

Final Report - **draft**  
September 2006 – May 2008

**Republic of Croatia**

**Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education in its Quality  
Assurance Role and the Development of a Supporting Information System**

August 2008



This Project is funded by the European Union



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**Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education in its Quality  
Assurance Role and the Development of a Supporting Information System  
(QACHE)  
Pub. Ref. EuropeAid/119818/C/SV/HR**

August 2008

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## Abbreviations

ASHE	Agency for Science and Higher Education
CA	Contracting Authority
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation
CFCU	Central Finance and Contract Unit
EC	European Commission
ECD	Delegation of the European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres
ENQAA	European Association of Quality Assurance Agencies
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
EUA	Association of European Universities
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
ETL	Extract(ion), Transform(ing) and Load(ing)
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISVU	Information System of Higher Education Institutions (Informacijski sustav visokih učilišta)
IT	Information Technology
LAN	Local Area Network
LTE	Long-term Expert
MoSES	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre



## Abbreviations

NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NCS	National Council for Science
NZZ	National Foundation for Science and Higher Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PM	Project Month
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency (United Kingdom)
QACHE	Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education in its Quality Assurance Role and the Development of a Supporting Information System
QM	Quality Management
QMS	Quality Management System
RDBMS	Relational Database Management System
SC	Steering Committee
SNMP	Simple Network Management Protocol
SPO	Senior Programme Officer
SRCE	University Computer Centre (Sveučilišni računarski centar)
STE	Short-term Expert
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
ToR	Terms of Reference
TQM	Total Quality Management
WAN	Wide Area Network
WG	Working Group
WS	Workshop



## 1 Programme Summary

<b>Overall Objectives</b>	<b>To promote the reform of Higher Education in the Republic of Croatia in line with best practice in the EU Member States.</b>
<b>Specific objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support to the development of Quality Assurance processes, procedures, systems and structures in Croatian Higher Education which will stimulate and establish the quality of the Higher Education being provided for students.</li> <li>2. Support to the development and implementation of an Information System, so that it can be used for reliable inputs of analysable data for Quality Assurance and Quality Management processes.</li> </ol>
<b>Results</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1. The staff of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, who is involved in its Quality Assurance role, both officers and administrative staff, will have been enabled to perform their duties in a way comparable to best practice in the rest of Europe, and a functioning National Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be established.</li> <li>1.2. The NCHE will have refined its policies and guidelines for evaluation and accreditation so that they are fully in line with best practice elsewhere in Europe, and have the capacity to keep these under review. Those who will have been appointed as evaluators by the Agency/NCHE will have been led to set sustainable precedents of good practice in the evaluation of HE programmes and institutions.</li> <li>1.3. Quality Promotion Units in the HEIs will have become well established and recognised as authorities on Quality Assurance in their own institutions, including in the provision of support for monitoring and internal evaluation. They will be the main actors in the Quality Assurance Network and an efficient working model of partnership between them and the Agency/NCHE will be established. The HEIs will have made significant progress in Quality Management (including academic and strategic planning).</li> </ol> <p>Inter-related and analysable Information Systems will have been developed and implemented so that they can be used for reliable and appropriate inputs of data for Quality Assurance and Quality Management processes at every level.</p>



Components	Component Description
<b><u>Component 1</u></b> <b>Support to the Agency for Science and Higher Education and the National Council for Higher Education</b>	<p>Development of ASHE expertise through extensive training for the staff of the Agency, conducting regular in-house seminars on the planning, organisation and reporting of evaluations and follow-up action, training in committee servicing mentoring in the course of their work, observing evaluations conducted by Quality Agencies in EU Member States, disseminating reports of their observations</p> <p>Training evaluators appointed by the NCHE/Agency in their evaluation role, attending evaluations to provide advice and guidance on good practice, advising the National Council for Higher Education on its policies and guidelines for evaluation and accreditation.</p> <p>Reporting to the NCHE on the feedback from evaluations and from the workshops and seminars organised by the Consultant, as well as designing and producing evaluation and feedback instruments.</p>
<b><u>Component 2</u></b> <b>Support to the establishment of the National Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the development of quality assurance in the HEIs</b>	<p>Provision of advice and assistance in support of the establishment of a National Network for QA in HE and the Quality Promotion Units being established in Croatian HEIs, mentoring of HEI staff with a designated role in Quality Assurance, including staff associated with Quality Promotion Units.</p> <p>Guidance to HEIs on curriculum development, on monitoring the progress of degree programmes, on the periodic evaluation of degree programmes, on institutional self-evaluation, on strategic planning, on preparing for external evaluations, on assessment of students and on quality assurance of teaching staff.</p> <p>Participation in relevant workshops or seminars organised by HEIs.</p>
<b><u>Component 3</u></b> <b>Support to the development of a Management Information System for HE</b>	<p>Expert guidance on development of Information System for Quality Assurance, on the implementation of the Information System for Quality Assurance and on the use of the Information System for Quality Assurance.</p> <p>Advice to the NCHE on the use of the information system for Quality Assurance.</p>
<b>Project funding</b>	<b>600.000 €</b>





## 2 Executive summary

The overall objective of the project is to promote the reform of Higher Education in the Republic of Croatia in line with best practice in the EU Member States, with specific objectives being to support the development of Quality Assurance processes, procedures, systems and structures in Croatian HE, and to support to the development and implementation of an Information System

At the end of the project there were still two areas that needed special attention as they influenced our project, namely policy paper acceptance and QA Information system. Beside that, following the decision of the ASHE Board and support from the Steering Committee, procedures for audit of QA systems in HEI were developed and pilot audits implemented in close cooperation with the Agency, which were originally not foreseen. Project extension for additional two months following the request of ASHE to finish all audit activities was granted.

Good working relationships were established during the project with all stakeholders. Collaboration with the Agency for Science and Higher Education and its staff became more intense in the last phase of the project, working on the day to day basis and supporting their efforts and their needs. This contributed to the sense of the ownership and added to the future sustainability of the project after its end.

A policy document “Comments on the existing QA model in Croatia and some suggestions for corrective measures” has been prepared at the very beginning of the project to clarify some of the issues that are open or unclear and which serve as basis for activities of the project. There was a series of meetings, clarifications, additional comments and responses from different stakeholders. There are still different opinions regarding main challenges, as the roles and responsibilities of the various organisations and bodies in relation to QA in HE (and science). Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, responsible for this area, is aware of this and some activities are foreseen during the year 2008. The final version of the policy document *Comments on the existing QA model in Croatia with presenting possible options for corrective measures*, which was presented at the final conference as one of the results of the project, is attached in Annex 1.

Beside support for the National Council for Higher Education in their activities for development of procedures and documents for external evaluation of Higher Education institution, project provided ASHE with support and participated in preparing documents and procedures for audits and piloting was implemented with national and international experts in three HE institutions.

Main project documents that were prepared are attached in annexes. Other documents that are referenced in the report are available in different interim reports. All documents produced are also available on the CV that was prepared for the final conference of the project.



### 3 Policy and programme context

Most of the issues are addressed in the policy paper *Comments on the existing QA model in Croatia with presenting possible options for corrective measures*<sup>1</sup>, which has been provided at the end of the project and presented at the final conference.

The current situation in relation to QA in HE in Croatia has been mapped at the beginning of the project and revised throughout its duration and major findings of the mapping exercise are briefly summarised as follows:

- a) Croatian higher education is in the middle of a **substantial reform process**. Croatia in general and its Minister responsible for higher education in particular are to be praised for the courage and determination in the transformation process of Croatian higher education according to the Bologna Declaration and the following ministerial meetings' communiqués. Changes of such magnitude always command respect from external parties even though those actually affected by the changes in the country may need a longer period for accepting the new situation and to adjust themselves to it.
- b) As part of these reforms, considerable efforts are being taken in order to **introduce and/or reinforce and maintain robust and reliable quality assurance mechanisms** both as far as the internal QA of higher education institutions, faculties, and programmes, and their external QA are regarded. A good part of the necessary legal and organisational steps and measures have been taken, although it is still to be seen and considered as to what extent they are justified by the actual outcomes and impact, and lead to the results intended.
- c) With regards to current external QA mechanisms in Croatia, three major activities can be identified:
  - (1) The **accreditation of new programmes** (by NCHE and ASHE), which has been undertaken for all programmes after the restructuring of them in accordance with the Bologna principles and which is undertaken whenever a new programme is proposed by institutions. This is a paper based accreditation exercise of programme proposals or "concepts", it is not about operating programmes.
  - (2) The **external evaluation (and accreditation) of institutions** (by NCHE and ASHE) which, after a thorough process of conceptual preparation (criteria and procedures defined), has just restarted in 2008. This evaluation seems to be conceptualized to focus both on the **institutional capacity** to run programmes and to care about quality of the programmes, and on the **actual operation of individual programmes**. This exercise, in the latter aspect, can be considered also as the **re-accreditation** of the current operating programmes.
  - (3) The **quality audit of institutional QA systems**, a new initiative by ASHE. The concept and the procedure have been developed in 2006/07 and three pilot audits are just to be finished in Spring 2008.

Altogether however, it is still not fully clear how exactly these three mechanisms and activities are to be related to each other, i.e. what systematic part they will play in the QA scheme of the Croatian higher education system. (See still section j) below.)

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<sup>1</sup> Revised version, 16 April, 2008



Having said all this, and seeing our role as that of a “friendly critic” assisting the beneficiaries, in order to be able to present options for possible modifications, we focus below on some issues we perceived as those that could be considered for such modifications of the current QA scene in HE in Croatia.

- d) It seems to us that the **roles and responsibilities** of the various organisations and bodies in relation to QA in HE (Ministry, NCHE, NCS, NFS, HEIs) **are not conceived in the same way by all the major actors involved**. Differences of views seem to originate not only from current practice, from the **actual operation** of the organisations involved. Some parts of the relevant **legal regulation** can also give rise to differing interpretations namely, various sections of the *Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education*, the Gov. Decree on, and the Statute of, ASHE, and the relevant *Ordinances* of the Minister. Boundaries of responsibilities are especially disputed between some representatives of NCHE and ASHE.<sup>2</sup>
- e) As to the **composition and membership of NCHE**, the current situation is the following:
- There is an **extensive nomination procedure** for the members of the Council, and they are **appointed by the highest possible body, Sabor**, the Croatian Parliament. Yet, still a **major role is played in the actual selection process** (proposal to the Government and *Sabor*) **by the Minister**. Moreover, the **President of the Council is proposed by the Minister**. Members of the Council have no formal way of expressing their preferences as to who the President could/should be.
  - 9 out of the current 13 members of the Council have **jobs in** (are employees of) **HEIs**.

NCHE, in principle and according to the Act (Articles 7-8), has **two different types of roles**. On the one hand, it is the **advisory body** (of the Minister and the Government in general) **for higher education policy and budget issues** while on the other, it is the **expert body making proposals for the Minister for accreditation decisions**. In the latter role the Council serves as a **quasi decision making body** of external QA. (As far as we know, the minister has always accepted the accreditation proposals of the Council.) In both functions the Council is assisted by ASHE as an administrative and operational unit, providing also expert assistance at times.

Now, for the **advisory body** for higher education policy it makes sense that the Minister responsible for higher education policy selects the members and makes the final proposal for the Government and *Sabor*.

Whereas as to the **direct QA role** the two above mentioned features (the Minister’s major selection power and the strong representation of HEIs in the Council), if not fully accompanied by robust no-conflict-of-interest rules and mechanisms, **may give rise to challenges as to the actual independence** of the Council. Moreover, especially in relation to the second feature, there is a potential **risk of conflict of**

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<sup>2</sup> E.g. Article 15 point 1) of the *Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education* (herein referred to as the *Act*) says that the Agency (ASHE) provides only “technical and administrative assistance to the national councils for science and higher education”, whereas according to Article 16 point 4) “The Agency performs the assessment ...” and submits “its assessment reports to...”, the latter responsibilities being clearly much more important (and demanding) than simple “technical and administrative assistance”. Moreover, Article 2 of the *Ordinance on measures and criteria for the evaluation of quality and efficiency of higher education institutions and study programmes* states that the Agency “is charged with providing expert and administrative support to the National Council”. (Underlining added throughout.)



**interest.** According to the „Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area“ (ESG for short, standing for European Standards and Guidelines),<sup>3</sup> the organisational and operational independence of QA bodies both from governments and HEIs is one of the crucial elements in the forming European QA scene.

- f) As to the Bologna transition, in relation to the **introduction of new, Bologna-type study programmes**, it seems that there has been **no strong co-ordination on the Faculty and/or HEI level** in many cases. This phenomenon, together with the programme accreditation procedure not devoting major attention to this aspect, resulted apparently in the **proliferation of study programmes** in Croatia. Diversity in itself is not a drawback, of course, quite the opposite usually, but here we experience **some undue structural differences** related to similar programmes in some cases (e.g. the duration of the BA programme in economics is 4 years in Zagreb and 3 years at other universities) and, **overlaps and parallelisms among the new programmes** in other cases.<sup>4</sup>

This situation does not make the **choice of prospective students** easier on the one hand and, on the other, it is **not the best and most efficient way of using the resources** available either on institutional or on the national level.

- g) Another characteristic of the Bologna transition in Croatia is that the **re-structuring and accreditation of programmes** of study in 2005 was undertaken **before a full-scale and robust QA system** had been continuously operating. (Two major external QA activities were (re)introduced in 2007/08, see section c) above.) Moreover, the transition was executed rather quickly, on a **timescale** that few (if any) countries might have attempted.
- h) One of the major currently applied **external QA process** (accreditation of new programmes to be launched) seems to be criticised by some interested parties for **not being transparent enough**, especially as regards the actual application of standards and criteria. (Transparency could be enhanced e.g. by making the expert opinions public.) Moreover, the **consistency of the process and the results** can be challenged to some extent due to the great number of individual experts (reviewers) involved in the accreditation procedure apparently without any major co-ordination efforts and/or training for the time being.
- i) **Bias / prejudice of reviewers from public HEIs against private HEIs** has also been mentioned by some of our interviewees. This is a recurrent issue in the Central and Eastern European region where the establishment and spread of private HEIs is just a recent phenomenon (measured on a historical scale, at least). The exact extent of such an alleged bias is difficult to tell but there can be a grain of truth in the opinion stated by private institutions.
- j) As to the external QA activities currently being (re)introduced, it is still not fully clear what will be the exact **distribution of work, the decisive difference in actual practice between two of the major types of external scrutiny** to be applied. NCHE

<sup>3</sup> Accessible e.g. at: <http://www.enqa.eu/files/ENQA%20Bergen%20Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> This phenomenon was discussed already in the EUA advisory mission report (p.6., see the exact reference at the end of the policy document) back in May 2005, mentioning programmes in similar discipline areas having different structures (3+2 and 4+1 at different universities). The EUA team recommended that HEIs (faculties) „should be asked to agree upon a single structural model.“ (p.8.)



is (re)launching the **evaluation** (in the narrow sense) process of operating HEIs, faculties, and programmes, which will also lead to the **accreditation** of them (the accreditation decision according to the Act and the concept for this institutional evaluation is to be made by the Minister). Separately from this, ASHE has introduced the pilot **quality audit** of HEIs (faculties).<sup>5</sup> This is a clear **parallelism** of institutional evaluation (accreditation) and external audit of the internal institutional QA systems, aggravated by the fact that the NCHE exercise will include also the scrutiny of the basic internal QA documentation of the given HEI (faculty)<sup>6</sup>, an area which is to be covered *per definitionem* by quality audit (by ASHE) at the same time.

Irrespective of the actual situation concerning the introduction of internal QA systems at HEIs in Croatia (see below), such parallel investigations, if really implemented, would mean an **unnecessary extra burden** on HEIs and the national QA body(ies) alike, thereby endangering the actual use and potential positive impacts of both processes.

- k) Based on our mapping exercise it seems to us that although there are some HEIs and faculties in Croatia having introduced **internal quality assurance mechanisms** to various degrees, the **majority of institutions are still only at the beginning** of this process. They definitely need time and help for being able to successfully accomplish the tasks of the initial period.<sup>7</sup>
- l) A related issue is that the majority of those HEIs and faculties who are in the forefront of this development in Croatia introduced an **ISO (9001:2000) system** which is appropriate as far as the **administrative aspects** of operation of a HEI are concerned, but it **cannot most effectively cover other very important aspects** such as e.g. the quality of the teaching staff, curriculum development, or the teaching and learning process itself (including the attainment of intended learning outcomes).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Evaluation* is frequently used as an all-embracing term including all types of investigations of quality in HE. Here, however, we use it in the *narrow sense*, as a subcategory of the general term, involving a review and evaluative judgements on the subject of scrutiny but usually not leading to any formal consequences or decisions. *Accreditation* is another type of investigation, based on predefined minimum or threshold criteria and resulting in a formal yes-no accreditation decision concerning the quality of the given subject. An *audit* is the review of an operating quality assurance system i.e. it is a „meta-level“ investigation checking the procedures and mechanisms of the given organisation for assuring the quality of its operation. As opposed to accreditation and evaluation (in the narrow sense), an audit in HE does not involve any direct scrutiny concerning the actual content, teaching and assessment methods etc. of the study programmes of the given HEI.

<sup>6</sup> See Article 2 of the *Criteria for Evaluation...* documents by NCHE.

<sup>7</sup> The CARDS 2003 project has made a survey about internal QA practices among HEIs in Croatia. Beyond the not very high response rate (46 % only, in spite of a repeated mailing of the questionnaire) we learned that only less than half of the replying institutions have introduced an internal QA system in one form or another. They represent about one fifth of all HEIs in Croatia.

<sup>8</sup> The *Ordinance on measures and criteria for the evaluation of quality and efficiency of higher education institutions and study programmes* prescribes the “introduction of ISO standard in the administrative part of the university components” (Article 4. point 7, underlining added)





#### 4 Review of Progress and Performance

The project is subordinated to the **overall objective** to promote the reform of Higher Education in the Republic of Croatia in line with best practice in the EU Member States.

Its **specific objectives** according to the ToR are:

1. Support to the development of Quality Assurance processes, procedures, systems and structures in Croatian Higher Education which will stimulate and establish the quality of the Higher Education being provided for students.
2. Support to the development and implementation of an Information System, so that it can be used for reliable inputs of analysable data for Quality Assurance and Quality Management processes.

In line with this, the Consultant was expected to achieve the following **results**:

- 1.1. The staff of the Agency for Science and Higher Education who is involved in its Quality Assurance role, both officers and administrative staff, will have been enabled to perform their duties in a way comparable to best practice in the rest of Europe, and a functioning National Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be established.
- 1.2. The NCHE will have refined its policies and guidelines for evaluation and accreditation so that they are fully in line with best practice elsewhere in Europe, and have the capacity to keep these under review. Those who will have been appointed as evaluators by the Agency/NCHE will have been led to set sustainable precedents of good practice in the evaluation of HE programmes and institutions.
- 1.3. Quality Promotion Units in the HEIs will have become well established and recognised as authorities on Quality Assurance in their own institutions, including in the provision of support for monitoring and internal evaluation. They will be the main actors in the Quality Assurance Network and an efficient working model of partnership between them and the Agency/NCHE will be established. The HEIs will have made significant progress in Quality Management (including academic and strategic planning).
- 2.1. Inter-related and analysable Information Systems will have been developed and implemented so that they can be used for reliable and appropriate inputs of data for Quality Assurance and Quality Management processes at every level.



## 5 Assumptions and risks – at the end of the project

Assumptions and risks were explicitly outlined in the Terms of Reference and stated in the following table. Following the developments in the course of the project their status has been reassessed at the end of the project as they were important for the planning of the operations throughout the implementation period as well as vital for successful implementation of the project.

**Table 1: Assumptions and risks as well as their implications for the task system**

Assumptions	Implications for the task system of the Consultant	Status as of the end of the Project
The Government remains committed to the reform of HE.	There is no reason to believe that the Government will not remain committed to HE reform, but the project will ensure that the implications for the Government's own role in the process are understood.	The assumption is still valid. The Ministry for Science, Education and Sports has continued with active implementation of Bologna process improving country's scorecard in different areas in the Bologna Follow-up process.
MoSES will actively support the development of HE in Croatia without seeking to control it.	The project will support the Ministry's recognition of the autonomy of the HE sector in Croatia, while emphasising the importance of its accountability to all stakeholders.	The assumption is still valid.
The NCHE is dynamic in its promotion of HE reform	The project will support the NCHE in taking the initiative in HE reform as an integral part of Croatia's HE sector.	The assumption is still valid. NCHE has carried out a number of activities, including preparation for a cycle of external evaluations of Higher Education Institutions.
In terms of its Quality Assurance role, the Agency is either seen as an Agency of the NCHE or as the Agency having full responsibility for external QA.	The project assumes that a decision will be made on the exact organisational setup, and in the course of the project implementation we shall proceed accordingly, providing assistance to the national agency irrespective of the organisational setup within which it operates.	According to the best of our knowledge the underlying problem is well understood by the representatives of the organisations involved. With the new government these issues are being reconsidered in the frame of existing legislation with possible revisions and clarifications most probably during the year 2008.



Assumptions	Implications for the task system of the Consultant	Status as of the end of the Project
The Tempus Quality Assurance project will have provided a useful foundation on which the CARDS project can build.	The project will utilise the conclusions of all relevant Tempus projects where appropriate.	There was the final Handbook produced by the Tempus QA project which is available. We also succeeded in establishing good contacts with other ongoing Tempus projects related to QA in HE in Croatia.
The funding of HEIs follows the August 2003 Law on Scientific Activity and Higher Education	The project will treat all Faculties as integral parts of their universities, with the latter having a corporate responsibility for the optimal allocation of resources	The financing of HEIs in accordance with the provisions of the new Law was to begin from January 2004, but was deferred to January 2007.
There is a relaxation of state control over staffing establishments in HEIs.	The project will advocate that the maximum flexibility be allowed to HEIs in the deployment and use of their staffing resources	The assumption is still valid.
The HEIs can establish and resource Quality Promotion Units	The project will support the development of QA units in all universities and other HEIs	The assumption is still valid. The majority of HEIs already have QA Units established but their level of activities is different. The biggest difference is between Universities and their faculties and Colleges. Project gave support and training to the units.
There is the necessary synergy between the implementation of the CARDS 2002 project “Higher Education Mobility: Diploma Recognition Policy and Legislation” and the implementation CARDS 2003 project.	The project will utilize the outcomes of the CARDS 2002 project wherever relevant and appropriate.	The assumption is still valid. Moreover, by having personal contacts with Peter Debreczeni, the TL of the CARDS 2002 project, and by inviting in September 2006 Hugh Glanville, (KE for the CARDS 2002 project) as a Short Term Expert for our project we were progressing well in the utilisation of the results of the previous project. Some of the materials prepared in the previous project, in particular the manual Quality Assurance in Higher Education, prepared by Hugh Glanville, were used extensively when working with HEI.





Assumptions	Implications for the task system of the Consultant	Status as of the end of the Project
The chosen Information System enjoys the level of consensus support necessary for its further development and successful implementation	The project will seek to ensure that any MIS system for which it has some responsibility will be compatible with other MIS systems introduced in Croatia, without imposing unnecessary burdens on HEIs through requirements for duplication of effort	The assumption is still valid and development of MOZVAG system follows this by planning to provide necessary interface to systems in use. Nevertheless, there was still the lack of national consensus on the direction of development of the national QA information system at the end of the project, although some activities took place at the very end to bring together different points of views and to move towards the implementation of proposed model with cooperation of main stakeholders.
There is sufficient funding, beyond that resulting from the project, for the chosen Information System to be developed and implemented.	The project will seek to ensure maximum cost-effectiveness in the case of any MIS system it recommends.	The assumption is still valid. There is an agreement between the Ministry and ASHE for providing (financial) support for the development of the system.  The Management Board of the Agency as well as Rectors' Council have supported development of Mozvag 2 as the national QA information system, but there is still no consensus on the national level and consequently no funding provided for the development of IS. Further activities are foreseen just after the project.
The members of the projects target groups are encouraged to be available for project activities.	The project will make direct contact with those staff in HEIs who have an immediate responsibility for QA in HEIs and work with and through them,	The assumption is still valid. The seminars for HEIs organized within the project framework showed, by the high participation rate and by the vivid discussions during the seminars, that there is increased interest for QA issues in academic community, and helped in promoting QA issues and development of quality culture in HEIs. Response was even better than expected and representatives of HEIs expressed their wishes (and needs) for even more support.



Assumptions	Implications for the task system of the Consultant	Status as of the end of the Project
HEIs are committed to teaching and the quality of student learning.	The project counts on the establishment of QA units and on the active participation of HEIs and faculties on the training workshops organised by the CARDS 2003 project for them.	The assumption is still valid. There was a number of activities and projects during the lifetime of the CARDS projects that addressed teaching and the quality of student learning and some examples were even presented in the project in form of case studies.
HEIs committed to good practice in the assessment and certification of students.	This is to be an important element of the internal quality assurance systems at HEIs.	The assumption is still valid. Many of the higher education institution, especially those with university type of studies are moving to outcome based education and assessment.
Appropriate evaluators appointed by the Agency / NCHE.	The Croatian national QA system aims to meet the European Standards and Guidelines in this respect thereby promoting the international acknowledgement of it. The assumption is also relevant from the point of view of a possible application of the Agency for ENQA membership.	The assumption is still valid. Agency appointed and trained a number of evaluators as part of the pool of evaluators for the audits of QA systems. NCHE also started with activities for appointment and training of external evaluators.
University Computing Centre (SRCE) is committed to updating of existing version of MOZVAG.	Development of information system for QA system is an integral and important part of the project and one of its outputs so it's important that it's implemented in time to benefit from the expert inputs.	This assumption is still valid. Ministry has provided support and earmarked additional funds for development of the system which would not be done during the course of the project.

Additional assumptions	Implications for the task system of the Consultant	Status as of the end of the Project
Agency will in all respects be independent from the Ministry, Government, Parliament or any other political influence.	Exploring and supporting the conditions for and consequences of such position of the Agency	<p>The assumption is still valid.</p> <p>The new Chairman of ASHE's Governing Board is no longer MSES official but a representative of the academic community.</p>



<b>Additional assumptions</b>	<b>Implications for the task system of the Consultant</b>	<b>Status as of the end of the Project</b>
QA units located in HEIs are integral to these institutions and do not have, even collectively, the potential to be considered a national QA body, or part of one.	Support the integration of QA units in their HEIs.	The assumption is still valid.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Measures of a risk management system of the Consultant</b>	<b>Status as of the end of the Project</b>
The universities fail to move to become integrated institutions	The project will as far as possible treat the universities as integrated institutions	There has been move towards universities as integrated institutions, lump sum financing being one of the features, which encountered some resistance as individual faculties challenged the Law providing this set-up.  Regardless of that, project was also working with individual institutions and their units for QA and/or individuals working in this area.
Redundant staff from the merged Ministries might be placed on the Agency staff, without proper consideration being given to their suitability	The context for this statement of risk has now passed, but the project will support the appointment of any new staff as a matter for the Councils.	The risk is over anyway, the attitude and measures of the Consultant have not been changed. The Agency has been hiring the highly qualified people, provided training beyond the one in the project, and developed very good expertise.
There are pressures which could result in the Agency becoming a bureaucratic body simply affirming the acceptability of the status quo.	The project will emphasise the fact that Quality Assurance should never be a purely bureaucratic process.	The attitude and measures of the Consultant have not been changed. Agency has been moving towards a professional organisation with high inspirations of being a leading organisation in the region.



## 6 Activities undertaken

The technical proposal defined steps to achieve results that are defined in the Terms of Reference.

They cover the requirements of the ToR without exception and to a certain extent create scope for additional dimensions and orientations.

### 6.1 Step 1: Review current situation

The activity for the quick scan had commenced right at project start in parallel with the activities for project mobilisation. A number of meetings with NCHE and ASHE representatives had been organised during first two weeks after the arrival of the experts. The Consultant then gave a brief summary about his first findings and impressions. Parallel with the quick scan, a questionnaire for Higher Education Institutions and their Quality Assurance Units (if existing), has been prepared and sent to all HE institutions in Croatia. This was a survey of internal Quality Assurance practices at Higher Education Institutions, aimed at collecting information about their internal QA practices and was also kind of a mapping exercise inquiring about organisational and procedural aspects related to internal QA as well. The deadline for return was restricted to about two weeks with sending reminders to institutions and a prolongation of another two weeks but unfortunately only at the end of the fourth month the questionnaires from a little bit less than half of the higher education institutions were returned for the analysis to start. This also showed that HEIs in Croatia were still at the beginning of the introduction of robust internal QA mechanisms at the very beginning of the project.

Questionnaire was sent to 105 Higher Education Institutions with the kind participation and support of the PIU in the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. First response was very slow and only a small number of questionnaires were returned. With a number of “reminders” by the end of December 2006 nearly half of the questionnaires (48) were returned. Following the draft analysis of responses the final document *Report on the Survey on Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Higher Education Institutions*<sup>9</sup> was prepared and presented at the first seminar for QA Units in HE Institutions.

Feedback from polytechnics and colleges was very low. There could be listed several reasons for this, the most probable being that the concept for quality assurance was very new for them and they have not developed or implemented any quality assurance activities although by the end of 2006 all higher education institutions were expected to have QA units.

Responses from institutions showed, that most of them had committees for the internal quality assurance (35), three have units, seven had a person, responsible for quality assurance and in 6 of them there was no unit, committee or a responsible person for the area of QA.

From the total number of institutions, participating in the survey, QA units had all together two full time and two part time staff. In the case of individuals, responsible for this area, number of QA staff was still small, 2 full time and 5 part time, who were given quality assurance as a side responsibility.

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<sup>9</sup> This document was attached as Annex 4 in the Second Interim report  
Croatia: CARDS 2003 – Final Report – September 2006 to May 2008



Relevant issues for the projects were support needed in establishment / operation of the internal QA system and preferences for the possible seminar themes.

Answers to the question what kind of help institutions need most for the establishment / operation of the internal QA system, showed that they prefer training courses and seminars (34), together with written documents and direct expert advice (both 27), and less oral information or an internet platform. Newsletter didn't seem to be an option for institutions in establishment or operation of the system for quality assurance.

Analysis of the possible seminar themes showed that (major) interest was equally distributed among all themes except for planning, organisation and reporting of evaluations and follow-up actions, which apparently was perceived as activity that is outside direct influence of the higher education institutions and probably more linked to the role of the Agency for Science and Higher Education and National Council for Higher Education, but still relevant for institutions themselves. These results were also in line with proposed seminar themes for Quality Assurance Units in Higher Education Institutions and were taken into account in future planning of activities.

In the last phase of the project a questionnaire was prepared by Agency for Science and Higher Education and sent to Higher Education Institutions to evaluate the change in the number and structure of the Quality Assurance Units in the system of higher education in Croatia. Similarly to the first questionnaire, responses came only from university type of HE institutions (they were 81 responses, including both Universities as their faculties), while response rate from colleges was close to none. First analysis shows that most of the faculties that responded have established one or another form of a quality assurance system, at least formally, which shows active development from the situation at the beginning of the project. Most of the individuals responsible for QA in their institutions attended one or several of trainings and/or activities organised by the project. The Questionnaire that was sent to the HE institutions provides also all data needed to establish a database of QA Units in Croatian HE.

## **6.2 Step 2: Define the national quality scheme**

This is mainly conceptual work which was performed in various iterative cycles.

Based on discussions, various documents and reports, results of survey, comments on the existing QA model in Croatia and suggestions for corrective measures have been produced for discussion within the project in project month 3 before forwarding it to the stakeholders. Draft comments on existing QA model in Croatia and suggestions for corrective measures has been further developed and updated and discussed with Head of the Agency and Heads of AZVO departments, as well as within the project. Taking into account comments final document for discussion on broader level (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Council for Higher Education, Council for Science and other major stakeholders) has been prepared. Final draft document on QA policy ("Comments on the existing QA model in Croatia and some suggestions for corrective measures") has been presented to ASHE in project month 5 for distribution to the members of the National Council for Higher Education. Document has been delivered to the Chairman for his consideration, and translated into Croatian language for wider distribution.

No comments from the National Council for Higher Education were received till the end of project month 6, one of the reason being that for half of the members of the Council their



membership expired and new nominations by the Parliament were expected in April 2007. Finally, National Council comments have been prepared by the advisor of the Chairman and have only been received in July 2007 when they were accepted by the Council. Feedback of all stakeholders was taken into account in the new version of the document.

Final draft document on QA policy (“Comments on the existing QA model in Croatia with presenting possible options for corrective measures”) has, after receiving comments both from ASHE at the very beginning of the project and comments from the National Council for Higher Education, revised and prepared for discussion within the team, to take into account different, on some issues diverging views. The final version has been presented at the end of the project, as one of its results, but decision on the most appropriate option of the QA model is left to the stakeholders.

Two other, shorter documents have also been prepared, *Major issues of the QA scheme in Croatia* and *Major issues of the QA scheme in Croatia* as policy documents for stakeholders to discuss.

Document “Comments on the existing QA model in Croatia with presenting possible options for corrective measures” is attached in Annex 1.

Delays in receiving comments for the policy document, in particular from the National Council for Higher Education, who is one of the main stakeholders, seriously threatened the successful implementation of the projects, as it was a starting and most important point for other activities. This was mainly due to unclear demarcation of roles and responsibilities between ASHE and NCHE. As these issues were reiterated throughout the project towards the end of the project there was a consensus achieved regarding many of the issues, and further legislation changes will clarify all the roles in the QA.

### **6.3 Step 3: Draft a policy implementation mechanism**

Draft of the policy implementation mechanism was linked to the definition of the national quality scheme and competencies and responsibilities of different stakeholders. Draft document on the national quality assurance scheme that also contains some proposals for the implementation has been prepared and submitted to key stakeholders (ASHE and NCHE). As mentioned in the previous section, decision will be made by responsible authorities, as there are still different opinions and interpretations of the legal document, and some additional harmonisation is needed. Document presents a good basis for further discussion and offers different solutions.





## 6.4 Step 4: Develop an institutional framework

This step has two main types of activities:

- 1) concept development,
- 2) human resource development.

Training started at the end of the project month two. The conceptual work has commenced in parallel to steps 2 and 3 and was supposed to be completed, as regards the first drafts for approval, when the national quality scheme would be approved/ accepted. Unfortunately this did not happen and it looks that it won't happen before the end of the project. This is something that goes beyond the power of the project; responsibility rests in first place on the Ministry for Science and Higher Education. Nevertheless, MoSES is well aware of this and issue of revisions of the Law on Science and Higher Education are being considered (for other reasons too), but it's difficult to expect any more substantial activities before Autumn 2008.

There are still open issues related to the future functioning of NCHE, ASHE and HEIs regarding quality assurance. One issue to be solved is the division of functions and responsibilities between the ASHE and NCHE and within the Agency<sup>10</sup>. Another issue is to define type of activities that will be carried out: licensing, evaluations, accreditation, audit. This hasn't been solved yet, although an important new development has been the decision on 17 July 2007 of the Agency's Management Board on launching pilot evaluations and/or audits at certain HEIs. Agency also went to some restructuring which was meant to optimise resources in the institution as there are many activities which have the same denominator.

Project provided comments on NCHE draft documents for evaluation: *Higher Education Institutions evaluation criteria*, *Higher Education Institutions evaluation procedure* and *Additional Tables to the Self-Analysis*, as well as continuous feedback on different documents Agency prepared.

In the last part of the project, project and Agency carried out pilot audits of three Higher Education institutions (Faculties) that were selected by their Universities based on the express of interest. Project provided all support, including training, supporting national and international experts as well as costs of the exercise, and piloting provided opportunity to assess processes and documentation that have been prepared by ASHE, as well as live auditing in selected institutions. During training, nearly 40 experts have been trained and received certificate which allows them to be auditors for ASHE. Handbook that was developed and prepared by ASHE with the support and close cooperation with the project is attached in Annex 4.

Pilot audits were very well accepted, and gave both auditors and auditees valuable information about and the insight into the quality assurance systems in individual institutions. Results are also valuable for institutional evaluations that NCHE will carry out with help and support of the Agency in next three years, and auditors trained present a good core of potential external evaluators.

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<sup>10</sup> There are different departments within the Agency responsible for different activities which in some cases overlap or carry out similar activities. Department for Higher Education supports NCHE in implementing institutional evaluations, Department for QA is responsible for QA audits and department for Statistics and Analysis provides analytical support and develops MIS for QA purposes.



## Training

Training was based on a thorough analysis of needs that has been carried out in the first two months of the project implementation. The number of in-house that have been provided by the project is 18, most of the seminars were basically half day seminars which were followed by discussions, except for the seminar on project management, which was a two day seminar.

The number of those attending seminars slowly diminished from the beginning, although the feedback sheets of those attending the seminars do not show any sign of dissatisfaction with neither the content or the delivery of the seminars. It looks that there was some saturation with different forms of education and training and with everyday activities and responsibilities of ASHE staff, which probably resulted in less attendance, but those attending the seminars were more and more actively taking part in the discussions.

Members of the National Council for Higher Education and National Council for Science have actually been invited to all of these seminars, although unfortunately they were in most cases not attending them. This was the case during all duration of the project.

Results of seminar evaluations of all in-house seminars are given in Annex 5.

List of the seminars with more detailed information is provided in the following table.

**Table 2: List of in-house seminars for ASHE staff and their implementation**

Topic	Contents	Implemented
Internal QA at higher education institutions	Context, framework in Croatia The international context with special regard to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Possible systems and solutions with some historical outlook (can include theme 1 as well) Actual cases of internal QA measures in Croatia	26 October 2006
Types of external QA in higher education	Evaluation <sup>11</sup> . Characteristics: general review and recommendations, no decision, focus on quality enhancement. Accreditation. Characteristics: predefined criteria, yes-no decision, focus on accountability. Audit. Characteristics: review and evaluation of internal institutional QA system, no decision, focus on quality management	27 November 2006

<sup>11</sup> We use the word „evaluation“ in the narrow sense here, referring to a special type of external investigations. At other places throughout the document the word is used in the wider, general sense, as an all embracing term in QA of higher education.





Topic	Contents	Implemented
Focus of external QA Institutional evaluation	Faculty evaluation Programme evaluation – operating programmes Programme evaluation – new programmes to be launched Evaluation of themes, such as e.g. implementation of the credit system, examinations, curriculum design and development, gender issues, student services etc.	18 December 2006
Methodology – Evaluation design	Elements of evaluation Evaluation design step by step	21 December 2006.
Special modes of programme delivery and their evaluation	E-learning and distance education, general characteristics Evaluation of distance education programmes Evaluation of e-learning	2 February 2007
Methodology – Criteria and procedures	Defining procedures Defining criteria Defining data and information to be asked for	16 March 2007
Methodology – Guidance to institutions	Manuals and handbooks to be prepared by the agency, guidance on preparing applications for accreditation Guidance on self-evaluation	21 March 2007
Methodology – Involving External Expert	Selection of experts Training of experts	25 May 2007
German Higher Education Systems and the context of Higher Education Information Systems in Germany: ICE, Online Surveys and EvaNet	E-learning and distance education, general characteristics Evaluation of distance education programmes Evaluation of e-learning	20 June 2007
Methodology – Site visits	Organisation of site visits Implementation of site visits	18 October 2007
Methodology – Evaluation report	Relevance of the theme (activity scheme, ESG) Report writing: logistics Report writing: substance and results	25 October 2007



Topic	Contents	Implemented
HE Information Systems I. – The overall concept	Information flows in Higher Education Information facilitators Information for management, information for decision making Information and its sources The overall concept of HE information systems in Croatia	26 November 2007
HE Information Systems II. – System specification / system design for Croatian HE information systems	Information and QA MOZVAG Higher Education Data Base (HEIs) QA Process Support (MOZVAG 2) Study Programme Register (PR) QA Forum	26 November 2007
Methodology – Feedback	Relevance of the theme (activity scheme, ESG) Feedback to be collected by HEI, agency Examples: NCHE, ASHE, HAC Working group exercise	3 December 2007
Results of CARDS 2003 project	Presentation of project results and discussion on future activities till the end of the project	6 December 2007
Methodology – Follow-up	Relevance of the theme (activity scheme, ESG) Follow-up activities, responsibilities of the various actors Examples, the situation in Croatia: NCHE, ASHE, MSES Closing the quality loop	17 January 2008
Organisational setup of external QA entities: Some European examples	Relevant parts of the ESG Possible theoretical organisational structures Examples of some European organisations	28 February 2008
Organisational skills	Project management Committee servicing Teamwork and team building	3 and 4 March 2008
Institutional development of AZVO	What makes a good organisation? From mission through policy and strategy to actual operation SWOT analysis of AZVO The future ahead	17 April 2008
Overview and overall evaluation of the seminars	Evaluation of the seminars Comments and proposals	17 April 2008



Seminars and workshops for Quality Assurance Units in Higher Education Institutions have been carried out according to the plan proposed in the Inception Report. There was a number of seminars that were implemented, addressing different issues of interest for Higher Education institutions. Beside the seminars for QA units in HEIs, there was also a series of seminars which were addressed specifically potential auditors of HEI, which are from the same pool of experts that attended other seminars and that are following their expertise also in most cases as members of QA teams at different higher education institutions. Beside theoretical they got also some practical knowledge as seminars were organised as workshops with participation of national and international experts.

List of all seminars with information about those held is provided in the following table.

**Table 3: List of seminars and workshops for Quality Assurance Units in Higher Education Institutions and their implementation**

Topic	Contents	Implemented
Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education	European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance Internal quality assurance system of HEI in Croatia Self-evaluation of higher education institutions	17, 19 and 20 April 2007
External Quality Assurance in Higher Education	European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance Experience of European countries in external quality assurance of HEI External evaluation of HEI in Croatia Practical experience in external institutional evaluation in Croatia	29, 30 and 31 May 2007
Role of information system for quality assurance in higher education	Information on higher education ICE- information system for higher education Further development of Mozvag	21 June 2007
Curriculum in higher education	HE curriculum development – experience of Slovenia HE curriculum development – experience of Croatia National Qualification Framework National Curriculum New curricula in Pharmacy – development and implementation	3 and 4 July 2007
Audit of the Institutions in Higher Education System in Croatia	External evaluation of HEI Guidelines for external evaluation ESG Internal evaluation of HEI Criteria for audits	22 and 23 October 2007



Topic	Contents	Implemented
Institutional audit	Audit of QAS at HEI Internal QAS at HEI Role of auditors Feedback to be collected Follow up Case studies	21 and 22 November 2007
Audit of the Institutions in Higher Education System	Documentation for independent audit: - HEI documents - ASHE documents Simulation of an audit	13 December 2007
Quality Assurance at Programme Level: How to Measure Quality	Measuring Quality in HE The ENQA Standards for Quality Assurance Systematic Quality Assessment at Programme Level Evaluation in Practice: Procedures Quality Assurance and Empirical Research Methods: How to Gather Relevant Data? Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning: Putting Evaluation Findings into Practice Evaluation in Practice: Responsibilities	14 and 15 January 2008
Quality of Teaching and Students' Assessment: Dimensions of Quality Assurance	Learning outcomes – an overview From learning outcomes to teaching and learning Modern teaching methods Linking learning outcomes to assessment Linking teaching to assessment	16 April 2008
Audit of the Institutions in Higher Education System	Final seminar for auditors Overview of the pilot project of Institutional Audit Experiences and lessons learnt of participating experts	17 April 2008
Strategic planning for HEI: From common sense and strategic planning to organizational strategy	Management and organization Values and management Managerial control of organization From strategic planning to organizational strategy	29 April 2008



## Study Visits

Study visits represent an important part of the training of experts, as they provide on hand information on different aspects of the work of QA agencies.

First study tour was carried out at QAA in UK with participation in auditor training, which is carried out periodically for UK experts that audit QA systems in HE institutions. Training was of high quality; two participants from ASHE were introduced into procedures and activities for audit, participated actively and learned a lot. Links were also established with the different institutions and individual experts which take part in audits and who could participate in evaluations and/or audits in Croatia. The study visit was carried out in the period 21-23 February 2007.

Two study tours followed in the next cycle. First one was a visit to Hungary. Three AZVO experts visited the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC), the organization that is responsible for quality assurance in Hungarian higher education. During their visit the regular external evaluation of one of the higher education institutions took place, so they had the opportunity to participate in evaluation process together with Hungarian experts. After the visit to the HE institution, experts found the opportunity to discuss the process with their colleagues and also gain information on how the Hungarian Accreditation Committee works. On the last day of their tour the visit to Higher Education and Research Council took place. The study visit was carried out in the period 23 to 25 April 2007.

The second study tour was organised to Germany, a visit to ZEvA (Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur) in Hannover, the organization that is responsible for quality assurance in German higher education. During their visit the external evaluation of University of Goettingen, School of Language and Literature took place, and they participated in evaluation process together with German experts. After the visit to the HE institution, discussed the process with their colleagues and also learnt how ZEvA works and what its role is in the German higher education system. Participants of the study tour also visited HIS (Hochschul Informations System), institution that works on the HE information system. The study visit was carried out in the period 21 - 24 May 2007.

Both visits included observation of the institutional evaluation. The presentations and reports from the study tours have been organized for other staff in the Agency. Taking part in these study tours contributed to the development of the staff of the Agency for Science and Higher Education and represents one of the outcomes of our project within the Component 1.

Two last study visits were organised and carried out by visiting two eminent QA agencies, Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (HSV) and Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), the national agencies that are responsible for the quality assurance in higher education in their respective countries. These agencies have the similar role in the society as Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education and it was very useful to learn how they are organized and how do they accomplish their missions.

The colleagues from ASHE also had the opportunity to visit higher education institutions in each country. In Sweden the visits to the University College of Södertörn (the most recent HE institution in the country) and to the oldest HEI - Uppsala University have been organized. In Norway they will visit Oslo University College. At all four institutions people were met that are responsible for the quality assurance at the institutional level, but the external institutional evaluations and their experiences were been discussed. In that way the colleagues from ASHE



got the insight on both sides of national quality assurance systems – from the agencies sides and from the institutional sides.

The study visit took place in the period 17 to 23 February 2008. A short presentation from the study tour has been organized for other staff in the Agency as part of the in-house seminar. Taking part in this study tours contributed to the development of the staff of the Agency for Science and Higher Education and represents one of the outcomes of our project within the Component 1.

Study visits also fit very well into other international activities of ASHE and they were sometimes also complementary and helped position the Agency in the international context. There were more study visits that originally planned to give an insight in different agencies across Europe with different experiences and different mandates also to allow ASHE to explore different options for (their) future status.

### **Coaching/Mentoring**

During all project activities consultants continued to provide mentoring and support to the staff members of the Agency for Science and Higher Education regarding different aspects of their work and providing necessary information, various documents, materials, web links, and comments and guidelines for their work. Written proposals were also provided in cases they were needed. Some mentoring and advising was also given to individuals from HEI that approached our project.

### **6.5 Step 5: Facilitate a template system**

Following experience with the first series of seminars for Higher Education Institution we invited to participate with representatives of all institutions as we wished to include as many institutions as possible, so not limiting their number to a small sample. Materials from the seminars will serve as information and templates for other institutions which will join QA activities later on, and they will also be published on the Forum that has been developed and will serves for networking of QA units in HE institutions and other interested parties. At the end of the project the infrastructure for such a networking (under actual coordination of ASHE) exists and it is starting to operate by providing information on different issues that have been addressed in the trainings for HEI.





## 6.6 Step 6: Establish an information system

### Activity 1: Needs analysis

Activity 1 concentrated on the provision of expert overview and guidance to the team(s) developing an electronic information system, particularly on those aspects which are related to the quality assurance and quality management process. First needs analysis has been provided in the first reporting period and served for the subsequent development of specifications for the information system.

### Activity 2: Expert guidance on QAIS design

In numerous discussion with the AZVO Analysis and Statistics group input was provided for the further development of the system design of MOZVAG 2.

As result of the project four documents have been developed:

- Higher Education Information Systems. Proposal for an overall Concept for Higher Education Information Systems in Croatia.
- System Specifications for the Croatian National Higher Education Information System (CNHIS)
- Higher Education Information Systems and the Agency of Science and Higher Education
- System Design for a Croatian Higher Education Information System

They are presented in Annexes 3a to 3d.

In the context of dealing with an ad hoc evaluation of CARDS projects, the Ministry seemed to have repeated the financial commitment for the development of the new system, although this would be effectuated only in the next fiscal year after the election. From the side of the Ministry the request to have a national level Higher Education Information System with access opportunities for the Ministry has been brought forward, which is exactly what our CARDS 2003 project was focussing on and attempting to promote.

The potential developers and cooperating units with regards to ISVU: SRCE and FER seem not to be ready any more to cooperate in the development of the new national level system. Thus fights between competing organisational units with regards to who should be the developers of the system tend to become another obstacle for speeding up the development and availability of a national level Higher Education Information System. This is taking place on the basis of different approaches for the new system: While FER more or less states that ISVU (the system for the Higher Education Institutions), as it is running on one single server and has a Data Warehouse with flexible report generator is already the national level system, that should be based on the same data base used for the institutions, SRCE clearly wants to separate the institutional from the national system, having two separate data warehouses, even if the same programme features are used.

The work of working group, that had supported AZVO in writing the system specifications for the new system had been interrupted since June 2007. Having in view these new struggles between potential developers of the system and competing concepts, AZVO decided to independently define the system specifications, to rather proceed towards a public tender than to let these fights impede the advancement of achieving the goal of a national level Higher Education Information System. With this task to write the system specification, AZVO relies on what Key Expert 3 submitted as the so-called system design for the new system. The



works on these specifications has been finished and before the end of the project system specifications were prepared.

**Table 4: Project activities – implementation in the reporting period**

Activities	Means	Inputs/Costs	Implementation
<i>1.1.1. Training of Agency staff involved in QA including in-house seminars.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• In-house seminars (see list in a separate document)</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), KE1, KE3, STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	<p>- <b>Regular</b> meetings with ASHE staff organised and attended</p> <p>- <b>Seminars</b> carried out (see list of in-house seminars)</p> <p>- Management Board (MB) of the Agency made a decision concerning the launching of pilot evaluations and/or audits by ASHE at some HEIs in Croatia</p> <p>- <b>Planning</b> of pilot evaluations and/or audits discussed by ASHE</p> <p>- <b>Proposal</b> for pilot evaluations and/or audits by ASHE, highlighting some of the relevant issues for launching such a project together with a possible schedule for the pilot evaluations and/or audits, prepared</p> <p>- <b>Pilot audits</b> carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faculty for Civil Engineering, University of Osijek</li> <li>- Faculty for Information Sciences and Organisation, Varazdin, University of Zagreb</li> <li>- Technical Faculty, University of Rijeka</li> </ul>





Activities	Means	Inputs/Costs	Implementation
1.1.2. <i>Training in committee servicing for Agency staff who support the NCHE.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• In-house seminars (see list in a separate document)</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>KE1, STE</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advising Agency staff on different issues regarding NCHE</li> <li>- Comments on NCHE draft documents for evaluation: <i>Higher Education Institutions evaluation criteria</i>, <i>Higher Education Institutions evaluation procedure</i> and <i>Additional Tables to the Self-Analysis</i></li> <li>- Final version of the policy paper <i>Comments on the existing QA model in Croatia with presenting possible options for corrective measures</i> provided</li> </ul>
1.1.3. <i>Mentoring of Agency staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Personal discussions</li> <li>• Mentoring at seminars and workshops abroad</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), KE1, KE3, STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Day to day mentoring of the Agency staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formal and informal meetings</li> <li>• personal discussions</li> <li>• literature surveys and seeking information</li> <li>• written proposal</li> </ul>
1.1.4. <i>Agency staff to observe evaluations conducted by foreign QA agencies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit and taking part in actual evaluation in a Western-European EU country</li> <li>• Visit and taking part in actual evaluation in an Eastern-European EU country</li> <li>• Visit and taking part in an auditor training</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), KE1</b> Incidental expenditure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visit and taking part in an auditor training (QAA, United Kingdom)</li> <li>- Study visit to Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) in Hungary implemented.</li> <li>- Study visit to ZEvA (Zentrale Evaluations- und Akkreditierungsagentur) in Hannover, Germany implemented.</li> <li>- Study visit to Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (HSV) and Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) implemented</li> </ul>



Activities	Means	Inputs/Costs	Implementation
1.1.5. Agency staff involved in 1.1.4. reporting to their colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency meetings</li> <li>Written reports by staff involved</li> </ul>	<b>Agency staff involved,</b> <b>TL (KE2), KE1</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	- Presentations of the study visits to UK, Hungary, Germany, Sweden and Norway prepared and delivered by visiting team.
1.2.1. Training evaluators appointed by the NCHE/Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training seminar</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), KE1, KE3, STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Seminars for evaluators: - <i>Audit of the Institutions in Higher Education System in Croatia</i> - <i>Institutional audit</i> - <i>Audit of the Institutions in Higher Education System</i> carried out
1.2.2. Key expert attending evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking part in actual evaluations as observer and mentor for agency staff</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), KE1</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Participation in pilot audits: - Faculty for Civil Engineering, University of Osijek - Faculty for Information Sciences and Organisation, Varazdin, University of Zagreb - Technical Faculty, University of Rijeka
1.2.3. Advice to NCHE on its policies and guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of current situation (meetings, discussions)</li> <li>Analysis of current documents</li> <li>Discussion in in-house training seminar</li> <li>Proposals for the future</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), KE1,</b> Fees.	- Development of the policy document <i>Comments on the existing QA model in Croatia with presenting possible options for corrective measures</i> - Two documents prepared: <i>Major issues of the QA scheme in Croatia</i> and <i>Major issues of the QA scheme in Croatia</i> - analysis and comments of ASHE audit documents and procedures - individual discussions - Discussing policy issues with the adviser of NCHE in relation to the QA scheme document and NCHE Opinion on it.



Activities	Means	Inputs/Costs	Implementation
1.2.4. <i>Feedback to NCHE from evaluations and project workshops and seminars</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey on evaluations</li> <li>Survey on workshops and seminars</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), KE1</b> Fees.	Evaluation report for in-house seminars prepared.
1.2.5. <i>Evaluation and feedback instruments to 1.2.4.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaires designed for feedback</li> </ul>	<b>KE1</b> Fees.	- evaluation and feedback questionnaire used
1.3.1. <i>Advice and assistance in support of quality promotion units.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visits to quality promotion units</li> <li>Review of current situation (meetings, discussions)</li> <li>Analysis of current documents</li> <li>Proposals for the future</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2)</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	- survey of the Quality Assurance Units in Higher Education Institutions  - Document <i>Report on the Survey on Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Higher Education Institutions</i> presented and discussed at the seminar.  - Preparation of the QA Forum
1.3.2. <i>Mentoring of HEI staff with a role in QA, including staff associated with quality promotion units</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings</li> <li>Personal discussions</li> <li>Mentoring at seminars and workshops</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	- Individual advising HEI staff with a role in QA
1.3.3. <i>Guidance to HEIs on curriculum development, including ECTS.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings</li> <li>Seminars</li> <li>Handouts</li> <li>Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Seminar <i>Curriculum in Higher Education</i> carried out.
1.3.4. <i>Guidance to HEIs on monitoring the progress of degree programmes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meetings</li> <li>Seminars</li> <li>Handouts</li> <li>Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Seminar <i>Quality Assurance at Programme Level: How to Measure Quality</i> carried out



Activities	Means	Inputs/Costs	Implementation
1.3.5. <i>Guidance to HEIs on the periodic evaluation of degree programmes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Seminar <i>Quality Assurance at Programme Level: How to Measure Quality</i> carried out
1.3.6. <i>Guidance to HEIs on institutional self-evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Workshop <i>Internal Quality Assurance at the Institutions in Higher Education System in Croatia</i> carried out.
1.3.7 <i>Guidance to HEIs on strategic planning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Seminar for QA units in HE: “ <i>Information System in Context of Quality Assurance in Higher Education</i> ”
1.3.8. <i>Guidance to HEIs on preparing for external evaluations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), KE1, STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Workshop <i>External Quality Assurance at the Institutions in Higher Education</i> carried out.
1.3.9 <i>Guidance to HEIs on assessment of students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Workshop <i>Quality of Teaching and Students’ Assessment: Dimensions of Quality Assurance</i> carried out.
1.3.10 <i>Guidance to HEIs on quality assurance of teaching staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>TL (KE2), STEs</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	Workshop <i>Quality of Teaching and Students’ Assessment: Dimensions of Quality Assurance</i> carried out.



Activities	Means	Inputs/Costs	Implementation
<i>1.3.11. Participation, as invited, in relevant workshops or seminars organised by HEIs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visits</li><li>• Presentations</li></ul>	<b>TL (KE2)</b> Fees and incidental expenditure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- participation in UZ seminar on QA in Zagreb, September 2006</li><li>- participation in Bologna Follow-up Group meeting, October 2006</li><li>- participation on Tempus workshop, Rijeka, October 2006</li><li>- participation in Bologna seminar Tuhelj, November 2006</li><li>- Participation at the Regional Round Table "Accreditation in Higher Education in South Eastern Europe"</li><li>- Participation at the International conference Global Integrated Graduation Programmes 2007 in Split</li></ul>



Activities	Means	Inputs/Costs	Implementation
2.1.1.- <i>Guidance on development of Information System for Quality Assurance.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of current situation (meetings, discussions)</li> <li>• Analysis of current documents</li> <li>• Proposals for the future</li> </ul>	<b>KE3</b> Fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- meetings, analysis of documents, discussions with stakeholders</li> <li>- document <i>System Design Mozvag 2</i> prepared for ASHE and SRCE</li> <li>- Proposal for an Internet Forum and platform related to QA in Croatian Higher Education,</li> <li>- Discussion of the “Regulations on work, development and use of MOZVAG Information System at the Agency for Science and Higher Education” and some comments and remarks provided</li> <li>- Meeting with stakeholders in order to exchange experiences with regards to national level information systems in higher education, data ware houses and flexible report generators</li> <li>- The proposal for an overall “Concept for Higher Education Information Systems in Croatia” developed.</li> <li>- details with regards to the new system discussed. with ASHE department for Analysis and Statistics</li> <li>- details of an internet based QA Forum have been discussed and clarified.</li> <li>- The updates of the three deliverables of component 3 have been completed and the papers have been sent to the relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>- Specifications paper had been completed by ASHE and commented by KE3</li> </ul>



Activities	Means	Inputs/Costs	Implementation
2.1.2. <i>Guidance to HEIs on the implementation of the Information System for Quality Assurance.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>KE3</b> Fees	No activities
2.1.3. <i>Guidance to HEIs on the use of the Information System for Quality Assurance.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Visit to a HE information centre in EU country (2 staff members, 3 days)</li> <li>• Handouts</li> <li>• Papers and other written materials</li> </ul>	<b>KE3. TL (KE2)</b> Fees	Third seminar for the Quality Assurance Units in HEI “ <i>Information System in Context of Quality Assurance in Higher Education</i> ” carried out.
2.1.4. <i>Advice to the NCHE on the use of the Information System for Quality Assurance.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Personal discussions</li> <li>• Proposals for the future</li> </ul>	<b>KE3, TL (KE2)</b> Fees	No activities





## 7 Project visibility

The GOPA Consortium set up a project website to present the context, goals, and main activities of the project to a broader public. This public website was seen as one element of making public relations for the project. The draft website has been available from January 2007. For the future activities the introduction of interactive access is being planned.

A leaflet according to the EU Visibility guidelines has been produced. The draft version of the project brochure/leaflet has been prepared for the visibility event. After the application of changes based on the comments of the Client the brochure has been published and distributed in February 2007. The leaflet has been produced in English and Croatian with print runs of 1,000 copies, and comprised 6 pages with the basic information on the project. It is presented in Annex 12.

The project was presented at the press conference in the EU centre on 26 February 2007 with participation of Mr Oskar Benedikt from the EU Delegation, Prof. dr. Slobodan Uzelac State Secretary of the MoSES, Prof. dr. Jasmina Havranek, Director of ASHE and Dr. Sergij Gabršček, Team Leader of the CARDS 2003 project. The press conference was followed by a round table with the title *“Quality Assurance in Higher Education – External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions: Are we Ready for Ranking Croatian Higher Education Institutions”* which was found very interesting and challenging by the participants and again which presented a good kick-off event for public and especially for higher education institutions. It also allowed the project to establish first contacts with the stakeholders in the higher education area.

Project visibility was throughout its duration provided by seminars, workshops and active participation of the key experts at different events: UZ seminar on QA in Zagreb, September 2006, - participation in Bologna Follow-up Group meeting, October 2006; participation on Tempus workshop, Rijeka, October 2006; participation in Bologna seminar Tuhelj, November 2006; participation at the Regional Round Table "Accreditation in Higher Education in South Eastern Europe", where representatives of quality assurance institutions from Western Balkans took part. The event, which was co-organized by ASHE, gave a good overview of activities and developments in the area and was also a good opportunity to make necessary contacts, as well as to present our project.

At the GIGP 2007 Conference QA session in October 2007 in Brela, the project was presented by an introductory presentation on European policy developments, focussing on the ESG and the Recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council. Moreover, on the practical side, the basic elements of an internal QA system of HEIs were presented and then discussed the importance and possible ways of implementation of a quality culture at HEIs in Croatia.

The Project finished with the final conference, with more than 100 participants. A CD with project results was produced and given to participants.





## 8 Human resources

The following Key Experts and local experts took part in the projects realization:

- Dr. Sergij Gabrscek TL and KE2;
- Dr. Tibor Szanto KE1;
- Dr. Edgar Frackmann KE3;
- Mr Hugh Glanville, international expert; and
- Dr Metka Vrtačnik, international expert;
- Mr Peter Müssig-Trapp, international expert
- Dr Mitja Tavčar, international expert;
- Dr Phillip Pohlenz, international expert;
- Dr Petar Bezinović, local expert
- Dr. Dijana Vican, local expert.
- Dr. Mile Dželalija, local expert.
- Mr. Predrag Pale, local expert.
- Ms Vesna Vrga, local expert.

Mr. Predrag Pale prepared and carried out in-house seminar on use of information and communication technologies in education.

Dr Petar Bezinović participated in the seminar *Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education* with the theme *Self-evaluation of higher education institutions*.

Dr. Dijana Vican and dr. Mile Dželalija prepared and carried out the seminar for HEI institutions *Curriculum in Higher Education*, together with Dr Metka Vrtačnik, international expert. Mr Peter Müssig-Trapp prepared and carried out the seminar on use of IS in higher education in Germany.

Dr Phillip Pohlenz prepared and carried out two seminars, *Quality Assurance at Programme Level: How to Measure Quality*, that addressed monitoring the progress of degree programmes and their periodic evaluation, and *Quality of Teaching and Students' Assessment: Dimensions of Quality Assurance*, prepared together with Dr Sergij Gabršček.

Dr Mitja Tavčar prepared and carried out the seminar *Strategic planning for HEI: From common sense and strategic planning to organizational strategy*.

Ms Vesna Vrga assisted the whole project implementation and was involved as lecturer in the in-house seminar *Project Management*



## 9 Monitoring and evaluation

The details on measurable indicators for project success have been determined during the inception phase, when the project has been specified in more detail and agreed with the key stakeholders, in particular the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, the EC Delegation to Croatia, the PIU and the CFCU.

The indicative table below shows the indicators for the results to be achieved according to the Terms of Reference and the deliverables which could be used for evaluation of the success of the related project component.

For each indicator that presents a deliverable there is information about its status at the end of the project. There were some delays in the achievement of some deliverables due to causes external to the project, in particular delays in NCHE comments on the Policy paper (which were supposed to be obtained at the very beginning of the project) and financing of development of MOZVAG 2, which influenced activities of the project.

**Table 6: Project indicators and their status**

Indicator	Result	Deliverable	Status
Rate of stakeholder satisfaction	1.1.	Results of a survey to be produced at the end of the project (PM 18)	Provided
Rate of satisfaction expressed by evaluators and HEIs	1.1.	Results of a survey to be produced at the end of the project (PM 18)	Provided
Number of agency staff trained	1.1.	Evaluation reports about training activities	Reports on the in-house seminars regularly delivered.
SWOT analysis produced	1.1.	SWOT analysis (PM 4)	Delivered
Agency has a candidate status at ENQA	1.1.	Membership document enclosed with one of the progress reports (PM 18)	Membership requested by ASHE and associate membership granted
The level of compliance with “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)”	1.1. 1.2.	Documents of ASHE and NCHE (PM 18)	Draft analysis prepared, based on the documents prepared by the NCHE
Number of seminars for training evaluators	1.2.	Evaluation reports about training activities (PM 18)	3 seminars held for auditors/evaluators



Indicator	Result	Deliverable	Status
Recommendations to NCHE	1.2.	Plans for quality assurance system, policy implementation mechanism and institutional development (PM 8 latest)	Policy document prepared and delivered to NCHE
Evaluation & feedback instruments		Ditto (PM 8 latest)	Evaluation and feedback questionnaire on in-house seminars designed and delivered
Number of evaluations carried out	1.2.	Evaluation statistics enclosed with progress reports for months 12, 15, 18	3 pilot audits carried out, institutional evaluations by NCHE still in preparation
Policy mixed model prepared	1.1. 1.2.	Policy document prepared (PM 12)	Final draft of the policy document prepared
Survey of HEI carried out	1.3.	Report of the survey (PM 6)	Delivered
Classification scheme for HEI institution produced	1.3.	Classification scheme produced (PM 8)	Survey under implementation by ASHE
Evaluation procedure designed	1.2.	Procedure designed (PM 8)	Procedure designed
Phasing model produced	1.3.	Model (PM 10)	Final draft of the policy document prepared, QA Forum prepared
Institutional and human development plans prepared	1.3.	Draft of plans prepared (PM 10)	Responsibility of HEIs
Concept for monitoring and evaluation proposed	1.1.	Concept proposal (PM 8)	Development of the audit system, comments on NCHE documents
Training materials prepared	1.1.	Training materials (PM 12 latest)	Training materials prepared
Study tour design and implementation	1.1.	Study tours (by PM 12)	Four study tours designed and implemented
Study tour evaluations	1.1.	Evaluation reports (PM 13)	Reports for study tours delivered



Indicator	Result	Deliverable	Status
Model for collaboration with foreign partners prepared	1.3.	Model prepared (PM 12)	Discussed during study visits and pilot audits
Twinning arrangements with foreign HEI implemented	1.3.	Example of at least one twinning arrangement (PM18)	Responsibility of HEIs
Guidelines for execution of template model prepared	1.3.	Guidelines published (PM 18)	Materials from seminars available
Monitoring and evaluation report prepared	1.3.	Monitoring and evaluation report (PM 18)	Prepared by PIU
Number of relevant staff trained/mentored	1.3.	Evaluation report on training activities (PM 18)	Provided
Notes of guidance drafted	1.3.	Plan for quality assurance system (PM 18)	Handbook for audits prepared
Improved student assessment	1.3.	Review of assessment practice in HEIs (enclosed with progress report for PM 12, 15, 18)	Non relevant, although developed by individual institutions
Strategic Institutional Plans developed	1.3.	Institutional development plan (step 4)	Developed by individual institutions
Number of HEIs with ECTS	1.3.	Review of documentation practice in HEIs (enclosed with progress report for PM 12, 15, 18)	All accredited institutions with Bologna programmes
Strategy papers elaborated by MSES and Agency	1.1.	Review of policy material (enclosed with progress report for PM 12, 15, 18)	On-going process. ASHE working on strategy paper
QAIS Needs Analysis undertaken	2.1.	Needs Analysis is approved (PM 6 latest)	Needs analysis prepared
List of data, indicators and functions of the new system	2.1.	List approved (PM 6 latest)	Preliminary list prepared
QAIS <sup>12</sup> Information system for QA designed	2.1.	QAIS Design Document is prepared (PM 8 latest)	Design document prepared

<sup>12</sup> NB: Actual design, development and implementation will be done by AZVO and SRCE, project will provide only support needed in design phase and additional expertise, if needed.



Indicator	Result	Deliverable	Status
QAIS <sup>13</sup> Information system for QA implemented	2.1.	First version of QAIS prepared for piloting (PM 12 to 15)	Pending (linked to financing of IS development)
Initial training needs assessment and training plan	2.1.	Training needs assessment and plan prepared (PM 8 latest)	Training needs assessment report prepared
Reliable analysed data being used as inputs to QA by HEIs, Agency and MSES	2.1.	Survey analysis report prepared (PM 18)	Pending (linked to financing of IS development)
Reliable analysed data being used for Quality management, including strategic planning	2.1.	Survey analysis report prepared (PM 18)	Pending (linked to financing of IS development)
Number of HEIs that have implemented the Quality Assurance information system	2.1.	Survey analysis report prepared (PM 18)	Pending (linked to financing of IS development)
QAIS Training is provided	2.1.	Staff has been trained in the use of the application (PM 15 to 18)	Pending (linked to financing of IS development)
Further training and equipment needs analysis drafted	2.1.	Draft for training and equipment needs analysis prepared (PM 18)	Pending (linked to financing of IS development)

<sup>13</sup> NB: Actual design, development and implementation will be done by AZVO and SRCE, project will provide only support needed in design phase and additional expertise, if needed.

**Table 7: Status of results of the project**

Result	Progress	Comment
1.1. The staff of the Agency for Science and Higher Education who are involved in its Quality Assurance role, both officers and administrative staff, will have been enabled to perform their duties in a way comparable to best practice in the rest of Europe, and a functioning National Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be established.	Achieved	Activities were carried out as planned in the inception report. Staff of the ASHE has been receiving extensive training in different areas, following the best practices in the rest of the Europe, mentoring as needed and QA materials have been prepared and/or commented. Pilot auditing has been successfully implemented and lessons learnt are important for evaluations of HEIs too. Network of QA Units in HEI was informally established through trainings and seminars and will continue through use of Forum.



Result	Progress	Comment
1.2. The NCHE will have refined its policies and guidelines for evaluation and accreditation so that they are fully in line with best practice elsewhere in Europe, and have the capacity to keep these under review. Those who will have been appointed as evaluators by the Agency/NCHE will have been led to set sustainable precedents of good practice in the evaluation of HE programmes and institutions.	Achieved	Project gave support and advice to the NCHE in the area of QA and evaluation procedures, but there are still some unresolved question regarding QA Policy Paper and distribution of responsibilities between ASHE and NCHE. This is beyond the influence of the project and will probably be solved during 2008. Materials for evaluation have been studied and commented. No training for evaluators requested by NCHE, and timetable for HEI evaluation still uncertain, probably late Spring or even Autumn. Training has been provided for ASHE auditors with many dimensions similar to evaluations.
1.3. Quality Promotion Units in the HEIs will have become well established and recognised as authorities on Quality Assurance in their own institutions, including in the provision of support for monitoring and internal evaluation. They will be the main actors in the Quality Assurance Network and an efficient working model of partnership between them and the Agency/NCHE will be established. The HEIs will have made significant progress in Quality Management (including academic and strategic planning).	Partially achieved	Establishment of the Quality Promotion Units in the HEIs is still in the development phase and quite uneven among HEIs, although their number has increased. Seminars and trainings help establishing the network of QA Units, exchange of information between institutions, capacity building. Development of QA Forum will allow partnership between them and the Agency/NCHE.





Result	Progress	Comment
2.1. Information system for quality assurance based on agreed indicators will have been developed and implemented so that it can be used for reliable and appropriate inputs and use of data for Quality Assurance and Quality Management processes at every level.	Partly achieved	All activities leading to the development and implementation of the information system that were feasible for the project were carried out according to the plan. Actual development and implementation of the information system is beyond the influence of the project as financial resources are needed from the MoSES, which requires additional procedures, so during the lifetime of the project the information system will not be implemented but good basis for it are provided, at last with the system specification.



## 10 Management and coordination arrangements

There were no major issues regarding management and coordination. Most of the decisions in the project implementation were taken in coordination with the Agency for Science and Higher Education. There was continuous support also from the both PIU and from the Ministry for Science, Education and Sports, and good cooperation with individual higher education institutions. There were three Steering Committee meetings during the project period following phases of the project. PIU also provided monitoring of the project. There were also a number of monthly meetings for Phare/CARDS projects which allowed project to present activities, get additional feedback and being informed about other projects, although none of them addressed the area of HE.

## 11 Key Quality/Sustainability issues

### Key Qualities:

*Efficient management:* An efficient organisation of project implementation was achieved with clear definition of responsibilities of all involved actors, and more specifically, close coordination with ASHE and MoSeS for issues that need approval. All important decisions required clear approval by the CFCU. Project has enjoyed all needed support from all the institutions that are involved in activities.

*Communication:* The project developed a strong visibility in the country and also outside Croatia, regarding different activities that were carried out. A discussion forum has been developed which will ensure easier communication with HEI and their QA Units, and ASHE as the main partner in these activities. A mailing list of all key actors has been established for easy communication.

*Thorough preparation of project activities:* While it was perceived as very important to stick to the overall time schedule, there were some issues that were beyond our power of influence which caused delays.

*Integration:* The integration of all project components was aiming to create synergies between supported activities in all three components. The integration is supported by cooperation within the Technical Assistance Team on all the issues that need attention.

*Partnership:* Partnership with all stakeholders was an important issue and aim of the project. Especially strong partnership (that leads also to the sustainability and ownership of the project) has been established with the Agency, in some instances with the NCHE, with the MoSeS on policy regarding issues. Partnership has also started to be build with HEI and individuals that have been working in the area of QA, especially when first seminars for HEI have been carried out.

*Monitoring and Evaluation:* Emphasis in the project was also on systematic monitoring and evaluation of the project. Monthly reports were prepared but there is constant monitoring of PIU in the MoSeS and in the Agency.



*Financial efficiency:* Financial efficiency was considered as an integral part of each activity. The financial implications of each activity was carefully evaluated, and the most efficient solution selected, in order to optimise the outputs from the available project budget. This allowed the project to carry out additional activities for the benefit of stakeholders.

*Exchange of experience:* Systematic exchange of experience realised with institutions and individuals in the area of quality assurance in higher education development in Croatia and in other countries, especially EU member countries. This was carried out in the form of attending conferences, seminars and meetings but also through study visits.

### **Sustainability:**

Emphasis has been given from the very beginning to the continuous development of sustainable project structures. We worked in teams, whenever possible and relevant, involving EU and local experts in every stage, and developing a strong orientation towards building local expertise, as the ownership of the project and project results is an important issue for the sustainability of the project results in the longer future.

Every measure was taken to assure close cooperation between the project and key stakeholders, especially the Agency for Science and Higher Education, as well as National Council for Higher Education. In this situation the of the most important issues seemed to be clarification of the roles and responsibilities between the Agency and NCHE in order to efficiently carrying out activities for assuring quality in higher education in Croatia, to achieve needed synergy for this quite demanding area. This has still not been solved although there is positive development both in closer cooperation and in awareness that QA is a “joint venture” where all partners have clear and defined roles and where professionalism is of utmost importance.

Beside that, awareness and capacity building in higher education institutions is of utmost importance. Preliminary results and experiences in the first phase of the project showed that there is lot of expectation and willingness for cooperation in activities. Series of seminars showed that there are on one hand a lot of needs from HEI regarding QA, especially those who have just started to develop mechanisms and procedures, but on the other hand also expertise already developed in a smaller number of HE institutions. Seminars offered an opportunity to share the experience developed and to establish direct contact among institutions, also using HEI forum that is being developed in the frame of the project.

We are confident that outcomes of the project will be sustainable despite the short timeframe of the project. Most of the challenges came from the policy dimension where it takes much more time to take and to implement decisions. Strength of the project was at it was able to give both support and advice to different stakeholders in the project and so building capacity and knowledge for decision making that goes beyond the daily politics.



## 12 Annexes

