

AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION 2019 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2020 ACTIVITY PLAN

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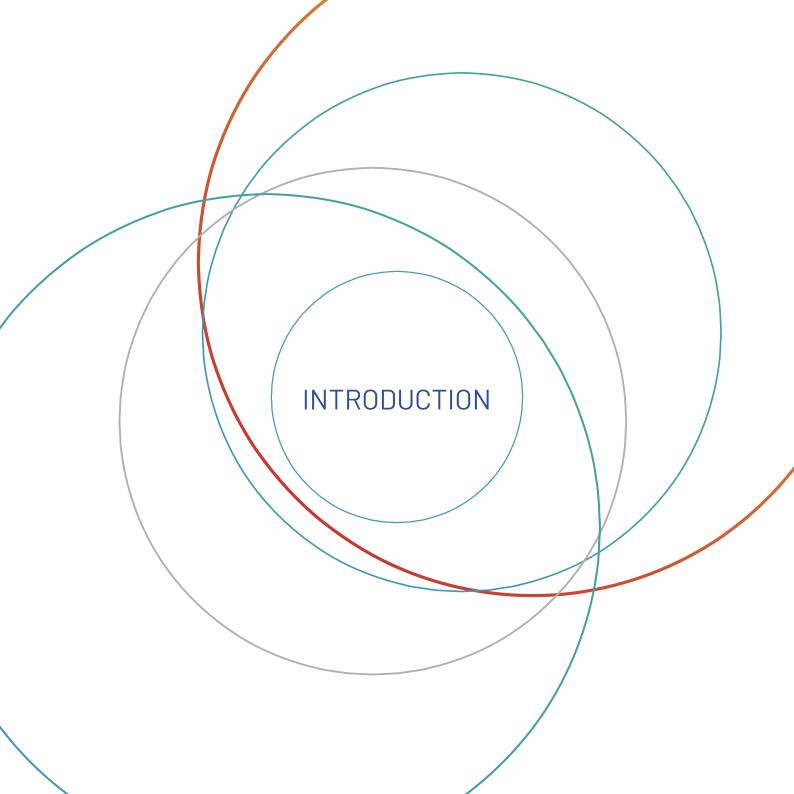
Prof. Jasmina Havranek, PhD, Acting Director

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"If your plan is for one year plant rice. If your plan is for ten years plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years educate children." - Chinese saying

Dear readers and colleagues,

When reflecting upon our activities during 2019, an overview of which we have prepared on the following pages, I thought that it was extremely important to contextualise our efforts in the field of quality assurance in higher education in a broader social framework.

In 2019 we organised exceptionally well-attended events dedicated to the internationalization of Croatian higher education. Although nowadays internationalization is an omnipresent social topic, I would like to emphasize that science is from its very beginnings – international! Indeed, scientist have always been invited to make a mark on the world by crossing borders - be it local, social or political. In today's globalised, networked world it is difficult to subsist without this kind of cooperation and it is necessary to bear this in mind when considering the stronger international affirmation of Croatian expertise and knowledge in Europe and in the world.



Prof. Jasmina Havranek, PhD

Along this way, I envisage Croatian Universities as creative, internationally oriented institutions, but also clearly focused on forming the solid intellectual basis of our society, promoting human development and safety, dialogue and understanding as well as being keepers of our country's cultural and national identity, and in particular of our mother tongue. Only in that way, firmly anchored to the values we inherited, we can act as authentic interlocutors to our European colleagues, and truly and responsibly contribute to the entire European community, just as the founding fathers of Europe have imagined.

During 2019, we organised numerous seminars, workshops, round table discussions and meetings in order to raise awareness on different aspects and challenges the higher education system has to face nowadays. We considered strengthening our Agency by orienting our procedures in the direction of expert accreditation for certain regulated professions, motivated by our meeting with colleagues from the Ministry of Health of the State of Israel which we, along with many others distinguished international guests, welcomed in our Agency last year.

During 2019, the Agency continued to carry out the re-accreditation of higher education institutions based on a new model and completed the re-accreditation of all postgraduate university (doctoral) studies – our important project aimed at improving the quality of doctoral studies regarded as the crowning point of formal higher education and one of the most creative periods of a scientific career. This evaluation has already resulted in general improvements in different fields – mainly thanks to the joint efforts of all stakeholders put in the development and adoption of criteria for the evaluation of doctoral study programmes. Completely new, improved, doctoral studies were also developed. Furthermore, evaluation has served as a tool for recognising programmes that, according to the unanimous opinion of international reviewers and international quality standards, should be considered as high level of quality programmes.

In addition, during 2019 the Agency has continued to strengthen the Croatian higher education system through its numerous activities and projects - more about this topic can be found on the following pages.



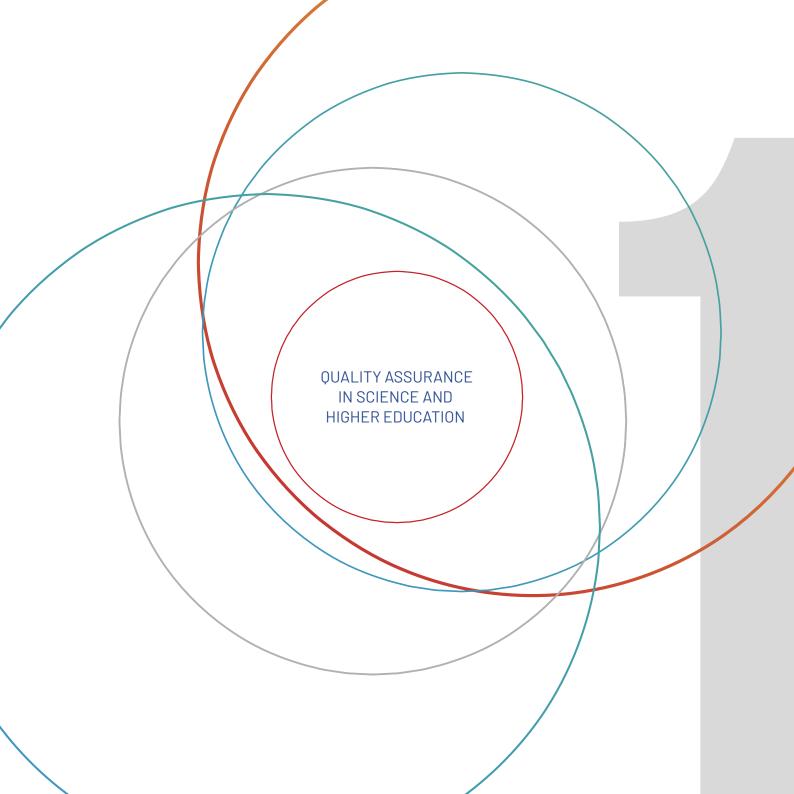
Finally, allow me to express my gratitude to all the Agency's employees for their hard work and efforts, to the students that cooperate with us, to all the members of our Management Board and Accreditation Council, to the members of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development and the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, to the members of all Field Committees and Regional Scientific Area Councils as well as to all reviewers and other members of expert panels with whom we have cooperated during 2019.

Prof. Jasmina Havranek, PhD Acting Director of the Agency for Science and Higher Education

ASHE's Management Board adopted the 2019 Annual Report and 2020 Activity Plan via e-mail.

2019 IN REVIEW

- · Re-accreditation of 26 higher education institutions carried out;
- Re-accreditation of 25 postgraduate (doctoral) university study programmes delivered at 14 higher education institutions carried out;
- Clusters comprising 70 expert panels members participated in the procedure of re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes;
- Three procedures of initial accreditation of new study programmes from polytechnics, colleges and private universities conducted;
- Five initial accreditation procedures for scientific activity initiated and completed;
- The Follow-up Committee issued 36 opinions in follow-up procedures;
- Two positive opinions were passed on the justifiability of public funding of new study programmes at public universities;
- One application for starting an online study programme was received and resolved;
- Audit of four higher education institutions carried out;
- Ten sessions of the Accreditation Council held;
- One session of the Complaints Commission held;
- A meeting of the National network of quality assurance units at higher education institutions (CroQAnet)held;
- Academic Rankings brochure published;
- The following publications were issued: Što nakon srednje? Želje, planovi i stavovi hrvatskih srednjoškolaca (What to do after high school? Wishes, plans and attitudes of Croatian secondary school pupils);
- ASHE organised seven sessions of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges in 2019;
- Four sessions of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development held;
- Three sessions of the regional scientific area councils held;
- In 2019, scientific field committees held 106 sessions and passed 1682 decisions;
- Field committees held 30 sessions, passing a total of 369 positive decisions on the fulfilment of criteria for appointment to teaching grades;
- In the summer enrolment period, there were a total of 40.590 slots available at all Croatian higher education institutions; out of 33.267 candidates that have applied, 24.043 candidates secured their right of enrolment;
- For the first time in the summer enrolment period, the candidates were assisted by a system using artificial intelligence when enrolling in a study programme the system automatically advised the candidates on the enrolment in a study programme;
- In 2019 Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office recognized 1.798 foreign higher education qualifications for the purpose of employment;
- MOZVAG2 and Central Procedure Records systems upgraded;
- Five workshops for MOZVAG, CROSBI and Projects Database system administrators held;
- New cycle of workshops for career advisors entitled Careering held;
- A cycle of workshops for higher education institutions on the internationalisation of higher education launched;
- ASHE published the Directory of Study Programmes delivered in Croatia in a foreign language;
- Promotional videos "You choose" and "Why study in Croatia?" published;
- ASHE leads or participates in seven international projects financed from the European Union programmes and other sources, the most important being ESF-funded project SKAZVO;
- Seminar Role of students in quality assurance in higher education institutions held;
- ASHE participated in the research within the framework of the DEQAR project (Database of External Quality Assurance Reports);
- ASHE became partner in an international project entitled KEEP IN PACT (Keep innovation in multi partnership cooperation in lifelong guidance services) with the aim of strengthening multi partner cooperation in providing lifelong career guidance services;
- ASHE welcomed the representatives of ENQA, Israeli Ministry of Health, Indonesian delegation, colleagues from the system of science and higher education from Turkey, Slovenia and the Netherlands.



RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Re-accreditation of higher education institutions in 2019

In line with the Higher Education Institutions Re-accreditation Plan in 2019, the Agency for Science and Higher Education carried out reaccreditation of the following institutions within the SKAZVO project (2016-2018).

- 1. University of Zagreb Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology,
- 2. University of Zagreb Faculty of Forestry,
- 3. Faculty of Agrobiotechnical Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (before: Faculty of Agriculture, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek),
- 4. Faculty of Food Technology, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,
- 5. University of Split University Department of Marine Studies,
- 6. Polytechnic "Lavoslav Ružička" in Vukovar,
- 7. Polytechnic "Marko Marulić",
- 8. Nikola Tesla Polytechnic in Gospić,
- 9. Baltazar Polytechnic in Zaprešić,
- 10. Polytechnic of Bjelovar,
- 11. Polytechnic of Požega,
- 12. Polytechnic of Slavonski Brod,
- 13. Polytechnic of Šibenik,
- 14. Velika Gorica Polytechnic,
- 15. VERN Polytechnic,
- 16. Zagreb School of Business,
- 17. Istrian Polytechnic (before: College for Technology and Business Pula Polytechnic),
- 18. RIT Croatia (Rochester Institute of Technology Croatia),
- 19. RRiF College for Financial Management,
- 20. College for Information Technologies,
- 21. Aspira University College of Management and Design,
- 22. College for Management in Tourism and Informatics in Virovitica,
- 23. EFFECTUS University College for Law and Finance Higher education institution,
- 24. College Algebra,
- 25. Zagreb School of Economics and Management,
- 26. Libertas International University.

Polytechnic of Zagreb and Polytechnic Hrvatsko Zagorje in Krapina asked for a postponement of evaluation and the re-accreditation of these institutions will be carried out in 2020.

The procedure was conducted in the spring and autumn of 2019. Along with Croatian experts, representatives of the economy and international experts from the following higher education institutions took part in the re-accreditation:

- Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences, Germany;
- Edinburgh Law School, The University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom;
- Debrecen University, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Science and Environmental Management, Hungary;
- University of Gent, Faculty of Bioscience Engineering, Belgium;

- Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia;
- University of Maribor Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Slovenia;
- Fakulteta za družbene vede, Univerza v Ljubljani, Slovenia;
- FH Burgenland, University of Applied Sciences, Austria;
- University of Sussex, United Kingdom;
- SRH Hochschule für Logistik und Wirtschaft, Germany;
- Faculty of Chemistry, Biotechnology and Food Science Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway;
- School of Biological Sciences, Institute of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom;
- Department of Food Science, Faculty of Science, University of Copenhagen, Denmark;
- Department of Food and Nutritional Science, University of Reading, United Kingdom;
- University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Business Administration, Germany;
- Tallinn University of Technology, Faculty of Information Technology, Estonia;
- Visoka škola za računovodstvo in financije, Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany;
- University of Sunderland, United Kingdom;
- Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Institute of Oceanography, Greece;
- Faculty of Science and Forestry, University of Eastern Finland, Finland;
- Department of Agroforest Ecosystems, University of Valencia, Spain;
- Technische Universität Dresden, Germany;
- Fakulteta za management, Univerza na Primorskem, Slovenia;
- University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, the Netherlands;
- Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences, Estonia;
- Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, Germany;
- Faculty of Engineering Science, University College London, United Kingdom;
- Haaga Helia University of Applied Science, Finland;
- Fachhochschule Technikum Wien, Austria;
- HAS University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands;
- Carinthia University of Applied Sciences Austria, Austria;
- Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania;
- Breda University, Breda, the Netherlands;
- Hochschule Aalen, Germany;
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain;
- Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland;
- School of Media, Film and Music, University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom;
- Fachhochschule fur Management & Kommunikation, Wien, Austria;
- Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal;
- Fachhochschule Münster, Germany;
- Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands;
- Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology Leipzig, University of Applied Sciences, Austria;
- University of Edinburgh, School of Informatics, United Kingdom;
- Maastricht University School of Business and Economics, the Netherlands;
- Aston Business School, United Kingdom.

Site visit in pictures

A site visit usually lasts from one to three days, or longer, if necessary. The site visit is carried out according to a predefined protocol.

The obligatory part of every site visit protocol are meetings with HEI management, representatives of teaching and non-teaching staff, students, representatives of employers and partner institutions, as well as a tour of the facilities (lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, IT classrooms, etc.).

A higher education institution is required to provide an expert panel with documents regulating their activities and examples of exams, seminar papers, final and graduation theses, doctoral theses, etc. A site visit ends with an exit meeting with the HEI management.



Expert panel training in the re-accreditation of the Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb



Expert panel members in a meeting with the management board of the Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb





Expert panel members analyse documents in the re-accreditation of the Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb



Expert panel attending classes and talking to students of the Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb



Expert panel members visit work facilities of the Faculty of Forestry, University of Zagreb



Expert panel members visit labs during the re-accreditation of the Faculty of Food Technology, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek





Expert panel visits facilities of the Faculty of Food Technology, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek



Comments from user satisfaction surveys

After the completion of the re-accreditation procedure, ASHE gathers feedback from higher education institutions and expert panel members with the aim of improving ASHE's work and procedure.

- The coordinator provided support the whole time and provided guidelines to make our job easier and done as best as possible.
- Everything was excellently prepared, coordinators were there for us all the time and they helped us by providing us with relevant information when we were not sure how to proceed. I am very satisfied.
- I am entirely satisfied with the procedure, and I think appointing an expert panel member from the industry was a smart move, as well as appointing a Croatian panel member who is familiar with the local legislation and regulations.
- Excellent communication during the planning, procedure and follow-up. Everything was well organized and planned. Support provided to expert panel members is impressive.
- The evaluation procedure is explained in detail.
- The documents are clear and understandable.
- Training provided to expert panel members was very useful for understanding the system and drafting the final report.
- $\bullet {\sf Excellent\, communication\, with\, the\, coordinators.}$

Educational activities of ASHE employees

Continuous professional training of ASHE employees is one of ASHE's strategic goals. Throughout 2019, ASHE employees participated in relevant international training programmes and visited foreign quality assurance agencies in the role of external experts.

"Implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)" - TAIEX mission

Within the framework of the Taiex mission "Implementation of European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area(ESG)", employees of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) visited, as external experts, the Agency for Control and Assurance of Quality in Higher Education (*Agencija za kontrolu i obezbjeđenje kvalitete visokog obrazovanja – AKOKVO*) in Montenegro, from 1 to 15 November 2019.

The first part of the mission was dedicated to the improvement of ordinances and subordinate regulations for the accreditation of study programmes and re-accreditation of higher education institutions; along with AKOKVO employees, representatives of the Montenegrin Ministry of Education were included in this part of the mission. The second part of the mission was dedicated to the work with representatives of higher education institutions with the aim of a detailed familiarisation with the first part of the ESG related to internal quality assurance. The third part of the mission was dedicated to the work with experts in evaluation procedures, professors, students and representatives of the business sector; the discussion centred on the selection procedure of experts and their obligations in the evaluation procedures.

As part of the Taiex mission, every part was supported by presentations and hands-on workshops that enabled participants to familiarise with the experience of their colleagues from the Croatian quality assurance agency.

Croatian institutions are encouraged to participate in TAIEX projects by the Law on Implementation of EU Institutional Co-operation Projects and Technical Assistance Projects (OG no. 99/18), i.e. to take maximum advantage from these projects and in that way also promote the interests of Croatian foreign policy.



Participation in ENQA Agency Review

An ASHE representative participated in the external evaluation of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency(KAA) as member of the Expert Panel appointed by ENQA. The purpose of the aforementioned evaluation is to verify the compliance of the Kosovo Agency's work with European standards – the ESG. The visit to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency took place on 19–20 March 2019. The Expert Panel's report as well as ENQA Board's decision are published on the following link: https://enqa.eu/index.php/reviews/review-reports-and-decisions/?keyword=KAA&submit=SEARCH.

Moreover, ASHE representative participated in the follow-up procedure of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's agency for quality assurance (Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance in science and higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina – HEA) as member of the Expert Panel appointed by ENQA. The aforementioned agency underwent an external evaluation procedure carried out by ENQA in 2017; the Expert Panel's report and ENQA Board's decision are published on the ENQA website. The purpose of the follow-up is to provide support to the agency in the procedure of quality improvement according to the recommendations resulting from the evaluation procedure. The Expert Panel's visit to the aforementioned Agency took place on 20 September 2019.

ASHE representative participates in seminar held in Latvia

Upon invitation from the Latvian agency for quality assurance in higher education (Quality Agency for Higher Education – Academic Information Centre), an ASHE representative participated in a seminar organised by the Latvian Agency and attended by representatives of Latvian higher education institutions. The seminar took place on 14 November 2019 in Riga, Latvia.

The purpose of the seminar was to familiarise Latvian higher education institutions with examples and experiences provided by European agencies that carry out institutional accreditation procedures. The model of institutional accreditation carried out by ASHE was recognized as an example of good practice and ASHE's presentation has drawn great interest. Apart from the Croatian Agency, the Estonian Agency also presented its experiences in carrying out institutional accreditation. The purpose of the seminar was to prepare Latvian higher education institutions for the new cycle of accreditation, according to the model of institutional accreditation, due to the fact that at the moment study programme accreditation is carried out in Latvia and the need for revision and improvement of the existing model of accreditation arose.

Participation in seminar in Slovenia

In an effort to strengthen cooperation between Croatian agency ASHE and Slovenian agency NAKVIS, an ASHE representative had an opportunity to present ASHE's work at a seminar organised by NAKVIS. The seminar took place on 12 November 2019 in Ljubljana, Slovenia and was attended by Slovenian experts for quality assurance in higher education. The presentation of ASHE's work generated considerable interest and it is particularly noteworthy that cooperation between the two agencies was encouraged, which will enable an exchange of information and examples of good practice, but also broader participation of Slovenian experts in processes of quality assurance in Croatia and vice versa.

Educational activities for ASHE employees within the framework of the SKAZVO project

• Employees of the Agency for Science and Higher Education participated in the 29th annual EURASHE conference "Future Students, Future Universities, Future Jobs - Professional Higher Education in the Changing World". The conference took place in Budapest on 16-17 May 2019. The main focus of the conference was on the ways to successfully adjust professional higher education to the new needs of the labour market; needs that are product of ever increasing changes brought about by digitalisation in the 21st century. The aim of the conference was to emphasize the importance of a faster and more efficient training of young people for the labour market. The advantage of professional studies compared to university studies lies within the possibility to provide students with more practical knowledge and to train them for the labour market in a short period of time, so that young people are able to begin their career as independently as possible.

- ASHE employees participated in a workshop organised by the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the Council of Portuguese Polytechnics. The workshop focused on different aspects of the short professional study programme (level 5 of the CroQF). Special emphasis was put on the mission, role and goals of the short professional study programme, its effects on the labour market, the needs of certain groups of students, quality assurance, recognition of qualifications pertaining to a short professional study programme in the field of higher education and on the pedagogical skills and teaching methods, with emphasis on practical aspects, experience-based learning and learning based on cooperation with the labour market. The Portuguese system of short professional study programmes was presented as well as their role and development. Short professional study programmes are of great importance for the country's development given their compliance with the needs of the labour market. Moreover, the aim is to facilitate access to higher education for a larger circle of interested parties (social dimension). International experts shared their vision of the status and role of short professional study programmes in the European Higher Education Area.
- Employees of the Agency for Science and Higher Education participated in a conference organised by the E4 Group European University Association (EUA), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and European Students' Union (ESU). The forum entitled "Supporting Societal Engagement of Higher Education" took place in Berlin from 21 to 23 November 2019, and it was hosted by Technische Universität Berlin. The discussion centred on the ways in which external and internal quality assurance processes can provide support to higher education institutions in developing their activities, which meet expectations and needs of all stakeholders, and present their value for society. The European forum for quality assurance in higher education is an annual conference that brings together students, representatives of higher education institutions and agencies specialising in quality assurance in higher education.

2020 Higher Education Institutions Re-accreditation Plan

In the following year, ASHE will continue with the second re-accreditation cycle in line with the Higher Education Institutions Reaccreditation Plan for 2020 adopted by the ASHE's Accreditation Council in June 2019. The plan includes the following higher education institutions:

- 1. Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb,
- 2. Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb,
- 3. Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb,
- 4. Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,
- 5. Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb,
- 6. Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Split,
- 7. Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka,
- 8. Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb,
- 9. Faculty of Law, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,
- 10. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb,
- 11. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,
- 12. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka,



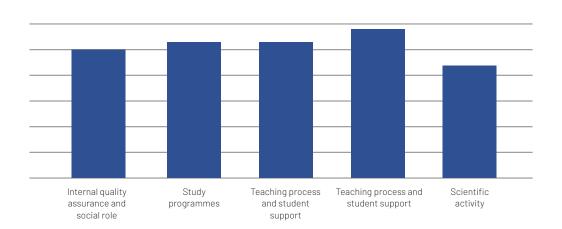
- 13. Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb,
- 14. Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Split,
- 15. Catholic Faculty of Theology in Djakovo, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,
- 16. University of Split University Department of Professional study programmes,
- 17. Faculty of Dental Medicine and Health, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,
- 18. Faculty of Health Studies, University of Rijeka,
- 19. Academy of Arts, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,
- 20. University of Zagreb Matija Vlačić Ilirik University Centre for Protestant Theology,
- 21. Polytechnic of Karlovac,
- 22. Polytechnic of Rijeka,
- $23.\,Edward\,Bernays\,College\,of\,Communication\,Management,$
- $24.\,European\,Business\,School\,Zagreb.$

Overview of assessment of implementation of quality standards and recommendations in the procedures of re-accreditation of higher education institutions in the technical field

In 2018, 16 higher education institutions underwent re-accreditation in the technical field of science while three higher education institutions underwent pilot re-accreditation in 2017. Based on the carried out procedures and final reports produced, below is a short overview of the implementation of quality standards and expert panel recommendations following the carried out procedures.

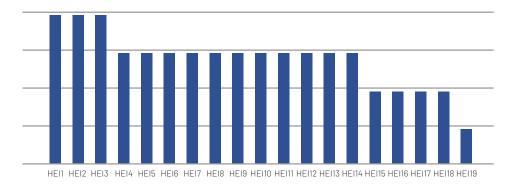
In the range of unsatisfactory level of quality to high level of quality, the total average quality grade for the technical field is a satisfactory level of quality. Thereof, the areas Internal quality assurance and social role, Study programmes, and Teaching process and student support, Teaching and institutional capacities were assessed with a satisfactory level of quality, while the area Scientific activity received the lowest relative grade.

Chart 1: Overview of the degree of implementation of quality standards from unsatisfactory level of quality to high level of quality



Within the standard Internal quality assurance and the social role the lowest degree of implementation is given for the indicator Functional internal quality assurance system and the highest grade to the indicator Understanding and encouraging the development of the social role of the higher education institution.

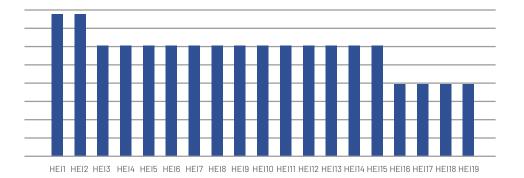
Chart 2: Distribution of the degree of implementation of quality standard for Internal quality assurance and social role of the higher education institution by higher education institutions



HEI-Higher Education Instituition

Within the area Study programmes, the lowest grade was given to the indicator Internship as an integral part of the study programmes, and the highest grade was given to the indicator Compliance of the general objectives of all study programmes with the mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution and social needs, both within the group assessed with a satisfactory quality level.

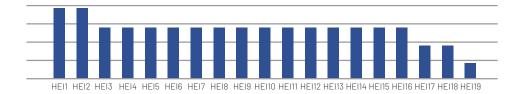
Chart 3: Distribution of the degree of implementation of quality standard for Quality of study programmes by higher education institutions





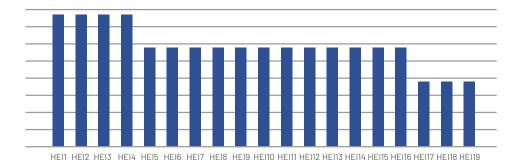
Within the area Teaching processes and student support, the indicator Collecting and analyzing data on student progress and ensuring continuity of study and completion of students is within the range of a satisfactory quality level, while the best graded indicator is Guarantee of issuing of Diploma Supplements and relevant qualification information which is within the grade high level of quality.

Chart 4: Distribution of the degree of implementation of quality standards for Teaching processes and student support at higher education institutions



Within the area Teaching and institutional capacities, the lowest graded indicators are Ensuring adequate teaching capacities and Supporting teachers in their professional development, while the best graded indicator is Objective and transparent process of teacher recruitment based on excellence, all three within a satisfactory quality level.

Chart 5: Distribution of the degree of implementation of quality standards for Teaching and institutional capacities at higher education institutions



Within the area Scientific activity, the lowest grade was given to the indicator of Teachers' commitment to achieving high quality and quantity of scientific research within a satisfactory level of quality, and the best grade was given to the indicator Proving the social relevance of scientific, professional and artistic research and knowledge transfer within the same standard.



Chart 6: Distribution of the average grade for Scientific activity at higher education institutions

In general, in the whole area, on average, only two indicators approach high quality grades; Understanding and encouraging the development of the social role of the higher education institution and the Guarantee of issuing Diploma Supplements and relevant qualification information; the lowest grade in the assessment area was given to the indicator Teachers' commitment to achieving high quality and quantity of scientific research was evaluated.

If recommendations from expert panel members in the procedures of re-accreditation in the technical field are analysed, several general recommendations can be made which occur in more than 50 per cent cases out of 19 higher education institutions.

In the first assessment area Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution the most frequently stressed need in the recommendations is for the formalization or strengthening of the procedures of detecting plagiarism at all levels (seminar papers, essays, written exams, final theses) and the creation of strict protocols of solving of potential plagiarism cases. Special emphasis is placed on the need to procure and apply software tools for detecting plagiarism. The need for improving quality assurance processes at higher education institution was particularly emphasized. The recommendation is to continue implementing the recommendations passed in the previous re-accreditation procedures and revising the quality assurance procedures based on the analyses of their previous effectiveness.

The second assessment area Study programmes has resulted in an interesting recommendation on the need to involve external stakeholders (industry representatives, alumni, etc.) in the activities related to the modernization of existing study programmes and designing new ones. Equally important is the recommendation to reconcile the learning outcomes, grades and ECTS credits allocation.

The teaching process and student support were the third assessment area in which the recommendation for reducing the likelihood of dropout has proven to be the most important one, by adopting appropriate measures and regularly reviewing their effectiveness. Almost in every procedure, expert panel members stressed the need to introduce teaching and writing of papers in English, both for foreign and Croatian students. The recommendation for the formalization of support provided by higher education institutions in the outgoing student mobility as well as reconciliation of enrolment quotas with the needs of the labour market is also important.

Monitoring teacher development along with the formal monitoring of existing Croatian and foreign workshops for professional development and providing support for attendance of the workshops, and the development of individual progression plans of all teachers has proven to be an important recommendation in the fourth assessment area Teaching and institutional capacities. The recommendation to reduce the number of norm hours with an emphasis on a more even distribution of teaching workload for all teachers is also frequently issued.



In the last, fifth assessment area, Scientific activities, members of expert panels in almost all cases recommend putting in more effort into support to teachers to publish papers in important international publications, rather than in Croatian and regional journals. Accordingly, they propose the introduction of a system of monitoring of scientific activity and adequate rewarding. They also stress the need for increasing the support by the HEI management boards to encouraging outgoing research mobility and to strengthen all types of support to teachers in the application to international projects.

RE-ACCREDITATION OF POSTGRADUATE UNIVERSITY (DOCTORAL) STUDY PROGRAMMES

The re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes was encouraged by the findings of previous evaluation procedures conducted by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), including the thematic evaluation conducted in 2013 and 2014. The goal of the re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes is to ensure that the higher education qualifications that award the academic title "doctor of science" reflect study programmes of high quality, which are internationally comparable and recognized in Europe. The re-accreditation will make sure that all the doctoral study programmes in Croatia meet the minimum quality requirements and it will encourage higher education institutions delivering doctoral study programmes to continually work towards their improvement.

In 2019, ASHE continued carrying out the re-accreditation of postgraduate (doctoral) university study programmes which were postponed during the last three years, following a request provided by the university and/or university constituent and approval from the Accreditation Council.

The said Plan involved the re-accreditation of 25 doctoral study programmes at 14 HEIs, with 70 expert panel members taking part in the procedures. They mostly come from renowned international and European institutions.

In 2019, the Accreditation Council of the Agency issued 15 accreditation recommendations for the procedures of re-accreditation of doctoral studies, thereof four for the procedures carried out in 2018 and 11 for the procedures carried out in 2019. All evaluation procedures of doctoral studies started in 2018 were completed after the Ministry of Science and Education issued the decisions based on accreditation recommendations.

Based on the carried out re-accreditation, issuing of a licence on compliance with conditions for carrying out part of activities was recommended for five study programmes, while the letter of expectation was recommended for 10 study programmes, with the deadline for removing deficiencies. All final reports produced by expert panels and accreditation recommendations were published on the ASHE website.

Postgraduate university study programmes evaluations carried out in 2019

In 2019 ASHE re-accredited 25 university postgraduate (doctoral) study programmes. Mostly foreign expert panel members participated in the evaluation procedures.

Table 1: Postgraduate university study programmes evaluated in 2019

No.	Study programme name	Provider and issuing institution		
Social Sciences Cluster				
1.	Culture Studies	Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek		
2.	European Studies	Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek		
3.	Law	Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Law		
4.	International Relations	University of Zadar and Libertas International University		
5.	Communication Studies	Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek		
Educational Sciences Cluster				
6.	New paradigms of education	Juraj Dobrila University of Pula		
7.	Quality in upbringing and education	University of Zadar		
8.	Lifelong learning and education science	Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb		
9.	Education Research in Natural and Technical Sciences	University of Split, Faculty of Science		
	Humanities, Social Scie	nces and Interdisciplinary Sciences Cluster		
10.	Doctoral studies in literature, performing arts, musicology, film and cultural studies	University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences		
11.	Croatian philology in an intercultural environment	University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences		
12.	Pre-modern history	University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences		
13.	Modern and contemporary Croatian history in the European and world context	University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences		
14.	Sociology	University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences		
15.	Sociology of regional and local development (joint study)	University of Zadar and University of Teramo		



No.	Study programme name	Provider and issuing institution			
	Religious Sciences and Philosophy Cluster				
16.	Licentiate and Doctoral Study of Theology	y of Theology University of Zagreb, Catholic Faculty of Theology			
17.	Philosophy	University of Zagreb, University Department of Croatian Studies			
Educational and Rehabilitation Sciences Cluster					
18.	Disorders of language, speech and hearing	Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb			
Natural Sciences and Interdisciplinary Sciences Cluster					
19.	Physics	University of Zagreb, Faculty of Science			
20.	Doctoral study of geography: space, religion, environment and landscape	University of Zagreb, Faculty of Science			
21.	Physics	Department of Physics, University of Rijeka			
	Те	chnical Sciences Cluster			
22.	Computer science	Faculty of Engineering, University of Rijeka			
	Ecc	onomics Sciences Cluster			
23.	International Economic Relations and Management (joint study)	University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula, Szenchenyi Istvan Universiy/University of West Hungary, Sopron, University of Economics in Bratislava, Burgenland College and University North			
24.	Economy and global security	Faculty of Economics, University of Zagreb			
Communication Sciences Cluster					
25.	Media and communication	University North			

List of expert panel members in the re-accreditation of post-graduate university study programmes in 2019

Social Sciences Cluster

1. Prof. Ciarán Burke, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany,

2. Prof. Peter W. Zuidhof, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands,

3. Prof. Dibyesh Anand, University of Westminster, United Kingdom,

4. Prof. Igor Štiks, University of Edinburgh, Faculty for Media and Communication, United Kingdom,

5. Dr. Daniela Angelina Jelinčić, Institute for Development and International Relations, Croatia,

- 6. Dr. Teresa Murjas, Reading University, United Kingdom,
- 7. Doc. dr. Dejan Jontes, Fakulteta za družbene vede Sveučilišta u Ljubljani, Slovenia,
- 8. Dr. Monika Metykova, School of Media, Film and Music, University of Sussex, United Kingdom,
- 9. Prof. Robert Wallace Vaagan, Faculty of Social Sciences, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway,
- 10. Matteo Tracchi, doctoral candidate, Human Rights Centre of the University of Padua, Italy,
- 11. Katja Simončič, doctoral candidate, Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- 12. Marko Radenović, doctoral candidate, Princeton University and McKinsey & Company, Croatia.

Educational Sciences Cluster

1. Prof. Lianghuo Fan, Head of Mathematics, Science and Health Education Research Centre, University of Southampton, United Kingdom,

- 2. Prof. Carlinda Leite, Centre for Research and Intervention in Education, University of Porto, Portugal,
- 3. Prof. Neven Ricijaš, Head of Centre for Lifelong Learning, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia,
- 4. Prof. Nihad Bunar, deputy chair of Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden,
- 5. Prof. Reinhold Stipsits, Universität Wien, Austria,
- 6. Prof. Maria Assumpta Aneas Alvarez, Faculty of Education, University of Barcelona, Spain,
- 7. Prof. Matthew John Schuelka, School of Education, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom,
- 8. Prof. Rachel Katherine Shanks, School of Education, University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom,
- 9. Prof. Lasse Lipponen, University of Helsinki, Finland.

Humanities, Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Sciences Cluster

- 1. Prof. Alan O'Leary, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, United Kingdom,
- 2. Prof. Tim Woods, Department of English and Creative Writing, University of Aberystwyth, United Kingdom,
- 3. Prof. Claudia Tiersch, Philosophische Fakultät, Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Germany,
- 4. Prof. Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom,
- 5. Prof. Bojan Aleksov, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, United Kingdom,
- 6. Prof. Kurt Villads Jensen, Stockholms Universitet, Sweden,
- 7. Prof. Emmerich Kelih, Department of Slavonic Studies, Universität Wien, Austria,
- 8. Prof. Barbara Sonnenhauser, Universität Zürich, Switzerland,
- 9. Prof. James Wickham, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland,
- 10. Prof. Gergely László Rosta, Institut für Soziologie, Universität Münster, Germany,
- 11. Prof. Václav Štětka, Loughborough University, United Kingdom,
- 12. leva Bloma, doctoral candidate, European University Institute, Italy,
- 13. Nika Đuho, doctoral candidate, Croatian Catholic University, Croatia,
- 14. Iuliana Soficaru, doctoral candidate, Central European University, Hungary,
- 15. Dajana Vasiljevičova, doctoral candidate, Department of South Slavonic and Balkan Studies, Charles University, Czech Republic.

Religious Sciences and Philosophy Cluster

- a.i.1. Prof. Harm Goris, Tilburg University, The Netherlands,
- a.i.2. Prof. Andrius Narbekovas, Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, Lithuania,
- a.i.3. Prof. Irmtraud Fischer, Katolisch-Theologischen Fakultät der Universität Graz, Austria,
- a.i.4. Prof. Rupert Klieber, Universität Wien, Austria,



- a.i.5. Dries Bosschaert, postdoc., Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium,
- a.i.6. Prof. Marina Gržinić Mauhler, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia,
- a.i.7. Prof. Panos Dimas, University of Oslo, Norway,
- a.i.8. Daniel Dragicevic, doctoral candidate, Hamburg Universität, Germany.

Educational and Rehabilitation Sciences Cluster

- 1. Prof. Kateřina Vitásková, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Czech Republic,
- 2. Prof. Katrina Skoruppa, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland,
- 3. Prof. Gary Morgan, City University London, United Kingdom,
- 4. Prof. Kristina Hansson, Lund University, Sweden,
- 5. Nuno Miguel Ribeiro Paulino, doctoral candidate, University of Lisbon, Portugal.

Natural Sciences and Interdisciplinary Sciences Cluster

- 1. Prof. Frank Witlox, University of Ghent, Belgium,
- 2. Prof. Thomas Niedomysl, Lund University, Sweden,
- 3. Rowan Jaines, doctoral candidate, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom,
- 4. Prof. Jorge Colomer Feliu, University of Girona, Spain,
- 5. Prof. John Doran, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland,
- 6. Kateryna Lemishko, doctoral candidate, Autonomus University of Madrid, Spain.

Technical Sciences Cluster

- 1. Prof. Bart Lamiroy, Université de Lorraine, France,
- 2. Prof. Jens Grabowski, Institute of Computer Science, University of Göttingen, Germany,
- 3. Prof. Michail Giannakos, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway,
- 4. Prof. Simon Gay, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom,
- 5. Imran Khan, doctoral candidate, Insight Centre for Data Analysis, University College Cork, Ireland.

Economics Sciences Cluster

- 1. Prof. James Davis, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland,
- 2. Prof. Jarolim Antal, University of Economics, Prague, Czech Republic,
- 3. Prof. Rowena Pecchenino, Maynooth University, Ireland,
- 4. Prof. Othon Anastasakis, Oxford University, United Kingdom,
- 5. Kanad Bagchi, docotoral candidate, Max Planck Institute, Germany.

Communication Sciences Cluster

- 1. Asst. prof. dr. Dejan Jontes, Fakulteta za družbene vede, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- 2. Dr. Monika Metykova, University of Sussex, United Kingdom,
- 3. Prof. Robert Wallace Vaagan, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway,
- 4. Prof. Sofia Gaio, University Fernando Pessoa, Portugal,
- 5. Laura Marciano, doctoral candidate, Universita Della Svizzera Italiana, Switzerland.

FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES IN RE-ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

The Follow-up Committee is an advisory body of the ASHE Accreditation Council appointed in order to provide expert assistance to the Accreditation Council on all follow-up questions in the case when a higher education institution or a scientific organization is issued a certificate of meeting all the conditions for conducting higher education and/or scientific activities or part of activities following the re-accreditation process. The Committee provides expert assistance to the Accreditation Council on all matters in the follow-up procedure and other external evaluation processes.

In 2019, the Follow-up Committee issued 36 opinions in the follow-up procedures.

INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Initial accreditation of study programmes

In 2019, the Agency conducted initial accreditation of study programmes under Article 20 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (OG 45/09) and Articles 15 and 16 of the Ordinance on the Content of License and Conditions for Issuance of Licenses for Performing Activities in Higher Education, the Implementation of the Study Programmes and the Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/2010).

The procedure includes checking compliance of study programmes with the strategic document the Network of Higher Education Institutions, the examination of received documents, visits of expert panels to higher education institutions, administrative and professional support provided during site visits, drafting of the final report and making accreditation recommendations.

In the past year ASHE received five requests for initiating the procedure of initial accreditation of new study programmes from polytechnics, colleges and private universities.

Based on the initial accreditation procedures carried out in 2019, the Minister of Science and Education received a recommendation to issue licences for three study programmes:

- Two undergraduate university study programmes;
- One specialist professional graduate study programme.

Two applications for launching new study programmes could not undergo evaluation because the HEIs that submitted the request were undergoing re-accreditation procedure.

The reason why the number of received requests for launching new study programmes was so small was because most polytechnics and colleges in Croatia underwent re-accreditation.

In 2019 ASHE worked towards the improvement of initial accreditation procedure and developed new standards for the evaluation of the study programme quality as well as the tables for entering data into MOZVAG. Standards are aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area revised in 2015 (ESG), the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 49/10) and with the proposed concept of the Croatian Qualifications Framework. ASHE also developed the Procedure for initial accreditation and the expert panel final report template in the initial accreditation procedure.



Initial accreditation for performing higher education activities

In line with Article 19 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09) and the Ordinance on the Content of a Licence and Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (OG 24/2010), ASHE performs initial accreditation for performing higher education activities. In 2019, ASHE received two applications for launching the initial accreditation for performing higher education activities. While one higher education institution withdrew their application, the other HEI was undergoing re-accreditation so the request was not put in motion.

Initial accreditation for carrying out scientific activity

ASHE carries out the procedure of initial accreditation for carrying out scientific activity, that is, establishing a scientific organisation or entering an existing scientific organisation in the Register of Scientific Organisations in a new scientific area.

Initial accreditation for carrying out scientific activity includes the following stages: examining the submitted documentation, a site visit of the expert panel, writing the final report and issuing the accreditation recommendation. In 2019, five applications for initial accreditation of scientific activity were received and resolved.

JUSTIFIABILITY OF PUBLIC FUNDING OF NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES

Public university study programmes are launched and delivered based on a university senate decision following a prior assessment of the unit for internal quality assurance and improvement system.

In accordance with the provision of Article 20, paragraph 10 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (OG 45/09), the Agency provides its opinion on the justification for financing of study programmes for which public universities require additional funds from the State Budget. Other study programmes of public universities which do not request additional funds from the State Budget are solved by the Ministry. The Ministry decides on entering them into the Register of Study Programmes and provides the Agency with the Decision to enter the study programme in the Register.

ASHE issued two positive opinions on the justifiability of public funding in 2019.

In 2019, the Ministry of Science and Education submitted to the Agency 47 opinions on registering public university study programmes into the Register of Study Programmes based on their evaluation.

EVALUATION OF ONLINE STUDY PROGRAMMES

In accordance with provision of Article 79 Paragraph 4 of the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, a study programme can be organized via distance learning system (online study programme), which is approved by the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development. In 2019 ASHE received one request for the launching of an online study programme for which a licence was issued.

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The 2019 Annual plan of audits was adopted by the Agency's Accreditation Council at its 100th session held on 20 November 2018.

The Plan included the following institutions:

- 1. Dag Hammarskjöld College of International Relations and Diplomacy,
- 2. Edward Bernays College of Communication Management,
- 3. Business College PAR,
- 4. Polytechnic of Rijeka.

On 11 December 2018, ASHE organised a workshop for the representatives of these institutions; the participants assessed the quality of the workshop with an average grade of 4.8/5.

All the site-visits were carried out within the agreed dates, except for the Dag Hammarskjöld College of International Relations and Diplomacy that asked for a suspension of the procedure due to merger with Libertas University, which was granted.

Site visits to higher education institutions included in the Annual plan of audits were carried out in November and December of 2019. (Edward Bernays College of Communication Management: 26-27 November; Business College PAR and Polytechnic of Rijeka: 3-4 December).

The final reports are due at the beginning of 2020.

CROQANET

During 2019, ASHE organised the 6th meeting of the CroQAnet (network of QA units at HEIs), a national platform for the exchange of knowledge and good practices in the area of higher education quality assurance, established by ASHE. Hosted by the University of Zadar, the meeting was held on May 31, 2019 at the University Rectorate, with the participation of 50 representatives of Croatian HEIs. The main topic was the professional development of teaching staff, with a short overview of the institutional support to the development of non-teaching staff.

The participants were presented with information on the European national initiatives related to learning and teaching, as well as on the results of the conducted study on the existing forms of institutional support to the professional development of teaching and non-teaching staff at Croatian HEIs.

An overview of the current situation regarding teacher development also included presentations by representatives of the universities in Zadar, Rijeka, Zagreb, Split, Osijek and Dubrovnik.



Meeting of CroQAnet network, 31 May 2019, Zadar



During the workshop part of the meeting, participants compared institutional practices related to learning and teaching, after which the host, University of Zadar, provided a brief overview of the institutional quality assurance of non-teaching staff, including the results of the satisfaction survey of University's administrative and technical staff.

Analysis of internal quality assurance systems at Croatian HEIs

In the first half of 2019, ASHE collected information on the internal quality assurance systems of Croatian higher education institutions, particularly focusing on whether the institutions have basic QA documentation (regulations and manual), and whether they conduct internal audits.

Obtained information is presented in the charts below.

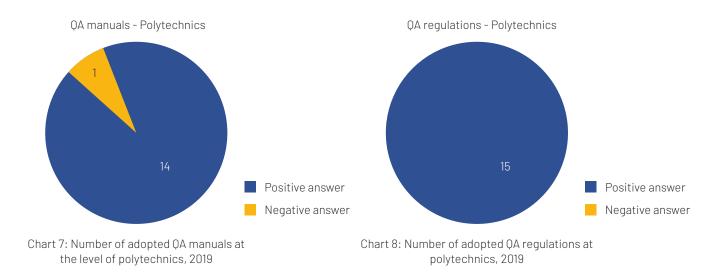
Table 2: Basic indicators of QAS at Croatian universities

Name of the University	Full title of QA regulations document	Full title of QA manual	Internal audit carried out	Audit report
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance System at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek	Quality Assurance Manual	YES	YES
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula	University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula Quality Manual	YES	YES
University North	Regulations on Quality Assurance System	Quality Assurance Manual	YES	YES
University of Dubrovnik	Regulations on System of Quality Assurance and Improvement at the University of Dubrovnik	Quality Assurance Manual	YES	YES
University of Rijeka	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Rijeka	University of Rijeka - Manual for Quality Studying	YES	YES
University of Split	Regulations on the Quality Assurance System at the University of Split	Quality Assurance Handbook of the University of Split	YES	YES
University of Zadar	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Zadar	Manual of Quality at the University of Zadar	YES	YES

	Naziv sveučilišta	Puni naziv pravilnika	Puni naziv priručnika	Provedena unutarnja prosudba	lzvješće o unutarnjoj prosudbi
	University of Zagreb	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance System at the University of Zagreb	University of Zagreb Quality Assurance Manual	YES	YES
	Croatian Catholic University	Regulations on Quality Assurance System	Quality Assurance System Manual	NO	NO
	DIU Libertas International University	Ordinance on quality assurance and improvement	Quality Assurance Manual	YES	YES

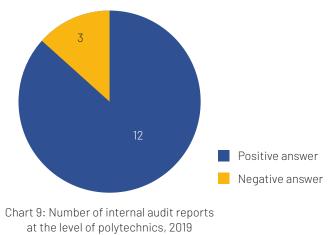
BASIC INDICATORS OF QAS AT POLYTECHNICS

In 2019, 15 polytechnics participated in ASHE survey of institutional quality assurance systems. Obtained data is presented in the charts below:



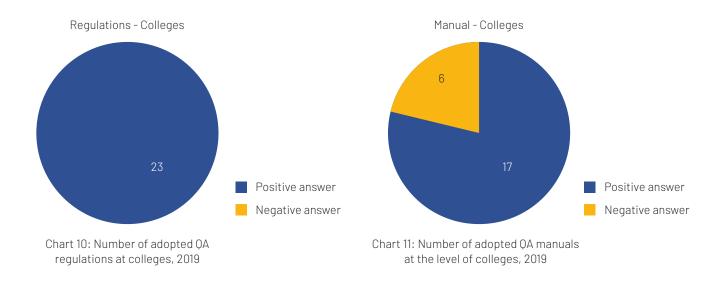


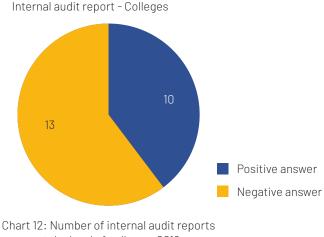
Internal audit reports - Polytechnics



BASIC INDICATORS OF QAS AT COLLEGES

In 2019, 23 colleges participated in ASHE survey of institutional quality assurance systems. Obtained data is presented in the charts below:





at the level of colleges, 2019

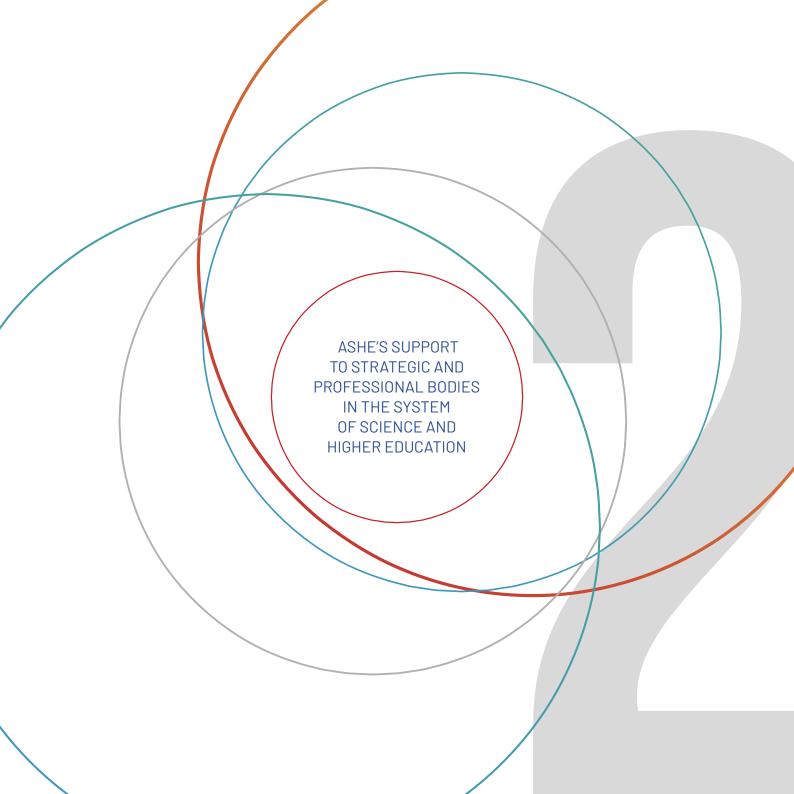
DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL FOR COMPARISON OF ACADEMIC QUALITY

The Agency for Science and Higher Education published the brochure Academic Rankings for the purpose of informing the public as a preparation for further work on the development of academic quality benchmarking mechanisms coordinated by ASHE.

The primary focus of the activities of the working group for the development of mechanisms for the comparison of academic quality is on the development of a national ranking model in the Republic of Croatia. Multifactor ranking model was used as a starting model so the proposed ranking would be aligned with the needs of the users and the Berlin Principles (standards for the evaluation of ranking quality). The working group will also develop in more detail the model of classification of higher education institutions by indicators distributed according to three university missions - teaching, research and the social role.

Indicators (analysis of frequency, usability and fitness-for-purpose) have been prepared by analysing existing quantitative data in the national higher education and science system in order to show the teaching quality (teaching component). However, due to the insufficient quality of existing data, elements for further analysis of indicators are collected through the questionnaires sent to higher education institutions. In further work, the working group will focus on the preparation of the indicators for the other two components – research and social role. Cooperation with Crosbi and Croris representatives is planned for that activity for the purpose of development of research component indicators.





One of ASHE's tasks is to lend administrative and professional support to the activities of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development, the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, scientific field committees, scientific area councils and field committees. All this represents an added value as it enables collecting and linking information and data related to the improvement of the quality of higher education and science in Croatia.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE, HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2019, the Agency continued to ensure the successful work of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development (NCSHETD), the most prominent professional body concerned with the development and quality of scientific activity and the system of science, higher education and technological development in the Republic of Croatia.

Four Council sessions were held in 2019. ASHE provided administrative and professional support to the work of the Council by preparing the necessary materials and information necessary for Council sessions, as well as drafting minutes, proposals, comments, decisions and conclusions.

Every two years the Croatian Parliament appoints half of the members based on the proposal of the Committee for Education, Science and Culture, while president of the Council is appointed every four years. The term of the president and half of the members of the Council expired on 1 April 2018 and the Croatian Parliament appointed Prof. dr. Mirjana Polić Bobić president of the Council and nine members of the Council on 12 July 2019.

SCIENTIFIC AREA COUNCILS AND COUNCIL FOR ARTS

Scientific area councils are responsible for the matters within the competence of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development, in relation to scientific and artistic areas. Of the three sessions of the scientific area councils held in 2019, one session was held by the Scientific Area Council for Humanities, one by the Scientific Area Council for Technical Sciences, and one by the Scientific Area Council for Biomedicine and Health.

SCIENTIFIC FIELD COMMITTEES

Last year, the Office for Appointments into Scientific, Artistic and Teaching Grades continued with one of its tasks related to the support to the work of 22 scientific field committees that participate in the appointments into scientific grades, the scientific field committee in the assessment of the artistic component of artistic and teaching grade and in carrying out the process for determining criteria for scientific/artistic excellence in the selection process for the conclusion of employment contracts for employees over the age of 65.

During 2019 a total of 106 sessions were held, with a total of 1682 decisions passed, of which 1636 were positive and 46 were negative.

Based on the processed data, a conclusion arose that the largest number of decisions on the appointment into scientific grades was passed by



the Scientific Field Committee for the Biomedicine and Health - fields of fundamental medical sciences, clinical medical sciences, public health and health protection, dentistry and pharmacy, followed by the Scientific Field Committee for Biotechnical Sciences - agricultural sciences, forestry, wood technology, biotechnology, food technology and nutrition, and the Scientific Field Committee for Social Sciences - field of economics.

The number of appointments to scientific grades upon individual request or a request of the scientific institution in 2019 was 1325, while those implemented on the basis of a public call amounted to 357.

According to the data on the appointment procedures performed in 2019, there was total of 579 appointments of scientific associates, 463 senior scientific associates, 321 scientific advisers and 210 scientific advisers with tenure.

The Scientific Field Committee for Arts - the fields of dramatic arts (theatre and media), film arts (film, electronic and media art of motion pictures), music art, visual art, applied arts, dance art and art of movement confirmed appointment to scientific and artistic teaching grades for 28 assistant professors, 21 associate professors, 12 full professors and 2 full professors with tenure.

Within the procedure of determining criteria for scientific/artistic excellence in the selection procedure for the conclusion of employment contracts for employees over the age of 65, scientific field committees in 2019 issued 26 positive decisions (of which 6 in the field of arts) and one negative decision on meeting the criteria for scientific excellence.

Table 3: Procedures held and results in the scientific field committees in 2019

				Positive	decisio	ns	Negative decisions						
Scientific field committee	No. of sess. held	Excellence criteria	Research associate	Senior research associate	Research advisor	Research advisor with tenure	Research associate	Senior research associate	Research advisor	Research advisor with tenure	Total positive	Total negative	Total
Biology SFC	4	1 neg.	11	10	10	13	2	0	1	0	44	3	47
Physics(+Geophysics)SFC	5	1	24	13	8	1	0	0	0	0	46	0	46
Geology (+ interdisciplinary natural sciences) SFC	4	0	7	7	5	5	0	0	1	0	24	1	25
Chemistry SFC	4	0	15	16	7	2	0	1	0	0	40	1	41
Mathematics SFC	4	0	12	7	9	2	0	0	0	0	30	0	30
Architecture and Urban Planning, Geodesy and Civil Engineering SFC	4	2	19	21	5	4	0	0	0	1	49	1	50
Electrical Engineering and Computing SFC	4	0	31	22	12	10	0	0	0	0	75	0	75

			Positive decisions Negative decisions			ns							
Scientific field committee	No. of sess. held	Excellence criteria	Research associate	Senior research associate	Research advisor	Research advisor with tenure	Research associate	Senior research associate	Research advisor	Research advisor with tenure	Total positive	Total negative	Total
Mining, geology and petroleum engineering, Metallurgy, Textile technology and Printing technology SFC	4	1	7	16	13	6	0	0	0	0	42	0	42
Mechanical Engineering, Naval Architecture, Traffic and transportation engineering, Aviation, rocket and space technology SFC	5	1	39	29	12	16	1	1	2	0	96	4	100
Basic medical sciences, Clinical medicine, Public health and health care, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy SFC	8	5	146	85	66	44	2	1	1	0	341	4	345
Veterinary Medicine SFC	3	0	5	4	6	10	0	0	0	0	25	0	25
Forestry, Wood Technology, Biotechnology, Food Technology and Nutrition SFC	5	0	36	52	27	34	0	0	0	0	149	0	149
Economics SFC	6	1	45	52	24	12	0	1	0	0	133	1	134
Information and Commu- nication Sciences SFC	3	0	16	5	7	2	3	0	0	0	30	3	33
Pedagogy, Educational and Rehabilitation Sciences, Logopedics and Kinesiology SFC	6	0	19	16	10	1	1	1	1	1	46	4	50
Political Science, Sociology Demography, Social Work and Security and Defence SFC	4	0	14	12	9	4	2	0	0	0	39	2	41
Law SFC	4	0	11	11	12	7	1	1	0	0	41	2	43
Psychology SFC	4	0	8	6	7	3	1	0	0	0	24	1	25

				Positive	decisior	าร	Negative decisions			ns				
Scientific field committee	No. of sess. held	Excellence criteria	Research associate	Senior research associate	Research advisor	Research advisor with tenure	Research associate	Senior research associate	Research advisor	Research advisor with tenure	Total positive	Total negative	Total	
Philosophy and Theology SF	C 4	3	12	13	7	4	0	0	0	0	36	0	36	
Philology SFC	6	3	40	36	28	17	1	1	1	0	121	3	124	
History, Art History, Art Science, Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology SFC	4	3	31	17	22	11	2	3	0	0	81	5	86	
Interdisciplinary Field SFC	5	0	31	13	15	2	1	0	0	0	61	1	62	
TOTAL	100	20+1 neg.	579	463	321	210	17	10	7	2	1573	36	1609	

Table 4: Number of conducted procedures and results adopted by scientific field committees in 2019 for artistic teaching grades

	Pozitive decisions							Negative decisions					Total		
Scientific field committee	No. of sessions	Excellence criteria	Assistant professor	Associate professor	Full professor	Full professor with tenure	Assistant professor	Associate professor	Full professor	Full professor with tenure	Total positive	Total negative	Total		
SFC Art Field	5	6	28	21	12	2	8	1	1	0	63	10	73		

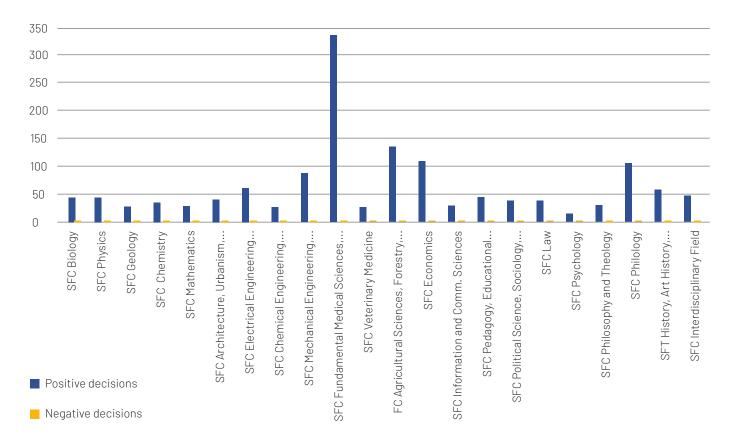


Chart 13: Total number of decisions made by scientific field committees in the appointment to scientific grades in 2019



COUNCIL OF POLYTECHNICS AND COLLEGES

The Council of Polytechnics and Colleges is a body in charge of deciding on the issues of common interest for the activities and development of polytechnics and colleges. Its members are deans of all polytechnics and colleges in Croatia. A representative of the Rectors' Conference, participates in the work of the Council without voting rights. The Council of Polytechnics and Colleges has 36 members, of which 18 are polytechnics and 18 are colleges. From the total number of members, 15 institutions are public and 21 are private.

ASHE organised seven sessions of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges in 2019. At the sessions, special emphasis was on topics related to amendments of the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, new Collective Agreement for Science and Higher Education and amendments to the Rules of procedure of the Council and adoption of the new Ordinance on the Organisation and Functioning of the Field Committees and Administering the Procedure of Election.

In November 2019, doc. dr. sc. Damir Jugo, dean of Edward Bernays College of Communication Management, was appointed president of the Council for a four-year term because the term of the previous president expired. As the term of previous members of Council also expired, the procedure of election of members of all field committees started at the end of the year.

At the end of the year, the Council adopted a decision on a new logo and on launching a separate web page which is in the development stage.

Representatives of the Council actively participate in the work of a number of committees and working groups established for the purpose of drafting regulations and working on the overall development of higher education system.

FIELD COMMITTEES

Field committees of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges held 30 sessions in 2019, passing a total of 369 positive decisions on the fulfilment of criteria for the appointment to teaching grades.

In this period, the Field Committee for Social Sciences passed the highest number of positive decisions (164). It is followed by the Field Committee for Technical Sciences which passed 67 positive decisions and by the Field Committee for Biomedicine and Health which passed 59 positive decisions.

The highest number of positive decisions in the procedures of appointment to teaching grades was passed in the field of economics (79 positive decisions passed), followed by the field of clinical medical sciences (52 positive decisions) and the field of information and communication sciences (30 positive decisions).

The teaching grade that resulted in the highest number of positive decisions in all scientific fields is the teaching grade for lecturers, which in 2019 resulted in 208 positive decisions, and the lowest number of positive decisions was passed for the teaching grade of tenured college professor - 29 positive decisions.

During 2019, four sessions of the Committee for Coordinating the Work of Field Committees were held and in addition to providing interpretation in the procedures of appointment to teaching grades by the members of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, a positive decision was issued in the procedure of appointment to teaching grade in the interdisciplinary field of science (geography).

The data does not include the number of amendments and negative opinions passed at the sessions.

Field Committee	Social Sciences	Technical Sciences	Humanities	Natural Sciences	Biotechnical sciences	Biomedicine and health	Arts	Total
Number of sessions	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	30
Number of opinions	164	67	27	19	21	59	12	369
Tenured college professors	12	4	3	1	3	6	0	29
College professors	28	4	2	1	4	3	0	42
Senior lecturers	36	13	4	6	11	17	3	90
Lecturers	88	46	18	11	3	33	9	208

Table 5: Number of positive opinions in the procedures of appointment to teaching grades for field committees in 2019*

* The data do not include the number of amendments and negative opinions passed at the sessions.



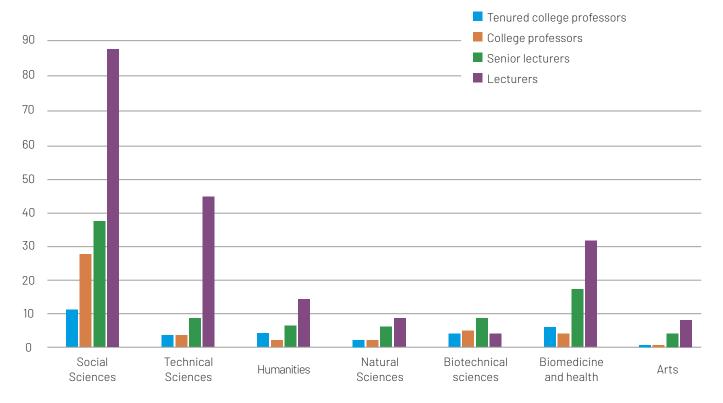
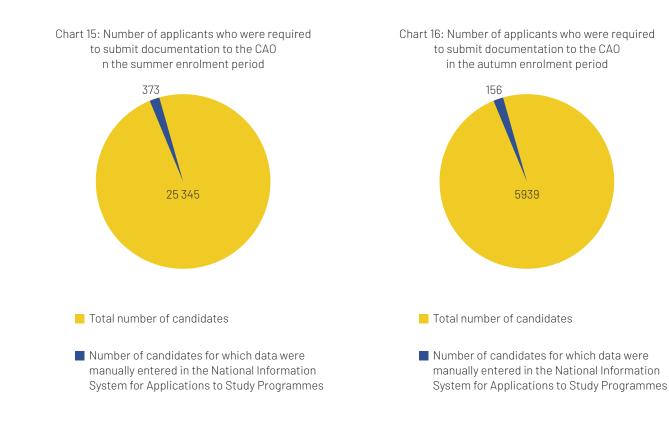


Chart 14: Number of positive opinions in the procedures of appointment to teaching grades for field committees in 2019



APPLICATIONS TO UNDERGRADUATE AND INTEGRATED UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

Applications for undergraduate and integrated undergraduate and graduate study programmes in the summer enrolment term began on 1 February and lasted until 15 July 2019, when the final ranking lists for study programmes were published. Out of a total number of 33.267 candidates, at the moment when ranking lists for the summer enrolment period were made public, a total of 25.345 candidates had applied to study programmes, of which 24.043 secured their right to enrol. The Central Applications Office (CAO) received and processed documents from 255 candidates, of whom 118 completed their secondary education outside of Croatia. Processing included filing of documents, making sure that documentation is valid and complete, and a thorough check and verification of candidates' personal data and grades entered into the system. In the autumn application period, which lasted from 23 July until 17 September 2019, out of a total number of 7887 candidates, 5.939 candidates applied for admission to higher education institutions at the time of the publication of the ranking lists, and 5.062 candidates secured their right to enrol in the autumn period. The CAO received and processed 136 candidates' documents, of whom 20 finished their secondary education outside of Croatia.



CAO also received 101 requests for the advanced enrolment, out of which 87 were granted and entered into the system.

In the summer enrolment period, there were 40.590 slots available at Croatian higher education institutions. Out of a total number of 33.267 candidates, 24.043 candidates or 72.27% secured their right to enrol in a study programme, and 1.302 or 3.91% did not secure the right to enrol in any study programme. A total of 150.164 applications for study programmes were registered (4,51 per candidate). In the autumn enrolment period, there were 16.403 slots left at higher education institutions. Out of the 7.887 candidates who competed for enrolment, 5.062 or 64.18% secured their right to enrol, and 877 or 11.12% did not secure the right to enrol in any study programme in the autumn period. A total of 25.293 applications were registered (3,20 per candidate).

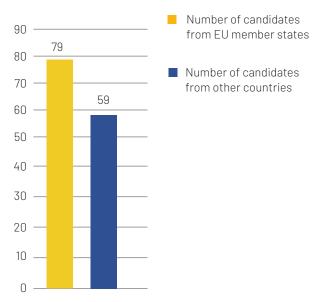


Chart 17: Number of candidates completing high school education, by country of completion

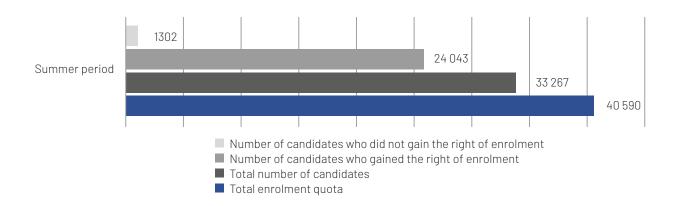


Chart 18: Number of applicants who secured the right of enrolment to undergraduate study programmes in the summer enrolment period



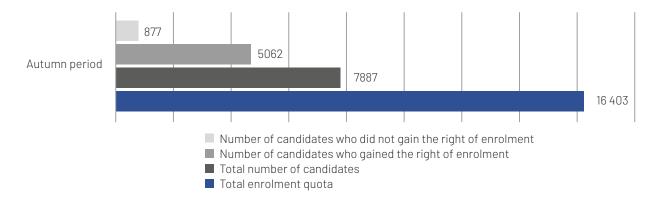


Chart 19: Number of applicants who secured the right of enrolment to undergraduate study programmes in the autumn enrolment period

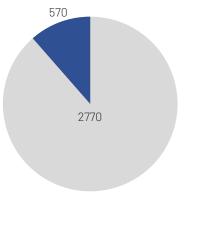
During the entire year, CAO replied to applicants' queries, responding to 8.285 telephone queries, 3.739 e-mail queries and 2.787 queries submitted via the form available on the website www.studij.hr. Also, CAO staff regularly updated information on the www.studij.hr website, in both Croatian and English.

APPLYING TO GRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

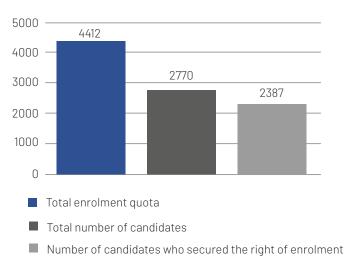
For the fifth consecutive year, CAO continued to administer centralised application to graduate studies through the National System of Applications to Graduate Studies (NSAGS). Applications took place between 1 July and 30 September 2019, when the final ranking lists for enrolment into graduate study programmes were published. This year, the centralised application through the NSAGS covered: three constituents of the J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek (Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Civil Engineering), the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, the Croatian Catholic University, four constituents of the University of Rijeka (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Health Studies, Department of Informatics, Department of Physics), 21 constituents of the University of Zadar (Department of English, Department of Ecology, Agriculture and Aguaculture, Department of Economics, Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, Department of Philosophy, Department of French and Iberoromance Studies, Department of Geography, Department of German Studies, Department of Information Sciences, Department for Teacher and Pre-school Teacher Education, Department of Classical Philology, Department of Croatian Language and Literature and South Slavic Philology, Department of Linguistics, Department of Pedagogy, Department of History, Department of History of Art, Department of Psychology, Department of Sociology, Department of Italian Language and Literature, Department of Tourism and Communication Studies, Department of Theology and Catechism), University North, Slavonski Brod Polytechnic, Polytechnic "Lavoslav Ružička" in Vukovar, Polytechnic "Marko Marulić" in Knin, Polytechnic of Požega, Polytechnic of Šibenik, Polytechnic of Rijeka, Međimurje Polytechnic in Čakovec, College for Technology and Business - Pula Polytechnic, College of International Relations and Diplomacy Dag Hammarskjöld and College of Agriculture in Križevci. There were a total of 4,412 open slots at the higher education institutions conducting the centralised application to graduate study programmes through NSAGS. CAO received and processed 570 sets of documents from a total of 2.770 applicants, of whom 2.387 or 86.17% secured their right to enrolment.

Chart 20: Number of candidates for enrolment into graduate studies

Chart 21: Secured rights to enrolment in graduate study programmes



- Total number of candidates who competed for the enrolment into graduate study programmes
- Number of candidates who were required to deliver documentation



SUPPORT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Throughout 2019, CAO continued to provide continuous support to higher education institutions and informed the coordinators about all necessary activities in NISAHEI and NSAGS. CAO received and answered 452 telephone and 695 e-mail queries from coordinators.

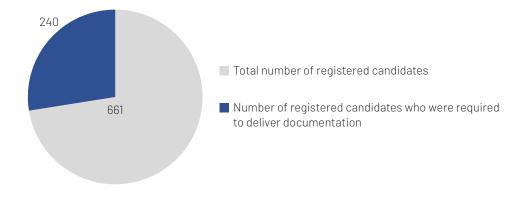
APPLICATIONS OF CANDIDATES COMING FROM OUTSIDE THE REGULAR CROATIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FOR ENROLMENT INTO THE FIRST GRADE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

CAO has once again successfully participated in the process of application for enrolment in the first year of secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia, which included candidate registration, verifying the accuracy of personal data and rating the candidates coming from outside the regular Croatian educational system through the National Information System of Application and Enrolment into Secondary Schools (NISAESS)



and provided information about the entire procedure. CAO registered 404 candidates in the summer enrolment period, and 257 candidates in the autumn enrolment period. CAO processed documents of 197 candidates in the summer enrolment period, and the documents of 43 candidates in the autumn enrolment period.

Chart 22: Number of applications of candidates coming from outside the regular education system of the Republic of Croatia for enrolment in the first grade of secondary school



APPLICATION SYSTEM UPGRADE

For the first time in the summer enrolment period, the candidates were assisted by a system using artificial intelligence when enrolling in the study programme - the system automatically advised the candidates on which study programme to enrol. This application is unique in the world. With the support of the Agency for Science and Higher Education it was developed by Croatian postdoctoral research associates from prestigious universities: Dejan Kovač from Princeton University and Marin Drlje from CERGE (Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education) in the Czech Republic. The system provides high school graduates with information according to their choice, i.e. generates a list of similar programmes given their score and preferences.

The purpose of this system is to help the candidates enrol in a study programme that suits their preferences.

MONITORING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER SURVEYS

The Central Applications Office continued to participate in the project of monitoring graduate employability in 2019. The aim of this project is to gather information from higher education graduates on their experience during higher education and start of employment. The survey was conducted from 28 November until late 2019. The questionnaire was sent to 11.527 persons by e-mail. The results of the survey will be published in July 2020.



Recognition is a formal acknowledgement of the value of a foreign education qualification or a period of study. Recognition is conducted by the competent authority for the purpose of the continuation of education or employment. ASHE, or rather its National ENIC/NARIC Office, conducts the procedure of professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications for the purpose of accessing the labour market in Croatia.

NATIONAL ENIC/NARIC OFFICE

ASHE's National ENIC/NARIC Office is an information centre for academic mobility and recognition of foreign higher education qualifications. It is an active member of the European Network of National Information Centres on recognition and mobility (ENIC/NARIC).

ENIC network (European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility) was established by the Council of Europe and UNESCO with the aim of achieving academic mobility and quality application of principles of the Convention on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in Europe (the so called Lisbon Convention). The network consists of information centres of the member states of European Cultural Convention or UNESCO Europe Region, with government bodies as their founders.

NARIC network (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) was founded on the initiative of the European Commission, with the purpose of improving academic recognition of qualifications in member states of the European Union, European Economic Community (European Economic Area, EEA) and joint members from Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus. The aim of the Network is to encourage academic mobility.

The Office activities, primarily the procedures for the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, are based on European policy guidelines and criteria that help the Office contribute to encouraging mobility.

Supporting the lifelong learning policy, the National ENIC/ NARIC Office provides assistance to institutions and experts responsible for the recognition and validation of qualifications of different levels and types of education, training and professional development, as well as to staff working in human resources, and pays special attention to the diversity of provided information that facilitates the recognition of foreign qualifications in Croatia, but also the recognition of Croatian qualifications abroad.

For that purpose, the Office regularly issues clarifications that contain all the information on the status of a higher education qualification in the country of origin, as well as an opinion on the comparability of a foreign educational level to the levels of education in Croatia by using European mobility instruments for the evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications, which increase the visibility of foreign qualifications (qualification frameworks, diploma supplement etc.). In this way, the National ENIC/ NARIC Office contributes to the final decision on a person's employment or enrolment to a study programme, which is in line with the European best practice on the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

The Office further performs the procedure of the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and, upon request by higher education institution' Offices for Academic Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications, participates in academic recognition by issuing recommendations for the recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad.

In addition to providing expertise in procedures and issuing advice and clarifications, the National ENIC/NARIC Office daily replies to questions from foreign and Croatian physical and legal persons about the national and foreign education systems as well as national and foreign higher education programmes and qualifications.

RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

The recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in Europe is done in accordance with the guidelines of The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the so called *Lisbon Convention*).

The Lisbon Convention prescribes that the signatory states should establish information centres (ENIC and NARIC networks) whose primary function is to enable all interested parties access to information on foreign and national system of (higher) education and qualifications, provide advice on the recognition and evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications and, in accordance with the relevant legislation, make decisions on the recognition, or rather the evaluation of foreign educational qualifications.

In addition to their primary purpose, the ENIC and NARIC centres carry out a number of activities aimed at supporting the strategic goals of encouraging and facilitating academic and professional mobility of students and professionals in Europe and beyond, while also contributing to the developing quality assurance platforms for all levels of education.

In 2019, the ENIC and NARIC centres, or rather the representatives of ENIC and NARIC networks, payed special attention to the following topics:

1. ENIC and NARIC networks and the development of higher education policies

Although the implementation of the Lisbon Convention is under the jurisdiction of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, the ENIC and NARIC centres provide an important platform for discussing and raising important issues regarding the Convention implementation. Consequently, many ENIC and NARIC centres are involved in various activities that contribute to the implementation of the Convention (e.g. collaboration with representatives of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee Bureau, the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group and others).

2. ENIC and NARIC centres and other stakeholders are interested in issues connected to the recognition of foreign qualifications

Representative of the ENIC and NARIC centres have collaborated with numerous stakeholders interested in mobility and issues connected to the recognition of foreign qualifications. This year, the most significant issues were:

- The proposed Recommendations of the EU Council on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad.
- Recognition of migrants' qualifications European Qualifications Passport for Refugees project
- Digitalisation and the recognition of foreign qualifications
- Recognition of foreign qualifications and quality assurance
- Recognition of foreign qualifications and higher education institutions
- Recognition of qualifications at EQF level 5
- Recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

3. ENIC and NARIC networks and the world

Considering the changes in the recognition of qualifications in other regions as well as on the global level, representatives of the ENIC and NARIC networks supported the processes of revision and implementation of other regional conventions, with a special focus on the Tokyo Convention for the Asia-Pacific region, which was enacted in 2018. Furthermore, many centres worked on the Draft Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2019.

4. Visibility and transparency of ENIC and NARIC networks

Representatives of the ENIC and NARIC networks have been especially focused on activities that could increase the networks' visibility, with the aim of raising awareness and strengthening their influence on policies. These activities included a series of articles in the relevant media, such as the University World News, as well as contributions to the topics of recognition – with an emphasis on the networks' role – at conferences of bodies such as the EAIE, EQAR, TAICEP, Groningen Declaration Network, INQAAHE and APAIE.

Recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in Croatia

From the 1st July 2004, Croatia has been conducting the procedure of foreign higher education qualifications on the basis of the Lisbon Convention principles, or rather the Act on Approving the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, and in accordance with the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications, which replaced the Act on the Recognition of Foreign School Certificates and University Diplomas that prescribed the procedure of nostrification.

The recognition of foreign higher education qualifications implies a formal acknowledgement of the value of a foreign higher education qualification and does not confer any status rights, academic degrees or titles nor any other titles in accordance with Croatian regulations. The procedure of the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications focuses only on the level of acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, without a comparison of study programmes.

In accordance with the relevant legislation, ASHE conducts the procedure of professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications (for the purpose of accessing the labour market in Croatia for unregulated professions) based on the following criteria:

- a higher education institution which awarded a qualification has to be accredited by a competent accreditation body in the country in which it is located;
- a foreign higher education programme has to be accredited by a competent accreditation body of the respective country;
- In case of a joint degree, all institutions that participate in the delivery of a study programme, as well as the study programme itself, have to be accredited by competent accreditation bodies of the respective countries in which the participating institution are located.

The recognition procedure also includes the following criteria:

- minimal level and type of qualification that is necessary to access the study programme which leads to the qualification being recognised,
- $\bullet access to further education and/or employment that the qualification gives.\\$

If the stated criteria are not met, ASHE cannot fully recognise a foreign higher education qualification, which is in accordance with the international practise.

In 2019, the National ENIC/NARIC Office:

- fully recognised 1798 foreign higher education qualifications for the purpose of accessing the labour market.
- responded to 229 requests for advice in the academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.
- issued 115 clarifications of Croatian and foreign higher education qualifications.
- replied to 129 requests for the verification of qualification authenticity.
- replied to more than 2900 e-mail inquiries on the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in the Republic of Croatia and abroad, as well as on foreign and Croatian higher education systems, or rather the foreign and Croatian higher education study programmes and qualifications.

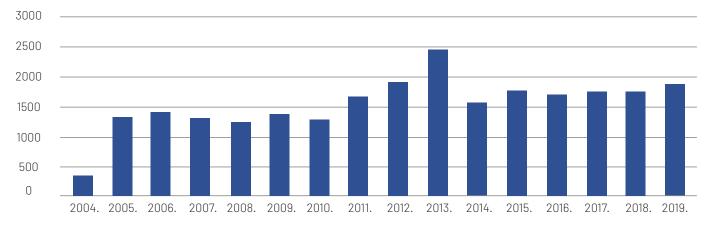


Chart 23: The number of requests for the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications (2004 - 2019)

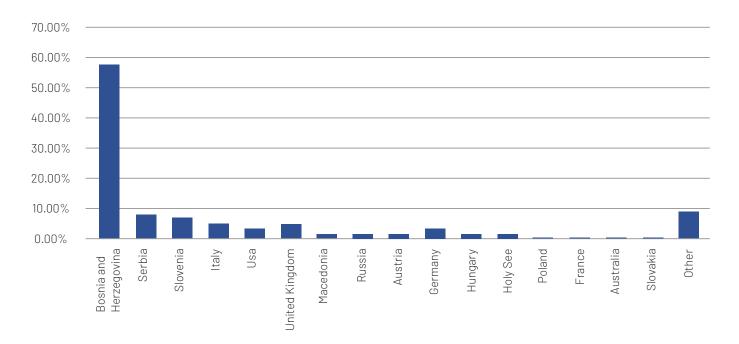


Chart 24: Percentage of higher education qualifications in the total number of requests received in 2019 (by country of origin)



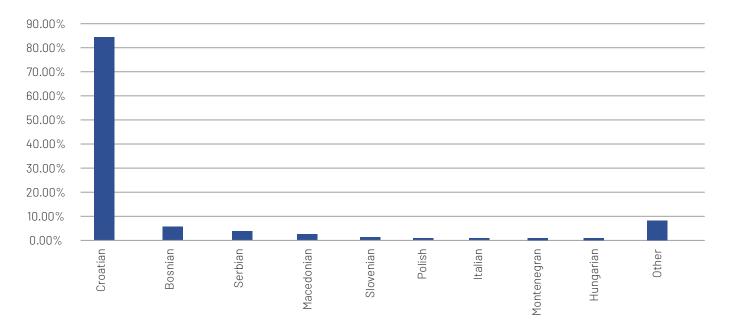


Chart 25: Percentage of higher education qualifications in the total number of requests received in 2019 (by applicant's nationality)

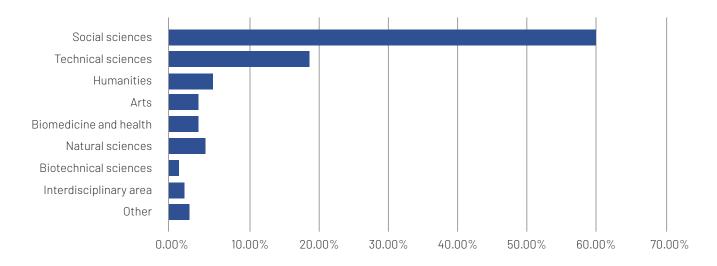


Chart 26: Percentage of higher education qualifications in the total number of requests received in 2019 (by scientific area)

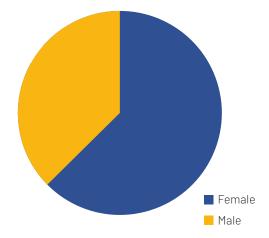


Chart 27: Percentage of higher education qualifications in the total number of requests received in 2019 (by applicant's gender)

ASSISTANCE CENTRE FOR PROVIDING INFORMATION ON THE RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Based on the Act on Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications, the National ENIC/NARIC Office has the role of the Assistance centre for providing information on the recognition of professional qualifications.

The role of the Assistance centre is purely informational, while the procedure of the recognition of foreign professional qualifications (for the purpose of accessing the regulated labour market) is under the jurisdiction of competent authorities for particular regulated professions.

In accordance with the Act on Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications, or rather the Directive 2005/36/EC, the Assistance centre provides citizens and assistance centres of other European Economic Area (EEA) Contracting States with:

- 1. The necessary information on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in the Republic of Croatia (information about national legislation which governs the access to and pursuit of regulated professions, including social legislations and, if necessary, ethical rules).
- 2. Assistance in achieving rights that arise from the Act on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications.
- 3. Information on regulated professions and how to access them in other EEA Contracting States.
- 4. The necessary information on the Database of Regulated Professions and the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in the Republic of Croatia.



As part of their procedures for the recognition of professional qualification, the competent bodies can, and in case of the so called *third countries* must, request the opinion on a particular foreign higher education qualification that contains information on the status of the HEI and study programme in question, the level of education in the country of origin and the comparison to a level of education in Croatia (if possible).

The Assistance centre also administers the Database of regulated professions and the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in the Republic of Croatia, which includes:

- Public part list of regulated professions and professional associations (chambers) or competent ministries that grant access to regulated professions in the Republic of Croatia (bodies competent for providing information on the procedure and requirements for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, for conducting the procedures and setting the requirements for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, as well as for issuing decisions on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications).
- Protected part (available only to competent authorities) data about the conducted procedures of recognition of foreign professional qualification in Croatia.

Based on the Act on Regulated Professions, the responsibility for filling the Database lies with the appointed representatives of competent bodies.

The number of requests for the recognition Competent authority in Croatia of foreign professional qualifications (2019) **Croatian Nursing Council** 71 Croatian Chamber of Medical Biochemists 17 Croatian Chamber of Healthcare Professionals - Sanitary Engineering 28 Croatian Chamber of Healthcare Professionals - Medical Laboratory 56 5 Croatian Chamber of Midwives Croatian Chamber of Pharmacists 143 Croatian Medical Chamber 212 Croatian Chamber of Civil Engineers 55 Croatian Chamber of Architects 10 Central State Office for Sport 58 13 Other 668 Total

Table 6: Number of requests for the recognition of professional qualifications (2019)¹

¹ Data from the Database of Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications



The Agency for Science and Higher Education participates in the development and management of external information and communication tools used in the external evaluation procedures and it has developed the Central Procedures Database information system. In cooperation with the University Computing Centre (SRCE) ASHE develops and maintains MOZVAG2 information system in which all higher education institutions undergoing external evaluation submit information about their activities and resources (information about the study programmes, courses, teaching staff, projects and scientific production and other information necessary in an evaluation procedure). ASHE also maintains and updates the *Directory of study programmes*, available on ASHE website in Croatian and English. The Directory provides Croatian and international public (prospective students, foreign ENIC and NARIC offices, etc.) with an insight into the basic data on the accredited study programmes at Croatian higher education institutions.

In 2019 both information systems, Central Procedures Database and MOZVAG2, were upgraded with the aim of a more efficient and high-quality implementation of external evaluation.

Upgrade of Central Procedures Database information system

Within the Central Procedures Database the matrix for entering data from expert panel reports on the re-accreditation of higher education institutions in the second evaluation cycle was made in order to facilitate the analysis of learning outcomes in the end. ASHE is planning to develop this module for other external evaluation procedures also, which would enable entering the outcomes of all evaluation procedures carried out by ASHE as well as their analysis.

Moreover, CPD system was upgraded so as to enable entering additional information on experts participating in the evaluation procedures (their h-index from three citation databases), which aims at improving the procedure of selection of experts in future evaluation procedures.

Upgrade of MOZVAG2 information system

MOZVAG2 system, developed by ASHE in cooperation with University Computing Centre (SRCE) in 2018, was upgraded several times in 2019 with the aim of optimizing the delivery of requested information from higher education institutions. The development of the system enabled the transfer of certain data sets to MOZVAG2, if this data already exists in some other information system. More specifically, the option of transferring data was enabled from the information systems *Croatian Scientific Bibliography CROSBI* and the *Database of Project Activities in Science and Higher Education in Croatia* (Project Database), which are developed and maintained for the purpose of external evaluation procedures by the Centre for Scientific Information of the Ruđer Bošković Institute together with ASHE. If the information that the higher education institutions are required to provide within the procedure of re-accreditation is available in the above systems, and if a higher education institution decides to transfer it to MOZVAG2, technically it is now possible to do so. The information that can be transferred refer to scientific and professional activities at the level of the higher education institution and teacher.

Upgrades done in CROSBI, Project Database and MOZVAG2 systems for the purposes of re-accreditation in 2019 include the following:

- Upgrade of CROSBI administrative interface and database,
- Creation of Croatian CROSBI author profiles,
- Enabling linking of publications with unique IDs of all Croatian authors in CROSBI,
- Implementation of reporting on scientific productivity of a higher education institution in two scientific fields for the purpose of HEI reaccreditation,
- Implementation of reporting on scientific productivity of Croatian authors (with and without a researcher's identification number) for the purpose of HEI re-accreditation,
- Implementation of interoperability with MOZVAG2 system in line with amendments of metadata(API interface),
- Developing the new and changing the existing data structure for the records of data obtained from CROSBI and Project Database.

Workshops for the administrators of upgraded systems

ASHE organizes regular workshops on the work with upgraded systems with the University Computing Centre and the Centre for Scientific Information of the Ruđer Bošković Institute. Judging by the interest the workshops attracted from users, it is evident that most higher education institutions are interested in using new options.

Workshops on the work with the upgraded MOZVAG2 system for authorized system administrators at HEIs were organized for higher education

institutions evaluated in 2019 as well as those to be evaluated in the first half of 2020. Additional workshops were also organized for CROSBI administrators and Project Database administrators.

ASHE keeps records of authorized administrators for working with MOZVAG2 system. Communication and the exchange of opinions and experience in the work with MOZVAG2 system among ASHE, the University Computing Centre and HEI administrators is enabled within the Quality Forum on ASHE website and via e-mail address mozvag@azvo.hr. Throughout 2019 more than 2000 inquiries on the work with MOZVAG2 were received and for the purpose of a more efficient solving of user enquiries the



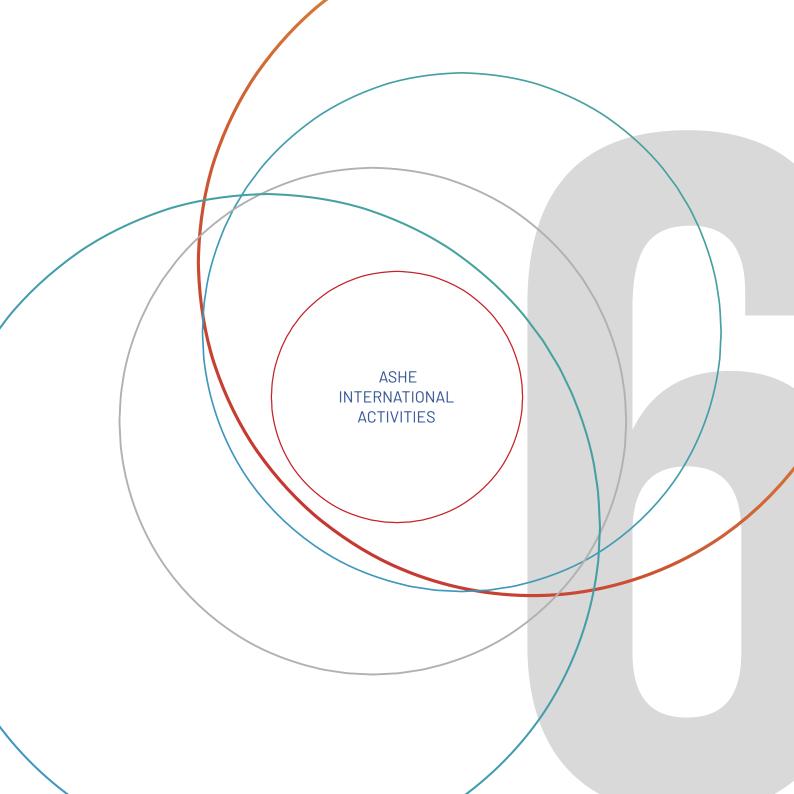
Workshops for CROSBI administrators

Manual for working in MOZVAG2 system were amended. They are also available online. The Manual will be upgraded in the future based on the frequently asked questions of users.

Cooperation with Croatian Board of Statistics

ASHE continually cooperates with the Croatian Board of Statistics for the purpose of collecting and processing information on the number of enrolled students and graduates from Croatian higher education institutions. The information is used for producing various regular and ad hoc analyses for internal and external purposes, and a part of analyses is available on the ASHE website.

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In addition to their numerous international activities, in 2019 ASHE started with the organization of support to Croatian higher education institution in the strengthening their international visibility, by carrying out various activities to internationalize Croatian higher education.

In addition to their Standards for the evaluation of quality of higher education institutions in the re-accreditation process which include the standard related to internationalization, ASHE organized training and other activities aimed at providing support and setting up a platform for the networking of higher education institutions, by encouraging them to systematically reflect on and develop the strategies and strategic activities for the strengthening of internationalization. This especially concerns outgoing and incoming student and teacher mobility, launching of new study programmes in foreign languages and launching of joint studies, but also the internationalization of internal quality assurance processes, managing higher education institutions and other activities.

By organizing the mentioned training seminars and conducting a survey on the topic of attracting foreign students, ASHE gathered information from higher education institutions about the challenges and obstacles in the field of internationalization of higher education and subsequently initiated cooperation and established communication with competent institutions (Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, Croatian Health Insurance Fund, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Ministry of Tourism, Croatian National Tourist Board, University Computing Centre Srce, University of Zagreb Student Centre, Agency for Mobility and EU Programs) in order to remove administrative and operational obstacles regarding attracting foreign students and enhancing the publicity and visibility of the Republic of Croatia on the student and academic map of the world, i.e. enhancing Croatia's image as a desirable educational destination.

Early in December 2019 the Agency for Science and Higher Education published the directory of study programmes fully delivered in English or another foreign language in the Republic of Croatia. It is a list made by the Agency for Science and Higher Education based on the data gathered through the survey in which higher education institutions participated voluntarily and subsequent contacts with higher education institutions. It will be continuously updated in communication with higher education institutions. This is the first such directory whose purpose is to unify available study programme information for foreign students with links to study programme details and important contacts. The Agency hereby wishes to put more effort into raising awareness of the importance of internationalization of higher education and Croatia's positioning as a desirable higher education destination.

In addition to the activities related to internationalization, ASHE continued to carry out many other activities planned within the project Improvement of quality assurance and Project enhancement systems in higher education (SKAZVO), which started in June 2016 and is financed from the Operational Programme "Efficient Human Resources" 2014–2020 of the European Social Fund (ESF).

Along with the implementation of the SKAZVO project and activities within other international projects in which ASHE participates as leader or project partner, ASHE employees gave a series of presentations in international conferences, workshops and seminars throughout 2019.

At the beginning of March 2019, within the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA) progress visit ASHE welcomed international reviewers who held meetings with ASHE employees regarding further improvements of external evaluation procedures both in Croatia and in the European Higher Education Area(EHEA).

In 2019 ASHE continued to participate in the activities of international associations of which it is member, namely in the work of working groups of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) in relation to internationalization of higher education, an initiative to establish European universities, mutual recognition of accreditation decisions and joint studies and innovations in accreditation procedures.

ASHE contributed to the promotion of Croatia's as a destination for high-quality higher education and made promotional videos entitled "You choose" and "Why study in Croatia?" which was produced both in Croatian and English. Short promotional videos are available on the Agency website, Youtube channel and social media.



Higher Education Discovery publishes article on internationalization of higher education in Croatia

International journal (HED) Higher Education Discovery published an article on the internationalization of higher education in Croatia entitled "Aspects of internationalization of higher education: Attracting students from abroad to the Republic of Croatia".

The article provides an overview of the survey conducted by the Agency for Science and Higher Education in 2019 on the internationalization of the Croatian higher education, concerning activities carried out by Croatian higher education institutions in terms of attracting foreign students as one of the aspects of internationalization of higher education as well as the challenges faced by higher education institutions in the process. In addition to the research findings, the article reflects on the internationalization of higher education institutions in the contemporary context and clarifies ASHE's role as a national quality assurance agency, which encourages higher education institutions to systematically develop internationalization strategies through their external evaluation processes.

ECA Discussion Paper on European Universities and ECA Barometer published

At the annual meeting of the - ECA (European Consortium for Accreditation) held in in Riga in June 2019, ECA members adopted the document ECA Discussion Paper European Universities Initiative - considerations regarding quality and quality assurance.

The starting point for the development of the document *European universities initiative – opportunities and challenges for quality and quality assurance* was the fact that during the past few decades we have seen the development of various initiatives arising from the concept of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), which rely on international cooperation and strategic partnership. At the meeting held in Gothenburg (2017 *Gothenburg Summit*) European Union leaders presented their vision for increasing the importance of education and culture in the EU public policies. One of the initiatives is "... Strengthening of strategic partnership throughout the European Union among higher education institutions and encouraging launching of around twenty European universities by 2024 which would consist of bottom-up networks of universities across the European Union which will enable students to complete a level of higher education by combining studies in several EU member states, which will further contribute to the international competitiveness of European universities."

ECA published the first issue of the ECA Barometer publication in 2019, which included various topical issues in the field of higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) - lifelong learning, digitalization and new technologies, knowledge and skills of the future and their impact on quality assurance in higher education, social dimension of higher education and quality assurance in scientific research. All ECA members, including ASHE, participated in the creation of this publication.

ASHE MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

ASHE is part of an international quality assurance system in higher education and science as an established and active member.

ASHE is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), an international association of institutions interested in the topic of academic ranking and excellence in higher education and science – IREG Observatory, and is included on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). ASHE is also a member of the International Quality Group of the American Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) and has an observer status in the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN). ASHE is a long standing member of the European Network of National Information Centres on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC) and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC). ASHE is also a member of International Association of Admissions Organisations (IAAO), European Association of Communication Professionals in Higher Education (EUPRIO) and international association GUIDE Association – Global Universities in Distance Education.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

ASHE leads or participates in a series of international projects funded from the European Union programmes and other sources.

Table 7: EU-funded projects and projects funded from other sources
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Project name	Partners (in addition to ASHE)	Lead partner	Duration	EU programme/ source of funding
Improvement of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Systems at Higher Education Institutions (SKAZVO)	_	ASHE	June 2016 - December 2020	European Social Fund
Database of External Quality Assurance Reports (DEQAR)	17 European quality assurance agencies, German Accreditation Council (GAC), Hochschulerektorenkonferenz (HRK)	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)	November 2017 - November 2019	Erasmus +
Modernisation, Education and Human Rights (MEHR)	ASHE and higher education institutions from Sweden, Portugal and Croatia, European Student Union	Swedish agency UKÄ	September 2016 - June 2019	Erasmus +
Allocating Credit to European Professional Training Programmes (ACCEPT)	NARIC centres from Latvia, Malta, NUFFIC (the Netherlands)	UK NARIC	Beginning of 2018 - March 2020	Erasmus +
Evaluating e-learning for academic recognition (e-Valuate)	ENIC and NARIC centres from Denmark, Lithuania, Norway, Ireland, United Kingdom, vice president of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, ECA representative and KIRON representative	NUFFIC (the Netherlands)	March 2018 – March 2020	Erasmus +



Project name	Partners (in addition to ASHE)	Lead partner	Duration	EU programme/ source of funding
Keep innovation in Multi Partnership Cooperation in Lifelong Guidance Services (KEEP IN PACT)	Universcience-Cité des métiers de Paris (France), Learning digital (Italy), Municipio do Porto-Cidade das Profissoes (Portugal) and Life Long Learning Platform (Belgium)	French network Réseau internation al des Cités des métiers	September 2019 - December 2020	Erasmus +
Twinning contract "Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in B&H", (beneficiary institution: Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina)	ASHE, ENIC centres from France and Latvia	Croatian Ministry of Science and Education	September 2018 - December 2019	Twinning contract

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME EFFICIENT HUMAN RESOURCES 2014 – 2020 OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF)

Improvement of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Systems at Higher Education Institutions (SKAZVO)

SKAZVO project (Improvement of quality assurance and enhancement systems in higher education) is co-financed by the European Union within the framework of the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources from the European Social Fund.

SKAZVO project (2016–2020) is conducted with the aim of developing a new model of external quality assurance system in higher education in Croatia. The project will develop new and improve the existing procedures of external evaluation of Croatian higher education institutions and study programmes, but also improve the quality of study programmes and further strengthen the competences of HEI staff.

The project will launch new activities such as collecting information and informing the general public about higher education, and developed counselling services for present and future students. It will also strengthen the role of ASHE as an educator at both the national and international level by organising thematic seminars and workshops for higher education institution and other relevant stakeholders, by themselves or in cooperation with experts from a particular field.

The following activities were financed by SKAZVO project: external review of ASHE, participation of ASHE's employees in conferences and seminars, numerous workshops and seminars (on drafting self-evaluation reports, training of expert panel members, workshops for students, learning outcomes, on MOZVAG and CROSBI, the ESG, members of the Network of Internal Auditors, as well as on topics such as quality

assurance, career development, internationalization, branding of higher education institutions, etc.), pilot re-accreditation, further conduct of re-accreditation, re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes, study visits, system reconstruction and improvement, analysis of business processes, improvement of the information system and the link between higher education and the labour market, creation of a visual identity, printing of professional publications, project conferences, etc.

During 2019, in Zagreb and in Dubrovnik, the Agency held two workshops on learning outcomes, five workshops on the restructured MOZVAG system and one workshop for training potential expert panel members for the re-accreditation of higher education institutions.

Six workshops were held in Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Rijeka and Osijek in 2019 as part of the new cycle of workshops entitled "Careering". The aim of the new cycle was to expand the reach of workshops to all student support services in order to strengthen their competencies, their role and networking, with the purpose of continuous development of student experience in the context of student-centred approach to learning and teaching.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education published a brochure entitled Academic Rankings, for the purpose of informing the public about the most important segments of academic ranking nowadays.

Besides answering the question "What is academic ranking?" the brochure provides useful information about the most commonly used and most popular worldwide rankings, principles, indicators and limits of ranking, as well as information regarding the current status of Croatia in international rankings along with many other interesting information.

During 2019, ASHE organised a meeting of the National Network of Quality Assurance Units at Higher Education Institutions (CroQAnet), a training for internal auditors at higher education institutions, two workshops on the internationalisation of higher education and a seminar on quality assurance for students.

Within the framework of the SKAZVO project, in 2019, 26 higher education institutions were involved in the re-accreditation process and the re-accreditation process of 25 postgraduate university (doctoral) study programmes was carried out.

Seminars and workshops within SKAZVO project

Internationalization

In 2019 ASHE organized two seminars within the cycle of seminars on the topic of internationalization of higher education. The first seminar entitled *"Some aspects of internationalization of higher education: attracting foreign students"* was held on 12 June 2019 at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Zagreb, and the second seminar, entitled *"European university alliances and development of joint studies"* was held on 30 October 2019 at the Faculty of Forestry, the University of Zagreb.

The first seminar brought together representatives of higher education institutions and relevant stakeholders in the system of higher education, encouraging debate on the challenges that institutions face in their attempts to attract students from abroad. The Agency for Science and Higher Education presented the results of its research of higher education institutions' activities related to attracting students from abroad. Examples of good practice and institutional experiences were provided by the representatives of HEIs in the ensuing presentations and round table discussion.



The Agency's research showed that there is a significant interest among higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia for attracting students from abroad, as one of the ways of improving the quality of study programmes and institution quality in general by means of processes pertaining to internationalization. There are currently 53 study programmes delivered in English at Croatian higher education institutions, with plans for 74 more by the academic year 2025/2026. In addition, HEIs that have participated in the study also offer a total of 3007 courses in English for foreign students participating in incoming mobility programmes, delivered at all study levels.



Seminar on internationalization: Attracting students from abroad

The topic of the second seminar in the cycle on internationalization - European Universities alliances and the development of joint studies - was encouraged by the European Commission's European Universities Initiative.

Specifically, on the conclusions of the European Council of 14 December 2017, the heads of states and governments called on the Member States, the Council and the European Commission to work towards "encouraging the establishment of twenty new "European universities" by 2024, consisting of a network of universities based on the bottom-up principle across the EU, that will allow students to earn a degree by combining studies in several EU countries and contributing to the international competitiveness of European universities." The conclusions of the Education Council of 22 May 2018 further highlighted the potential of "European universities" to "significantly improve mobility and promote high quality and excellence in education and research by strengthening the link between teaching, research and innovation and the transfer of knowledge by recognizing the benefits of multilingual learning, recognizing qualifications and the development of joint educational and research programs and projects." They also stressed that European universities "can play a leading role in creating the European Education Area as a whole." To achieve this, the European Commission has proposed a unique initiative that requires a quantum leap in cooperation among all types of higher education institutions from all regions of Europe and at the level of institutions and across all areas of activity, from teaching and learning to research and innovation.

In June 2019 the European Commission published the names of higher education institutions from all over Europe that were selected for the first alliances (full list); the list of 114 HEIs also includes Croatian universities – the University of Split and the University of Zadar, and the University of Rijeka as an associate member. Of the 54 applicants, 17 European universities were selected, comprising a total of 114 higher education institutions from 24 EU member states.

The selection was based on an assessment carried out by 26 independent external experts, including rectors, professors and researchers appointed by the European Commission. The budget for the first 17 European universities amounts to EUR 85 million. This first call will test different models for implementing the new concept of European universities, and its potential for the development of higher education.

As the European Universities Initiative was designed to enhance student and staff mobility as well as the quality, competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education by fostering cooperation among European HEIs, a discussion was held during the seminar on the opportunities for joining universities' alliances and the resulting opportunities for Croatian HEIs.

Careering 2019 - cycle of workshops for career advisers at HEIs

As part of the new cycle of *Careering*, a round table discussion entitled *Career Centres in the Higher Education System* was held at the University of Dubrovnik on 8 March 2019. The round table was organised by the Agency for Science and Higher Education and the University of Dubrovnik. The workshop Presentation of available e-tools in the field of lifelong career guidance at the Croatian Employment Board took place on 6 June 2019 at the University Computing Centre Srce. The workshop was led by representatives of the Croatian Employment Board. Workshop participants had the opportunity to get acquainted with the work of the Croatian Employment Board, its lifelong career guidance activities and the available e-tools such as the CISOK and e-Guidance portals as well as to participate in group work on case studies.

The new cycle of practical workshops is intended for career advisers and teachers at higher education institutions in charge of strategic planning of high-quality graduate employability, support to students through the work of career centres and extracurricular activities, curriculum development and implementation. Its aim is to continue to provide support to higher education institutions in developing career guidance services and sustainability of career centres as well as to strengthen the competencies of career advisers so that they could address professional challenges and demands they have to face in their work with students as best as possible.

ASHE's goal is also to encourage the establishment of new centres and employment of skilled employees who will help students in setting their educational goals, developing career management skills and practical transversal skills for the labour market, which will actively contribute to



Careering at the University of Rijeka

the linking of higher education and the labour market.

Considering that the workshops were very positively evaluated and that there is a growing interest in the organization of this kind of training and in the expansion of career guidance into an increasing number of higher education institutions, ASHE will continue to organize workshops for career advisers and teachers in 2020. In order to broaden the reach of this activity, ASHE will enlarge the target group to include counsellors in centres for student psychological counselling and counsellors from other student support services. Internal networking and strengthening of competencies of student support services' employees and teachers will contribute to the implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) through continuous enhancement of student experience in the context of a student-centred approach to teaching.



Workshop on learning outcomes for higher education institutions

The workshops on learning outcomes aimed at representatives of Croatian higher education institutions, titled "Workshop for HEI lecturers with a competence approach to planning study programmes", were held on 30 May 2019 at the Hotel Panorama in Zagreb and on 7 November 2019 at the University of Dubrovnik.



Workshop on learning outcomes held in Dubrovnik

The workshops delivered by Prof. dr. Vesna Vlahović-Štetić and Prof. dr. Željka Kamenov, were organized mostly for teachers, study programme coordinators and vice deans for teaching affairs. They gained more information on learning outcomes by working in small groups, which included writing and assessment of learning outcomes, with an emphasis on constructive alignment i.e. linking of intended learning outcomes with teaching methods. Around 60 participants participated in the workshops.

Seminar Role of students in quality assurance in higher education institutions held

ASHE's seminar Role of students in quality assurance at higher education institutions held in December 2019 in Zagreb brought together around 140 students. The aim of the seminar was to introduce students to the culture of quality assurance at higher education institutions, to inform them about their rights and obligations in order to encourage them to become actively involved in the activities of quality assurance at their institutions as well as in other higher education institutions in Croatia.





Role of students in quality assurance at higher education institutions



During this seminar the students could learn how they can become agents of change in their higher education institutions, in which ways they can contribute to the modernization of study programmes and participate in the discussions with students from all over Croatia.

Gohar Hovhannisyan, the Vice-President of the European Student' Union, was a special guest at the seminar.

ERASMUS+ PROGRAMMES

Database of External Quality Assurance Reports (DEQAR)

The first survey within the framework of the DEQAR(*Database of External Quality Assurance Reports*) project was published. Through an analysis of accreditation reports, its goal was to establish how quality assurance agencies implement the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), especially standards 1.2 and 1.9, in different national contexts.

The analysis focuses on institutional external quality assurance reports available in the DEQAR base, from Croatia, Estonia, Finland and Portugal - countries with very different higher education systems. In every country, one report per type of higher education institution was chosen. A total of 17 reports were analysed (six in Croatia, four in Estonia, three in Finland and four in Portugal).

The aim of the survey was to establish whether the ESG was in line with the design, approval and the follow-up of programmes in institutional external evaluation reports, and whether quality assurance agencies implement the ESG in different ways while evaluating higher education institutions

DEQAR Survey Conclusions

The survey showed that the impact of the ESG on institutional external quality assurance reports is unquestionable and that all agencies lay great emphasis on their "commitment to compliance" with the ESG. Nevertheless, agencies interpret and implement the ESG in different ways and the reports differ with regard to their length and focus.

In Portugal and Finland, institutional external quality assurance is focused on internal quality assurance systems at higher education institutions while in Estonia and Croatia the reports evaluate the higher education institutions as a whole.

All countries have two report models – one was used in the evaluation cycles until 2017 or 2018, and the other, the new one, was developed for the recent evaluation cycles, which are currently ongoing.

The revised and supplemented report model in Croatia represents what can be defined as a direct translation of the ESG, while the new model in Finland diverges from the linear translation of ESG.

In Croatia, the participation of stakeholders in the design and follow-up of programmes is evaluated on different levels and in different areas; in Estonia the reports assess whether external stakeholders are included in the development of study programmes, while in Finland the emphasis is put on the involvement of external and internal stakeholders in the quality assurance system.

The concept of learning outcomes is visible mostly in Estonia, Finland and Croatia.

The notion of student progress is used more often in Finnish and Estonian reports.

The concept of qualification framework does not appear often in reports, nor does the concept of student workload.



ASHE participates as partner in DEQAR project financed by the European Union from the programme Erasmus+, while the project leader is the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). DEQAR is a two-year project, lasting from November 2017 to 31 October 2019, aimed at developing a European database with information on the results of the evaluation on higher education institutions for an easier access to reports and decisions resulting from the evaluation of higher education institutions carried out by EQAR-registered agencies. This will increase the transparency in QA procedures in higher education in the European Higher Education Area, as well as to provide support and fulfil the needs of users in areas such as qualification recognition and student mobility.

Seventeen EQAR-registered agencies, including ASHE, actively participate as project partners for technical support, while other partners are key organizations of European stakeholders – ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, Education International, CIMEA and University Ghent.

The current database contains information on around 400 higher education institutions, mostly institutions from Belgium (Flemmish Community), Croatia, Finland, Romania and Spain (Catalonia). In the future DEQAR is expected to develop further and all EQAR members are invited to enter reports and results of their activities in the database.

Modernisation, Education and Human Rights (MEHR)

In June 2019 final conference of the international project "Modernisation, Education and Human Rights" (MEHR) was held. The aim of the project was to develop guidelines for quality assurance of learning outcomes assessment, with an emphasis on the human rights related topics.

ASHE was one of the partners in MEHR project that was carried out from 2016 and it was financed by the European Union within the framework of Erasmus+ project. Swedish Higher Education Authority – UKÄ is the project leader, while partners include Karolinska Institutet, European Students' Union – ESU, Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education – A3ES from Portugal, the University of Lisbon, the Agency for Science and Higher Education and the Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Rijeka.

One of the main objectives of the project is to develop a common tool, i.e. evaluation guidelines and quality assurance of learning outcomes that include topics and matters in the field of human rights. This is to be done through the inclusion of a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, from higher education institution management and quality assurance units to teachers, researchers and students alike, but also including non-governmental/civil sector, representatives from the professions programmes prepare students for, and others. During the project, information was collected and surveys were carried out regarding the extent to which study programmes include learning outcomes in the field of human rights. The research included higher education institutions with their teachers and students studying the observed programmes.

Project researches were carried out from three different perspectives. The Swedish Higher Education Agency (UKÄ), with its partners at the Karolinska Institute placed an emphasis on the gender perspective in human rights education, i.e. learning outcomes on human rights, gender and domestic violence. The University of Lisbon and the Portuguese Agency for Valuation and Accreditation (A3ES) researched activities that involve issues of migration, human rights and citizenship as well as intercultural skills and communication in higher education. The Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) and the Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Rijeka emphasized human rights, children's rights and participation and the child(student) as an active citizen.

Three project reports - Swedish, Portuguese and Croatian - were presented on the project conferences and are available to the public on the website https://mehr.azvo.hr/.

At the international conference and national workshop organized by ASHE and the Faculty of Teacher Education, the University of Rijeka, held on 21-22 January 2019 at the University of Rijeka, entitled "Human Rights, Children's Rights and Participation and Active Citizenship as Learning Outcomes of Higher Education Study Programmes", ASHE's project study (survey) was presented. The study focused on higher education institutions that deliver teacher and pedagogical study programmes and social work study programmes to research the inclusion of learning outcomes in human, children's rights and participation and active citizenship in these programmes.

The Faculty of Teacher Education, the University of Rijeka, carried out a survey among teachers at higher education institutions recognized as examples of good practice in the researched field. The results of both surveys are part of a comprehensive report that was discussed during the conference held in Rijeka.

Different views and perspectives on the current state of human rights education were presented - researchers, NGOs, civic initiatives, teachers, educators, curriculum development professionals, community workers and advisers. Researchers and experts dealing with human rights in "education for life" have made proposals to support other departments and higher education institutions in integrating human rights learning outcomes into study programmes. An overarching approach to human rights, diversity and interculturality was presented – national and international contexts, from training to practice, from education to life, and from theory to real policies.

Finally, Croatian members of the project team considered the topics covered by the conference, results of discussions held and lessons learned as a valuable contribution to the completion of the Croatian report and the planning of future activities.

The national workshop, held on 21 January 2019, was primarily designed for stakeholders in the system of education and upbringing, i.e. representatives of higher education institutions, study programmes and representatives of the professions covered by this research. The objective of the workshop was to improve inclusiveness and the quality of learning outcomes on human rights, children's rights/children's participation as active citizens, and educational contents in preschool and school education and upbringing.

Objectives of MEHR project were outlined in the project comparison report Modernisation, Education, and Human Rights Quality assurance of learning outcomes and the student perspective.

Allocating Credit to European Professional Training Programmes (ACEPT)

The project team held a meeting within ACEPT project in which it defined the content of the template for the evaluation of prior learning. The template under the title PQProfile was adopted and it contains the information necessary to facilitate the evaluation of foreign qualifications acquired by completing professional training programmes. Project test phase was carried out at the end of 2019 during which foreign qualifications to be evaluated through the PQProfile form were delivered to higher education institutions. In addition to the evaluation of qualifications acquired through informal or non-formal learning in one of the partner countries, higher education institutions of project partner countries provided their opinions and comments on the PQProfile form with the aim of their improvement.

Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, together with NARIC Latvia, ENIC Malta and NUFFIC (the Netherlands), participates as partner in ACEPT project. UK NARIC is ACEPT project leader. The project started at the beginning of 2018 and it is financed from ERASMUS+ programme, and its objective is to further strengthen the use of the European tools for the identification/recognition of qualifications and increasing the visibility of their content. Some of these tools are the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), qualification frameworks etc., for the purpose of promoting synergy among similar educational systems and practices to make the evaluation and recognition of foreign qualifications as best as possible and based on trust among the states.



The aim of this project is to encourage the use of learning outcomes in the evaluation of foreign qualifications obtained in different forms of education – formal, informal and non-formal – which will additionally help in the creation of the methodology for the evaluation of professional training and similar lifelong learning programmes.

Evaluating e-learning for academic recognition (e-Valuate)

Work conference of the international ERASMUS+ project *Evaluating e-learning for academic recognition (e-Valuate)* was held in Den Haag on 28 March 2019.

ASHE participates in e-Valuate project before ECA-e (European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education as part of the project Steering Group).

The aim of the e-Valuate project is to contribute to the further development of public policies in the area of recognition of new forms of online learning in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Support for higher education institutions and ENIC and NARIC centres in the assessment of competencies, knowledge and skills acquired through new forms of online learning, such as MOOCs (*Massive Open Online Courses*) and SPOCs (*Small Personal Online Courses*) should be developed during the project.

The project started on 1 March 2018 and it will last until 29 February 2020.

Project consortium comprises representatives of ENIC and NARIC centres from Denmark, Lithuania, Norway, Ireland, United Kingdom and the Netherlands, as well as vice president of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, a representative of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) and a representative of Open Higher Education for Refugees KIRON.

Two publications compiled within e-Valuate project were issued in October 2019: Practitioner's guide for recognition of e-learning; Introducing a step-by-step approach towards academic recognition of stand-alone e-learning and Academic recognition of e-learning; Recommendations for online learning providers.

Keep innovation in multi partnership cooperation in lifelong guidance services (KEEP IN PACT)

ASHE is partner in the international KEEP IN PACT project (Keep innovation in multi partnership cooperation in lifelong guidance services) financed by the European Union funds from ERASMUS+ programme. The purpose of the project is strengthening multi-partnership cooperation in lifelong career guidance centres (LCG). The general objective of the project is upgrading the multi partnership management function in the lifelong career guidance centres while specific goals are:

- Strengthen the quality and quantity of services in lifelong career guidance provided to citizens;
- Develop competences in multi-partnership management among professionals working in lifelong career guidance centres;
- Promote multi-disciplinary and integrated services in lifelong career guidance;
- Develop the European network of professionals in multi-partnership management in lifelong career guidance.

KEEP IN PACT project brings together six organizations working in the field of education, training and employment from five states, and its leader is the French network Réseau international des Cités des métiers. In addition to ASHE, project partners include Universcience-Cité des métiers de Paris (France), Learning digital (Italy), Municipio do Porto-Cidade das Profissoes (Portugal) and LifeLong Learning Platform (Belgium).

The project will last 28 months, from 1 September 2019 to 31 December 2021.

The project kicked off in Paris on 23-24 September 2019.

The participants in the meeting discussed planned activities and tasks of partner institutions and future results and opportunities for dissemination of project results.

Effective partnership for enhanced recognition (EPER)

Kick-off conference of the project Effective partnership for enhanced recognition (EPER) was held on 5 July 2019in Zagreb. EPER project was co-financed by the support of ERASMUS+ programme of the European union – Key action 3/KA3/ – Support for policy reform. The Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia is lead partner in the project, while partner countries include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia. The objective of the project is enhancing the recognition procedures and practices in partner countries, strengthening capacities for the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the strengthening of regional cooperation in addition to the exchange of experience and good practices among partners from Southeast Europe.

ASHE representatives contribute to the implementation of project activities by providing expertise in the area of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

Kick-off conference was the first project activity, aimed at the exchange of experience and good practice in the area of development and implementation of policies of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and encouraging debate on topics to be covered by the project activities.

Experts from the European Commission/Eurydice, The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), European University Association (EUA) and several European ENIC/NARIC offices presented good practices at the conference. Representatives from the project partner states participated in the panel discussion on the challenges in the area of recognition in Southeast Europe.

A seminar within EPER project was held on 20 November 2019 in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The goal of the seminar was to facilitate the understanding of international trends in the procedures of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, with emphasis on automatic recognition and the exchange of experience and good practice among representatives from institutions participating in the project, international experts and representatives of higher education institutions and the state administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

TWINNING PROJEKT

Strengthening institutional capacity for recognition of higher education qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The closing conference held on 19 November 2019 in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, marked the end of the *Twinning* project entitled *Strengthening institutional capacity for recognition of higher education qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina* which had been carried out from October 2018. Results of the project were presented at the conference, and the final goal of the project was to abandon the procedure of diploma nostrification in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. to reconcile the procedure of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications with the principles of the Lisbon Convention (*The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, LRC*). During the project, project members worked on the strengthening of human potential and reconciliation of legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of improving the procedures of recognition of foreign qualifications.

Long-term solutions were defined which would lead to an equal treatment of all holders of foreign educational qualifications, i.e. to the introduction of a uniform recognition procedure which would be carried out at the national level by a single institution possessing adequate expertise and knowledge in the recognition of foreign education qualifications.

The project beneficiary was the Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina (CIP).



This project is the first Twinning project of the European Union in which the Republic of Croatia (the Ministry of Science and Education) is the lead partner and in which Croatian institutions took part. ASHE gave contribution to the implementation of this project by providing their expertise in the area of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications. Project partners include *Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques* from France and Academic Information Centre from Latvia.

COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS FROM THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE AND PRESENTATION OF ASHE'S WORK ABROAD

ENQA representatives visit ASHE

Two international reviewers, Prof. dr. Jürgen Kohler and Ms. Vanessa Dulcos, visited ASHE on 11 March 2019 and held meetings with ASHE's Director and employees as part of ENQA's (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) progress visit.

This strategically profiled, policy-oriented meeting is not intended to check the compliance of Agency's work with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area(ESG), but to facilitate a constructive dialogue oriented towards improvements. ASHE representatives opened discussion on several important topics, such as further development and optimization of the procedures of external evaluation of higher education institutions, adapted to the specific features of different systems and institutions, aimed at further development of quality culture, as well as further application of the qualification framework principles in external evaluation – how to adequately evaluate the learning outcomes acquired(*outputs*).

Having experience in external evaluation of quality in higher education, ASHE participated in this meeting voluntarily, wishing to discuss topics relevant for the further development of quality culture in the area of higher education.

The Agency successfully completed the international evaluation conducted by ENQA during 2016, confirming the quality of its work and the consistency of its procedures, aligned with the ESG and good European practice. Prof. dr. Jürgen Kohler and Ms. Vanessa Dulcos were the members of the Expert Panel that carried out the evaluation.

Meeting with representative of Global International Pedagogical Forum Organizing Committee

On 11 February 2019, ASHE Director, Prof. Jasmina Havranek, PhD, and her associates held a meeting in the Agency with the representative of the Global International Pedagogical Forum - IPF 2019) Mr. Alexander Priyutov.

The Forum was organised by the European Institute of Education Development (EIED) from Warsaw, in cooperation with the International Institute of Education Development from Washington. The topic of the meeting was potential cooperation with ASHE, as well as the possibility of involving Croatian teachers in the work of the International Pedagogical Forum. The event that took place on 4-8 November 2019 in five different countries: Poland (Warsaw), Germany (Berlin), USA (Washington), Finland (Helsinki) and Singapore. The goal of IPF 2019 was to create a common platform for the exchange of experiences and achievements in teaching, with educators, innovators and other individuals involved in any form of educational development, from different fields and different educational levels.

Meeting with representatives of Slovenian quality assurance agency in Ljubljana

On 14 February 2019, ASHE Director, Prof. Jasmina Havranek, PhD, and her associates held a meeting in Ljubljana with the representatives of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA), Mr Franci Demšar and his associates.

The activities of SQAA and ASHE were presented at the meeting, and the participants discussed the possibilities of the mutual exchange of experts and further cooperation.

Meeting with delegation of Israeli Ministry of Health

On 20 May 2019, a meeting was held in ASHE with a delegation of the Ministry of Health of the State of Israel, which paid a two-day visit to Zagreb.

The topics of the meeting included the procedures of external quality assurance in higher education and science that are carried out by ASHE, and the Agency's overall activity and role in enhancing the quality culture of Croatian higher education. During the meeting, the emphasis was put on the possibility of directing ASHE's future activities towards specific, profession-oriented accreditations of study programmes, in particular accreditation of programmes in the field of biomedicine and health.

The Israeli delegation also paid a visit to the Ministry of Science and Education, the University of Zagreb School of Medicine and the hospital centres where clinical practice is held, to get acquainted with the work of these institutions.

Study visit of Indonesian delegation to ASHE

The delegation of the *People's Legislative Assembly of Riau Province* from Indonesia visited the Agency for Science and Higher Education on 1 July 2019. The MPs of the Indonesian Riau Province, which holds a population of around 6 million, held a meeting with ASHE representatives to get information on the Croatian system of external quality assurance in higher education.

The delegation expressed interest in cooperating with Croatian higher education institutions, with the aim of achieving academic mobility of students and teaching staff.

This meeting represents the first step in further cooperation with the Riau Province. During their study visit to Croatia, the members of delegation also held meetings with the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Finance.

Colleagues from Slovenia, Turkey and Netherlands visit ASHE

Colleagues working in science and higher education from Turkey, Slovenia and the Netherlands visited the Agency for Science and Higher Education in September 2019.

On 9 September 2019, ASHE hosted the representatives of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, prof. dr. Franci Demšar, Director of the Agency, and Mr. Klemen Šubic. The topics discussed were the good practices that the two agencies exchanged, the development of quality culture in the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia, internationalization of higher education, *accreditation* of joint and online studies, procedures and evaluation standards and legislation in the area of quality assurance in higher education, since Slovenia still does not have a separate law regulating that area. ASHE Director, Prof. Jasmina Havranek, Ph.D., stressed the need for strengthening cooperation between the two agencies which signed the Cooperation Agreement to exchange their experts in evaluations and accreditation procedures in the field of quality assurance and other projects.



On the same day, ASHE welcomed the representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science as part of the study visit to Croatia. The participants talked about the Croatian system of higher education, internationalization of higher education, mobility and other priorities related to higher education, especially from the aspect of the forthcoming Croatia's presidency of the EU. ASHE representatives introduced their Dutch colleagues to quality assurance in the Croatian higher education system and it was stated that the first cycle of reaccreditation of all higher education institutions showed that the internationalization and mobility are the weak points of Croatian higher education.In order to raise awareness of this issue, ASHE started a cycle of seminars on the internationalization of higher education and conducted a survey among higher education institutions in order to establish difficulties encountered by higher education institutions in



Study visit of representatives of Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

their efforts to internationalize. The guests were also familiarized with this topic.

On 10 September 2019, ASHE welcomed Prof. dr. Mustafa Çufali, rector of the University Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit from Turkey, Mr. Dinçer Biçer from the University Office for International Cooperation and Ms. Zeynep Gizem Hancerli, representative of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Croatia. They met with representatives of the Agency to exchange information on the systems of quality assurance in higher education in Croatia and Turkey and to become familiar with the processes of quality assurance in higher education and science carried out by ASHE. Furthermore, the processes of internationalization of higher education were discussed as well as experiences from both countries regarding the delivery of study programmes in English, attracting foreign students, delivering joint studies and other topics. Representatives of the University Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit are interested in cooperation with Croatian universities and in attracting Croatian students to their University. In relation to that they also met with representatives of the University of Zagreb and the Croatian Catholic University in Zagreb.

Visit of EMREX network representatives

On 5 April 2019, ASHE's Central Applications Office (SPU) received the visit of colleagues from the EMREX network - Vera Mol from the Netherlands, Head of innovative projects at the Dutch Government's Executive Agency (The Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs - DUO) and Matija Puzar from Norway, Senior engineer in the Management for ICT and shared services in higher education and research (*Direktoratet for IKT og fellestjenester i høyere utdanning og forskning* - UNIT), in charge of the development of ELMO XML exchange standards.

During the visit, our colleagues shared their work experience with the EMREX network, with challenges they have to face in the electronic transfer of student records and their plans for the future when it comes to service improving.

Considering that the Agency for Science and Higher Education created the (NCP)EMREX National Contact Point and the new service "e-Exchange of student grade" on e-Citizens portal at the end of August 2018, and in this way Croatia joined the EMREX network, this visit was particularly useful because of the exchange of good practice.

ENQA General Assembly

General Assembly of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA was held on 17-18 October 2019 in Yerevan (Armenia). The event was hosted by the Armenian agency for quality assurance – ANQA (*National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation*).

The programme focused on the future of higher education quality assurance and ENQA's role to play in these future developments. A consolidated version of the ENQA Strategy 2021-2025 was presented. Participants also discussed the added value stemming from European cooperation in the field of quality assurance, with a focus on certain regions.

The General Assembly is held once a year in the organization of one of ENQA's members, bringing together more than a hundred representatives of higher education quality assurance agencies.

Public discussion on recognition of foreign professional qualifications in biomedicine and health

A public discussion on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in the field of biomedicine and health was held at the University of Zagreb on 2 April 2019.

The event brought together representatives of the University of Zagreb and the University of Rijeka, representatives of all professional chambers in the field of biomedicine and health, representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Ministry of Science and Education and ASHE's representatives.

The participants discussed how to further raise awareness in responsible state and public authorities and institutions of the problem of obtaining the right to exercise regulated professions in the field of biomedicine and health in Croatia on the basis of foreign professional qualifications, in particular the ones acquired in so-called third countries (outside the EU). The issue of recognition of foreign qualifications acquired in third countries raises certain questions and causes technical problems that can be solved by further encouraging an open cooperation between all relevant stakeholders and by addressing these problems on a higher level and in a broader context, thus placing them under the adequate authority of competent expert bodies – as concluded at the discussion in view of assuring the quality of work and services in the field of biomedicine and health in Croatia.

Meetings of ECA members and working groups

As a full member of the *European Consortium for Accreditation* (ECA), ASHE is actively involved in the work of various ECA working groups and international projects that broadly deal with advancement of higher education in Europe, working on the development of different areas, from improvement of external quality assurance procedures, recognition of accreditation decisions and qualifications, accreditation of joint study programmes, digitalisation of external evaluation procedures, cooperation with various stakeholders, establishment of European universities, internationalisation and other current topics in the field of higher education.

Regular ECA working group meetings and joint member meetings were held in Cologne, Germany in February 2019, in May in Warsaw, in June in Riga and in October in Stockholm.

ASHE representatives participate in the work of several ECA working groups - (i) Mutual recognition and joint study programmes, (ii) Innovation in QA and accreditation, (iii) Certification group, (iv) Communication group and (v) Thematic analyses in line with the ESG.

The meeting in Cologne, Germany, took place on 19 and 20 February 2019. ECA event was hosted by the German agency for external quality assurance in higher education Quality Assurance Agency in the field of Higher Education (AQAS). At the winter meetings in Cologne, ASHE contributed to the activities of the working groups and the planning of new ECA projects. With this, ASHE enables further improvement of its external quality assurance procedures, opens the possibility for new international collaborations, and increases the visibility of its expertise and operation in an international arena. One of the planned improvements is to consider the possibility of including the evaluation of internationalization at Croatian higher education institutions, in accordance with the methodology for assessing the quality of internationalization in higher education, developed within ECA's CeQuint project – *Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation*.



In Warsaw, Poland, the ECA meeting was held on 7 May 2019; the main objective was to explore the need and the possibility of establishing a separate, formal ECA working group that would deal with thematic evaluations in accordance with ESG 3.4. Analysis conducted by the umbrella European association of agencies for quality assurance in higher education (ENQA) showed that ESG standard 3.4. is one of the less applied standards in the evaluations conducted by the member agencies. ASHE was pointed out as a positive example of compliance with the aforementioned criterion. At the meeting, a presentation on the application of ESG 3.4. was held by the president of EQAR, Karl Dittrich.

At the following meeting of the working group for thematic evaluations in higher education, held as part of the regular ECA meetings in Riga on 7-8 June 2019, a survey was presented that will be used to identify how are ECA members pursuing the activities related to ESG 3.4. The questionnaire was developed by ASHE in collaboration with the Spanish agency for quality assurance, *Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System* (ACSUG).

The June event was hosted by the Latvian institution for external quality assurance in higher education (AIKA).

During the meetings in Riga, the work of the working groups so far and the results achieved were analysed, and plans were defined for the following period. In addition to the meetings of the working groups, a regular joint meeting of the ECA members, i.e. ECA Board, was also held. At the meeting, the ECA Discussion Paper "European Universities Initiative - considerations regarding quality and quality assurance" was adopted.

At the meetings in Riga, ECA members agreed to continue strengthening ECA's role as a platform for learning and sharing knowledge, experiences and good practices in accreditation in higher education, and a platform for providing transparent information on quality and for promoting internationalisation of higher education, i.e. institutions and students.

Meetings of ECA working groups, ECA Board and joint meeting of ECA members in Stockholm, Sweden, were held on 3 and 4 October 2019. The two-day event was hosted by the Swedish institution for external quality assurance in higher education Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ), which also delivered thematic presentations on the Swedish system of quality assurance in higher education and science. Participants were informed of the evaluation of doctoral studies, with puts emphasis on the assessment of the conditions for enrolment, study structure and organisation, study implementation and results (including gender equality and monitoring, measures and feedback), student perspective, working life and cooperation. The presentation of the quality assurance of research provided an insight into the evaluation of Swedish HEls' research activities. The evaluation is based on international guidelines for research as defined by the European Charter for Researchers and the European Commission's Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, as well as on the national framework for quality assurance of research developed by the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF).

A new thematic evaluation that was launched in Sweden was also presented to the participants; the evaluation assesses the sustainable development of higher education institutions by individual topics of the national quality assurance system (management, environment, etc.) The evaluation was launched in order to meet the priorities of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Within the evaluation, the higher education institution produces a max. 20-page self-evaluation document, outlining its contribution to the sustainable development and objectives of the 2030 Agenda.



UKÄ also organised an invited lecture titled Internationalisation Index – Methodology, Results and Reactions, delivered by Hans Pohl, Ph.D., programme director of the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research & Higher Education (STINT).

The results of the survey on the thematic analyses in line with ESG, conducted among ECA members, were also presented at the event. Survey results showed that themes of such analyses are diverse and closely related to the types of evaluations conducted by member agencies; in most cases, the analyses are conducted by agency staff. Analyses of the results from programme evaluations are conducted more often that analyses of the results of institutional evaluations, and are mostly initiated by the member agencies, in cooperation with the competent authorities. Some results indicate that a more in-depth study is needed, in order to determine whether there is a possibility of improving and standardizing certain analyses. This will be discussed in future meetings.



ECA meeting in Stockholm

In November 2019, ECA published *ECA Barometer* as a way of contributing to various relevant topics in the field of higher education, which in a broad sense deal with further development of quality, and consequently the processes of quality assurance in European higher education. In this publication, ECA members summarized their reflections on the current situation of their respective systems of higher education, including the



challenges faced in today's dynamic business environment, and expressed their commitment to continue the search for innovative methods of quality assurance in higher education. ASHE representatives also contributed to this document.

In developing its evaluation procedures, ASHE will use the information gained through the exchange of experience with other ECA members, in particular the experience gained from participating in ECA working groups and bodies. ASHE will continue to be actively involved in the work of these groups and contribute to the development of the system of quality assurance in higher education and science.

World Education Day

The conference took place in the Chinese city of Dalian on 27-29 September 2019. Professor Jasmina Havranek, PhD and Dr. Vesna Dodiković Jurković, PhD, participated in the conference and gave a presentation titled "Twenty years of the Bologna Process and new initiatives".

The conference included researchers, teachers, creators of public policy and anyone interested in education, and it promoted cooperation in the area of education among HEIs, institutions and associations worldwide.



This year's topic was shaping the future of education for all and a series of forums, workshops and lectures that addressed various aspects of the future of higher education was held.

Kick-off conference of project SIDERAL

Kick-off conference of project SIDERAL - Social and International Dimension of Education and Recognition of Acquired Learning, took place on 2 July 2019 at the University of Zadar. The conference was funded from Erasmus+ programme. In addition to the representatives of higher education institutions, the conference was also attended by members of the National Group for the Advancement of the Social Dimension of Higher Education, which includes one appointed ASHE representative.



The SIDERAL project is designed to support the implementation of the measures of the National Plan for the Advancement of Social Dimension of Higher Education

Conference World Education Day in China

of the Republic of Croatia 2019-2021, and through it, a part of the activities of the National Group for the Advancement of Social Dimension of Higher Education will be funded.

Austrian and Swedish experts, representatives of the European Student Union, European Association of Universities and Croatian higher education institutions, presented their experiences at the conference.

Annual conference of EUPRIO network

Organized by the European Association of Communication Professionals in Higher Education (EUPRIO), and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, the annual EUPRIO conference was held from 16 to 19 June 2019, and was attended by representatives of the ASHE.

The focus of this year's conference were inspirational university communities that, with the help of communication experts, have taken innovative approaches to strengthening their reputation, by building a recognisable and authentic brand.

Since public communication is very important for higher education institutions, being closely linked to strategic decision-making process, the issue of effective internal communication as a powerful tool for building and managing reputation, and increasing student employability and attractiveness of the institution for potential students and other external stakeholders, was particularly emphasised.

Examples of good practice and innovation were presented at a number of lectures, highlighting the current role of social media and video content.

EUPRIO was established in 1986 with the support of the then European Community, to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences amongst its members, both within the whole communication field and particularly from the institutions of higher education's perspective. The association has more than 750 members in 15 European countries, and ASHE has been engaged in the activities of the association since 2016.

Seminar recognition of foreign qualifications and substantial differencesRepresentatives of the National ENIC NARIC Office at ASHE participated in the seminar on the recognition of foreign qualifications and the evaluation of the so-called substantial differences in recognition process (Seminar on Recognition of Qualifications and Substantial Difference).

The meeting, organised by the *Bologna Follow-up Group* (BFUG), was held on 26 June 2019 in Bologna, Italy. The seminar was hosted by the Italian ENIC/NARIC office – Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence (Centro di Informazione sulla Mobilità e le Equivalence Accademiche – CIMEA).

During the meeting, a number of relevant topics were raised in seminars and workshops, not only regarding the recognition of foreign qualifications and academic and professional mobility, but also the further development of educational policies.

26th Joint meeting of ENIC and NARIC networks

Representatives of the National ENIC NARIC Office at ASHE have in 2019 also participated in the regular annual meeting of ENIC (European Network of Information Centres in the European Region) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union) networks. The meeting, organized by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, was held on 16-18 June 2019 in Cologne, Germany.

The meeting was hosted by the (KMK) Central Office for Foreign Education of the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs.

During the meeting, a number of relevant topics were raised in seminars and workshops, not only regarding the recognition of foreign qualifications and academic and professional mobility, but also regarding the further development of educational policies.

EUF Open Space 2019 - project incubator for Erasmus+ programme

In 2019, ASHE representative participated in the EUF Open Space 2019 - project incubator for the Erasmus+, held on 3-5 July 2019 at the University of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines in Versailles, France.

The event was attended by more than 70 participants from 23 European countries, representing various institutions in the area of higher education. In addition to basic guidelines on preparation and implementation of ERASMUS+ projects and information on various opportunities offered by ERASMUS+ programme, the participants were provided with interactive workshops where new project ideas were being discussed, while facilitating inter-institutional networking and future project collaborations.

Workshop on the short cycle of higher education

Organised by EURASHE (*European Association of Institutions in Higher Education*) and the Council of Portuguese Polytechnics, with the support of the Portuguese Ministry of Higher Education and Science and Polytechnic Institute of Porto, a workshop on the various aspects of short cycle of higher education was held in Porto on 19-20 September 2019. The workshop was also attended by representatives of ASHE.

A special emphasis was placed on mission, role and goals of short cycle of higher education, as well as its impact on the labour market. The workshop covered topics related to specific groups of students, quality assurance of such programmes, and recognition of qualifications obtained through the completion of a short cycle of higher education. The focus was also put on pedagogical skills and teaching methods, especially with regard to practical aspects, work-based learning, and collaboration with the job market.

The Portuguese system of short study programmes was presented, as well as their role and development. Short study programmes are of great importance for the country's development given their compliance with the needs of the labour market. Moreover, the aim is to facilitate access to higher education for a larger circle of interested parties (social dimension).



International experts shared their vision of the status and role of short professional study programmes in the European Higher Education Area.

Final conference of LIREQA project

On May 22, 2019, the final conference of the ERASMUS+ project "Linking Academic Recognition and Quality Assurance" (LIREQA) was held in Vilnius. The conference was hosted by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

The aim of the LIREQA project was to contribute to the further improvement of the recognition of foreign qualifications, i.e. fair and proper evaluation of foreign qualifications, especially in the procedures of academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, recognition of periods of study and, more broadly, recognition of prior learning (RPL). By recommending linking academic recognition and quality assurance in higher education in practice, the project sought to provide an additional impetus to a stronger link between internal and external quality assurance in higher education and academic recognition. The LIREQA project also sought to contribute to the development of public policies in the area of recognition, in line with the European agenda for the promotion of mobility, to identify the existing practices in European countries, and to encourage stronger cooperation between higher education institutions, ENIC and NARIC centres and agencies for external quality assurance in higher education.

At the final conference in Vilnius, Recommendations (Integrating academic recognition and Quality Assurance: practical recommendations) were presented to the participants, with group discussions on their content and possible implementation from the perspectives of HEIs, quality assurance agencies and ENIC and NARIC centres. The ASHE representative moderated and contributed to one of the discussions by sharing the experiences of the Agency, which, within its scope of work, does link the external quality assurance procedures with the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, as the National ENIC/NARIC Office is a part of the Agency.

International conference on EU funds

International conference on European funds entitled "What is new with EU funds in the financial period 2021-2027? Learning from the experience of strategic development and implementation of EU projects of other EU member states" was held in Trakošćan on 6-7 March, 2019. The conference was attended by a representative of ASHE.

The aim of the conference was to better involve current and future beneficiaries of EU funds in the process of planning and using the existing opportunities. Participants were informed on the preparations for the new financial period 2021-2027, the experiences of former beneficiaries of EU funds and projects from other member states, and the challenges of implementing EU projects.

Guest speakers included Vittoria Alliata di Villafranca, Director-General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, Florentina Ciocanel, Deputy Director, Ministry of European Funds of Romania, Aurelio Cecilio, Head of the Department for Croatia, Bulgaria and Slovenia, EC's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy urban policy, and others.

ENQA Leadership programme

This year, an ASHE representative participated in the training programme ENQA Leadership 2019, organized by umbrella association for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ENQA and she participated in the first of three seminars on 21-23 October 2019. The first seminar was hosted by the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance – AQ Austria. The topics discussed included challenges and new trends in quality assurance in higher education and the most frequent problems faced by quality assurance agencies undergoing ENQA review, especially the problem concerning the proving of agency independence.

ASHE hosts 6th regional meeting of ENIC and NARIC centres

Sixth regional meeting of ENIC and NARIC centres was held on 12 December 2019 in Ljubljana. The host of the meeting was the Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport, Slovenian ENIC NARIC centre. The topics discussed were automatic recognition of foreign qualifications, credibility of national quality assurance systems and prospective future joint projects aimed at improving the recognition procedures. Along with representatives of Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office representatives of other ENIC and NARIC offices from the region participated in the event.

PRESENTATIONS HELD AND PUBLISHED PAPERS

Havranek, J., ASHE's support to the improvement of quality and relevance of higher education institutions and study programmes, round table organized by Faculty of Textile Technology, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia, 15 October 2019;

Havranek, J., The role of evaluation of the academic environment in clinical teaching bases, round table within the project Alliance4Life, the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia, 28 November 2019;

Havranek J., Dodiković-Jurković, V., 20 Years of Bologna Process and New Initiatives, World Education Day Assembly-2019, Dalian, China, 27-29 September 2019;

Bezjak, S., International accreditations, International accreditations - added value, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia, 29 November 2019;

Bezjak, S., *Quality assurance in higher education*, Conference of the Student Conference of the University of Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia, 26-27 April 2019;

Bezjak, S., Role of quality in education, Topical matters in adult education, Sv. Martin na Muri, Croatia, 2 and 3 December 2019;

Bezjak, S., Predstavitev hrvaške Agencije za znanost in visokoškolsko izobraževanje (AZVO), Program posveta za strokovnjake NAKVIS, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 12 November 2019;

Bezjak, S., The new cycle of institutional accreditation – Croatian experience, Institutional accreditation of HEI in Latvia – opportunities and challenges II, Riga, Latvia, 14 November 2019;

Bezjak, S. Đorđević., M., Attracting foreign students, Seminar: Some aspects of internationalization of higher education: Attracting foreign students, Zagreb, Croatia, 12 June 2019;

Briški, G., Dodiković-Jurković V., Characteristics of The European Higher Education Area in 2018, 19th Croatian conference on quality and 10th scientific symposium of the Croatian Society for Quality, Vodice, Croatia, 15-17 May 2019;

Cvitanušić Brečić, M., Grubišić M., Optimization of collecting information on ASHE external evaluation procedures (Interoperability: MOZVAG – CROSBI – Project database), international professional conference DEI 2019, Zagreb, Croatia, 1–2 April 2019;



Cvitanušić Brečić, M., Grubišić M., Development of the (National) Database of Project Activities in Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Croatia, Book of Abstracts from the international conference PUBMET 2019, Zadar, Croatia, 18–19 September 2019;

Dodiković-Jurković, V., Transformational strategies for higher education, 7th Higher Education Institutions Conference 2019: Building Agile Organizations, Opatija, Croatia, 23-24 September 2019;

Dodiković-Jurković, V., Stakeholder Involvement in External Quality Assurance – ASHE experience, CEENQA General Assembly and Workshop 2019, Kyrenia, Cyprus, 17-18 May 2019;

Dodiković-Jurković, V., *Quality Assurance and Higher Education – Opportunities for Students*, Role of Students in Quality Assurance at Higher Education Institutions, Zagreb, Croatia, 9 December 2019;

Drvodelić I., Modernizing Admissions Technology - Al, Blockchain, Credentials & Security, IAAO 2019, Toronto, Canada, 26 September 2019;

Drvodelić I., EU Initiatives and Standards - ASHE Activities, European university alliances and Development of Joint Studies, Zagreb, 30 October 2019;

Grubišić M., Measuring the societal impact of scientific work in the process of re-accreditation of higher education institutions and public scientific institutes in the Republic of Croatia (poster) 17th International conference on scientometrics & informetrics, Rome, Italy, 2–5 September 2019;

Petrušić, I., Academic Rankings: Challenges and perspectives, roundtable of Universitas association, University of Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia, 14 March 2019;

Petrušić, Irena (2019): Lost in the process: How Stakeholders View Quality of Public Universities in Croatia? Društvena istraživanja : Journal for General Social Issues, 28 (2019), 2; 333-352

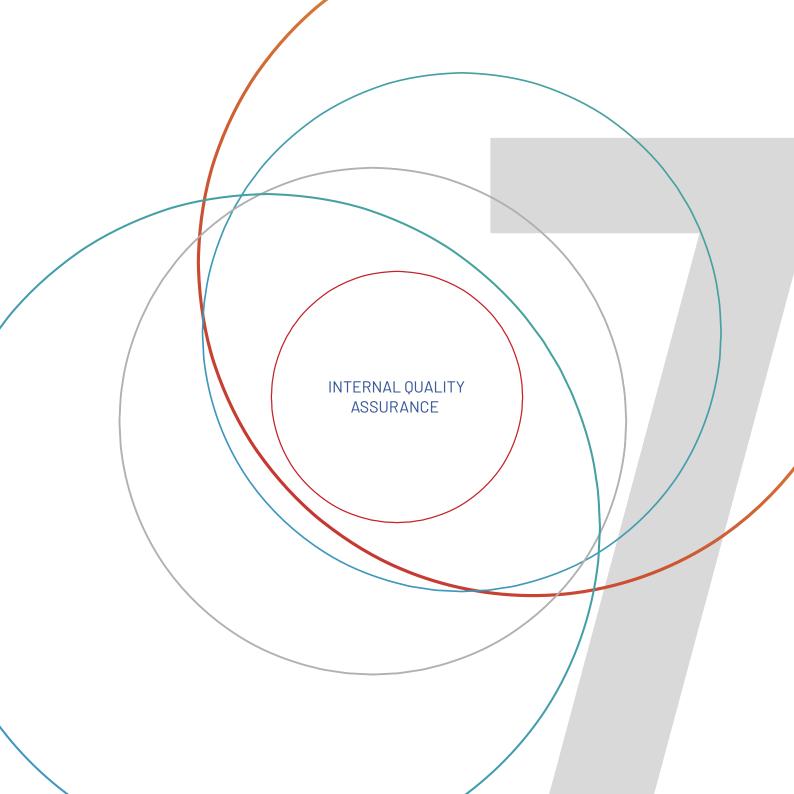
Petrušić, I., "The Influence of Openness on Ranking and Visibility of Higher Education Institutions", SRCE, E-infrastructure Days 2019: "Connecting. Communication. Cooperation.", Zagreb, Croatia, 1 April 2019;

Petrušić, I., The role of bylaws in the context of procedures of external evaluation of quality in higher education and science, Croatian Library Association, symposium Librarianship in the light of the adoption of standards and regulations for the operation of Croatian libraries, Zagreb, Croatia, 15 November 2019;

Stanić M., Pužar M., Software development: Decentralized verification infrastructure for documents, EUNIS conference, Trondheim, Norway, 7 June 2019.

Dodiković-Jurković, V. Transformational strategies for higher education, 7th Higher Education Institutions Conference 2019: Building Agile Organizations, Opatija, Hrvatska, 23. i 24. rujna 2019.

Dodiković-Jurković, V. Stakeholder Involvement in External Quality Assurance – ASHE experience, CEENQA General Assembly and Workshop 2019, Kyrenia, Cipar, 17. i 18. svibnja 2019.



In 2006, ASHE Management Board adopted a decision on the establishment of internal quality management system. The path from the adoption of that decision, to the establishment of a functional quality system that is fit for purpose, was followed against the backdrop of an overall institutional development.

Keenly aware of the importance of continuous learning and development, we have actively encouraged our employees to expand their knowledge and develop new skills, in order to think critically, identify risks, creatively solve problems and improve ASHE business processes. From the very beginning, we have encouraged the development of a quality culture in which employees are responsible for the quality of their own work, and aware of their contribution to the institutional mission and strategy.

Knowing and applying, and - if needed - adapting and improving, is not always easy. Knowing that we have good and motivated employees, ready for collaboration and teamwork, with good communication it is easier to find adequate solutions to the challenges of today's dynamic business environment.

ASHE developed an integrated quality assurance system, in line with both ESG and ISO 9001. The application of these standards has contributed to the improvement of business processes and development of a culture of self-evaluation, both at individual and organisational levels.

In the period 13-18 March 2019, an internal audit was carried out all the level of all organisational units, resulting in 16 observations, 4 commendations, 3 recommendations for development and 1 recommendation for improvement. Internal audit did not show any nonconformities.

Like every year, ASHE's QMS has been subject to an external audit by DNV GL. The 2018 external audit of ASHE was a re-certification audit, resulting in DNV GL certificate No. 68377-2009-AQ-HRV-HAA, valid for the period of 5 November 2018 - 28 October 2021.

This year's external audit was conducted on 27 October 2019, and the resulting report confirmed that the Agency's QMS is in high compliance with the requirements of HRN EN ISO 9001: 2015. In line with the ESG, European quality assurance agencies are subject to international external evaluation procedure organised by ENQA in 5-year cycles, in order to prove their conformity with ESG Parts II and III.

First such evaluation of ASHE was carried out in 2011, and second in 2016/17. On account of a positive evaluation report, ASHE's full membership in ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) was extended by the decision of ENQA Board. Based on the same report reviewed by the ENQA Board, ASHE was registered in EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education), and has in 2017 renewed its status in the Register for the period of 5 years.

ENQA committee report is available on ASHE website:

https://www.azvo.hr/images/stories/publikacije/ENQA_izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e_2017.pdf

The report was also submitted to the minister of science and education, and members of the Rectors' Conference and Council of Polytechnics and Colleges.

In addition to findings that refer to ASHE's compliance with individual standards and guidelines, the report also contains recommendations for improvement in the following period. In the follow up stage, ASHE produced and submitted its action plan. The ENQA Board fully accepted this document.

As part of the ENQA progress visit, on 3 March 2019 ASHE was visited by Mr. Jürgen Köhler, chair of the ENQA evaluation committee, and Ms. Vanessa Duclos. In accordance with the agreed protocol, the participants of the meeting discussed the improvements that ASHE made during the follow up stage, namely the new procedure of re-accreditation of higher education institutions and the development of a new model of initial accreditation, which includes a stronger application of the CroQF principles, as well as the Agency's contribution and impact on the development of Croatian higher education, and advantages and challenges experienced in the evaluation of study programmes in relation to the evaluation of higher education institutions (programme vs. institutional evaluation).

In 2018, ENQA launched the external evaluation of the ENQA Agency Review process and invited ASHE to participate in the procedure. During the meeting with the expert panel, the Agency had the opportunity to present its experiences and indicate areas that could be improved. Stakeholder satisfaction with ASHE services is of crucial importance and thus continuously monitored. Questionnaires are sent to the stakeholders, and their answers are processed, analysed and used to identify good practices and opportunities for improvement. The stakeholders also provide their feedback via e-mail, telephone and at various events organised by ASHE (conferences, workshops, seminars etc.)



Chart 28: Overview of the client satisfaction with ASHE services, by individual departments

*OVP – Audit Department; OVO – Department of Higher Education; OZZ – Department of Science; OAZ – Department of Accreditation in Science; OAV – Department of Accreditation in Higher Education; UMO – Office for Appointments into Scientific, Artistic and Teaching Grades; OP/OIP – General Administration/IT Department; SPU – Central Applications Office; MS/UEN – International cooperation/ENIC/NARIC Office



The stakeholder feedback indicates the following:

- Regarding the cooperation with ASHE employees, clients/stakeholders commended the expertise, professionalism, courtesy, timely response, clarity of feedback, focus and excellent presentation skills of ASHE employees.
- Satisfaction with activities carried out through the SKAZVO project, which allow for the development of competencies of different stakeholder groups within the academic community. This is rather important given that higher education institutions have limited financial resources, and that the choice of educational topics is tailored to the needs of stakeholders.
- Satisfaction with the fact that SKAZVO project provided support to the work of career centres at HEIs, thus contributing to stronger links between higher education and labour market.
- Satisfaction with trainings and seminars organised by ASHE, aimed at preparing higher education institutions for various external evaluation procedures. Awareness of the importance of continuous implementation of external evaluation procedures, not only for further development of higher education institutions, but also as a confirmation of the integrity of their work.
- Satisfaction with the fact that the implementation of external evaluation procedures encourages internationalisation of higher education and science, which in turn contributes to the objectivity of the evaluation process and the inclusion of best international practices.
- Satisfaction with the fact that ASHE activities contribute to the increased visibility of the Croatian area of higher education.

We at the Agency believe that our employees are the main reason of our success. During February and March 2019 we have conducted an employee satisfaction survey. Data was collected via e-questionnaire. Compared to 2018, there was a slight increase in grades for all aspects of the organisational climate.

A review of the four-year (2015-2019) estimates of the various aspects of organisational climate showed that ASHE employees assessed with highest grades various professional values and goals, employee development opportunities, and cooperation with the immediate superior, which was, incidentally, the best evaluated aspect in the 2019 survey.

With regard to the individual aspect of the organisational climate:

- in terms of the average grade of individual aspects of the work, the autonomy in work was graded the highest
- in terms of employee motivation, the highest grades were given to benefits offered (in comparison to other organisations), and the joint setting of work goals
- in terms of employee development, the level of qualifications and superiors' support in career development were the aspects graded the highest.

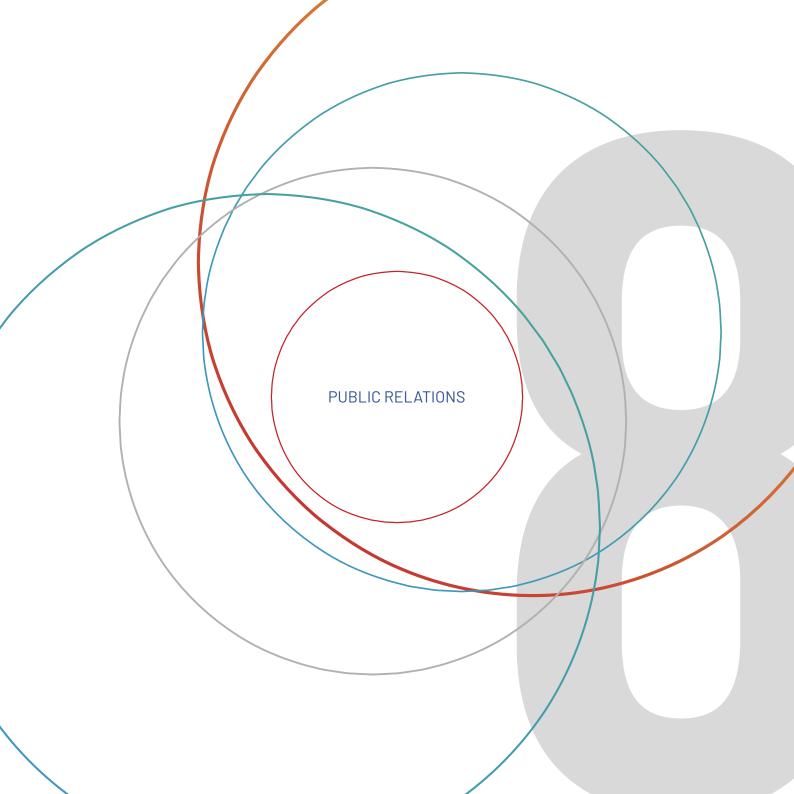
With regard to issues such as communication, cooperation and support within the organisation, the highest grades were given to aspects such as collegiality, freedom to express opinion and institutional flexibility in meeting the needs of stakeholders. With regard to individual engagement and commitment, most of the employees feel the commitment to the organisation and would recommend ASHE as a good employer. Regarding the cooperation with the immediate superior, the encouragement for presenting ideas, and fair conduct towards employees were graded the highest.

In terms of cooperation with ASHE management, the opportunity to present ideas and suggestions to the management, and the relationship between the management and the employees were the aspects graded the highest. In terms of work values and business goals, ASHE employees graded the knowledge of ASHE Strategy, mission and vision the highest.

Aspects such as job security, flexibility regarding the working hours and the use of vacation days, and cooperation with the immediate superior received the highest grades in 2019.

The established quality assurance system provides support to the implementation of internal and external evaluation procedures, with the aim of developing business processes in accordance with regulations and international standards. It also contributes to the development of an organisational quality culture that promotes shared institutional values, beliefs and attitudes.





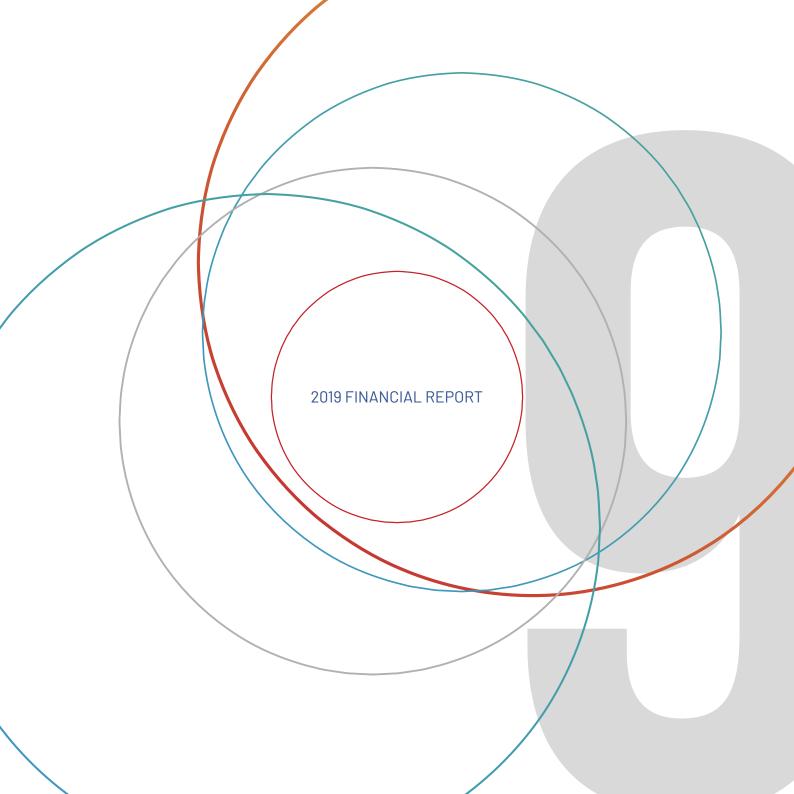
Providing information about the quality of higher education institutions, the higher education system in Croatia and reporting on the Agency's activities with the aim of promoting the importance of quality assurance in higher education and science is part of the Agency for Science and Higher Education's mission.

With the purpose of accomplishing this mission, during last year ASHE has carried out the following activities:

- 2018 Annual Report and 2019 Activity Plan were published in Croatian and English language; they were submitted to the Croatian Parliament, the Government of the Republic of Croatia, higher education institutions and other stakeholders in the higher education and science system, as well as to ENQA, EQAR and European agencies specialised in quality assurance in higher education, and they were published on the Agency's website www.azvo.hr;
- The following publications were issued: *Što nakon srednje*?(What to do after high school?), *Želje, planovi i stavovi hrvatskih srednjoškolaca* (Wishes, plans and attitudes of Croatian secondary school pupils) and the brochure Akademska rangiranja (Academic Rankings);
- In cooperation with TV Student, ASHE made and released a video entitled #youchoose that informs potential students about the higher education system, types of higher education institutions, study programmes, possibilities of continuing education, the importance of accreditation, support to student standard through scholarships and useful network resources. Moreover, ASHE also made and released a video entitled "Why study in Croatia", in Croatian and English language, that provides information about what Croatia as a destination for higher education offers. These videos were advertised among the general public through ASHE's website and social media profiles;
- ASHE's electronic newsletter was issued in Croatian and in English language, it was submitted to the stakeholders and published on the website as well as on social media profiles. The printed version of the newsletter was delivered to all higher education institutions;
- Higher education institutions were regularly supplied with information regarding ASHE's activities and news in the higher education and science system;
- Press releases related to important activities and events organised by ASHE were published on ASHE's web page and submitted to relevant media and stakeholders, responses to questions raised by the press were given in time to media representatives;
- ASHE's web page and Facebook and Twitter profiles were updated on a regular basis;
- In order to increase international visibility, news concerning ASHE's activities were published in the electronic newsletters issued by ENQA, EQAR, CEENQA and INQAAHE;
- With the aim of raising awareness of how important is proactive and strategic communication for higher education institutions, ASHE organised a workshop on branding of higher education institutions. The workshop was held on 8 July 2019 at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb. The goal was to encourage Croatian higher education institutions to recognize their strengths, to teach them how to link them together (create a brand) and finally, present them efficiently; the final aim is to strengthen HEI's visibility and trust as well as to attract the best candidates from Croatia and abroad. The workshop was led by doc. dr. sc. Hrvoje Jakopović from the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb.



Seminar on the branding of higher education institutions



The Agency for Science and Higher Education is a budget beneficiary of the Ministry of Science and Education. In 2019, the Agency had 20 activities in the budget:

- A621155 Administration and general transactions
- A621179 National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development
- A621182 College of Polytechnics and Higher Schools
- A621186 Evaluation of Scientific Organisations
- A621187 Evaluation of higher education institutions
- A621190 External evaluation of the quality assurance system of higher education institutions and scientific organisations
- A621191 Monitoring the employability of graduated students
- A621192 Central applications office
- A867004 Committee for ethics in science and higher education
- K621178 Equipment and maintenance
- K621194 National Information System for Applications to Higher Education Institutions
- K867008 European Social Fund SKAZVO project (Improvement of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Systems in Higher Education)
- T867003 IPA RPL Competitive Croatian Higher Education for Better Employability
- A867005 Strengthening Professional Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training in Central and South-Eastern Europe (PROCSEE)
- A867006 BUILDPHE Building Professional Higher Education Capacity
- A867009 HRMinHEI Project Modernisation of Higher Education Institutions through enhancement of Human Resources Management function
- A867002 EURASHE Harmonisation of Approaches for Vocational Education in Europe
- A867010 MEHR Modernisation, Education and Human Rights
- A867013 DEQAR Database of External Quality Assurance Reports
- A867014 ERASMUS Keep innovation in multi partnership cooperation in lifelong guidance services KEEP IN PACT

Based on the financial reports, total revenue in 2019 amounted to HRK 23.331.677. It consisted of:

- 1. State budget resources for 2019: HRK 18.367.335
- 2. Business revenue: HRK 651.876
- 3. ESF project Improvement of Quality Assurance and Project Enhancement Systems in Higher Education (SKAZVO): HRK 3.772.908
- 4. Other EC funded projects: HRK 534.348
- 5. Other revenues: HRK 5.210

Total expenditure in 2019 amounted to HRK 23.426.094. It comprised business expenditure in the amount of HRK 22.268.330 and expenditure for acquisition of non-financial assets in the amount of HRK 1.157.764.

	EXPENDITURE	HRK
	EXPENDITURE (A+B)	23.426.094
Α.	Business expenditure (1+2+3+4+5)	22.268.330
1.	Staff expenditure	10.528.175
1.1.	Salaries (gross)	8.849.546
1.2.	Salary contributions	1.427.200
1.3.	Other staff costs	251.429
2.	Material costs	11.520.433
2.1.	Travel costs and other remunerations	3.306.270
2.2.	Material and energy expenditure	322.489
2.3.	Service costs	6.731.103
2.4.	Other expenditure not included above	1.155.365
2.5.	Internship costs	5.206
3.	Financial expenditure	49.087
4.	Subvention	48.392
5.	Grants given abroad and within the general budget	122.243
В.	Acquisition of non-financial assets	1.157.764

A. Business expenditure:

Item 1. Staff expenditure includes:

- salaries (gross)
- other staff expenditure (gifts for children, severance pay, help after an extended sick leave, etc.).

Item 2. Material costs include:

- Travel costs and other remunerations
- Material and energy expenditure
- Service costs
- Other costs not included above.

Item 2.1. Travel costs and other remunerations that include:

- travel costs for members of expert panels participating in external evaluation procedures (initial accreditation, reaccreditation, thematic evaluation of higher education institutions and research organisation, audits), travel costs for members of ASHE professional bodies, and other external associates and employees, remunerations for transport costs to and from work;
- costs of professional trainings, seminars and other educational programmes.



Item 2.2. Material and energy expenditure includes:

- office materials, energy, materials for current and investment maintenance, small inventory, car tires and other costs
- Item 2.3. Service costs includes:
 - maintenance of other information systems Centrix system for administration and data management, IP telephone centre and contact centre, software for financial administration, and other programmes;
 - costs of renting (offices, space for seminars, workshops, training courses and committees' sessions, working groups and other bodies);
 - intellectual services:
 - temporary work contracts with Croatian and foreign members of expert panels working on external quality assurance procedures implemented by the Agency (initial accreditation, re-accreditation, thematic evaluation of higher education institutions and research organisation, audit);
 - temporary work contracts with members of professional and administrative bodies working with the Agency (members of the Accreditation Council, NCSHETD, Committee for Ethics in Science and Higher Education, scientific field committees, scientific area councils, CPC, and other committees established in accordance with the work plan and as required);
 - student work for Central Applications Office;
 - telephone, postage (scientific field committees, ENIC/NARIC, SPU) and transport costs;
 - promotion and information services (ASHE Annual report, brochures and materials for conferences, and other Agency events, ESF project publications and promo materials);
 - communal services;
 - design and printing costs, and other services.
 - archiving services.

Item 2.4. Other expenditure not included above that includes:

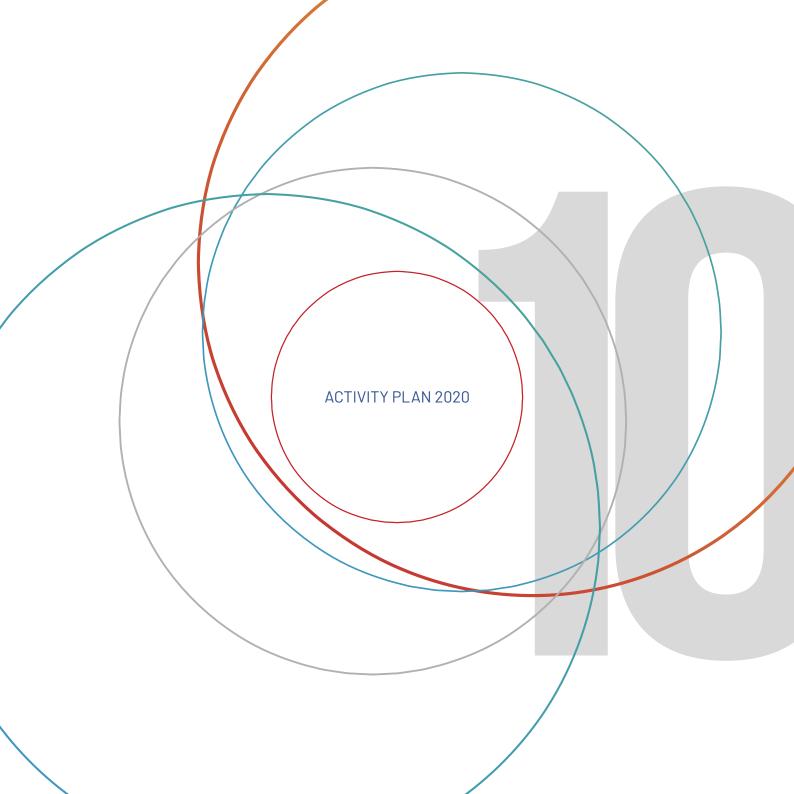
- costs of the Agency's Management Board
- insurance premium
- membership fees (national and international).

B. Acquisition of non-financial assets:

- 1. software licences;
- IT programmes costs (contracts for the maintenance and upgrading of NISpVU system National Information System for Applications to Study Programmes and NISpDS system - National Information System for Applications for Graduate Studies (National Information System for Applications for Graduate Studies), costs of maintenance and upgrading of the information system MOZVAG;
- 3. office, computer and communication equipment, equipment for the maintenance of heating and ventilation system, etc.

Contracts awarded in public procurement procedures in 2019

During 2019, 18 straightforward procurement contracts (worth up to HRK 200.000) were awarded. The cumulative value of the contracts amounts to HRK 1.452.527, exclusive of VAT. In the public procurement procedure (worth more than HRK 200.000), one contract for travel agencies was awarded to Speranza d.o.o.; the cumulative value of the contract amounts to HRK 1.000.000, exclusive of VAT. In the procedure of central public procurement, the Agency awarded 3 contracts expiring 2022 with a cumulative value of HRK 99.000, exclusive of VAT.





Implementation according to the Reaccreditation plan adopted by ASHE Accreditation Council (24 higher education institutions) and two higher education institutions which requested a postponement in 2019

Implementation of nitial accreditation fo performing higher education activity upon request

Implementation of initial accreditation for performing scientific activity upon request Implementation of initial accreditation of study programmes upon request

Implementation of initial accreditation of online study programmes upon request Implementation of audit according to the Plan adopted by the Accreditation Council (four higher education institutions)

Implementation of thematic evaluation upon request

Re-accreditation of public scientific institutes and scientific organisations outside the system of higher education (other legal entities)

Conducting activities from the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology

Supporting Croatian HEIs in the implementation of CROQF and the ESG Monitoring graduate satisfaction and employment Professional and administrative support to the work of strategic and professional bodies in the system of science and higher education (National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development, Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, scientific field committees, scientific area councils, field committees)

Participating in ongoing international projects and applying for new ones Developing human potential – life-long learning (training of ASHE employees)

training activities - the training of expert panels which conduct procedures of external evaluation, thematic training of HEIs and scientific organisations, organising conferences, seminars and workshops

Regular activities of the national network of QA units at higher education institutions

Improving the ASHE internal quality assurance system in accordance with the ESG and the ISO 9001, as well as with new models of external evaluation procedures Active participation in the development of the national information system for science and higher education

Updating the Knowledge Base

Conducting the procedure of application to integrated undergraduate and graduate study programmes at Croatian HFIs

Conducting centralised applications to graduate study programmes



Informing the public about the conditions of enrolment, application deadlines and other relevant information on applying for, competing and obtaining the right to enrol in study programmes (through the web site Become a student, the official web site of the Central Applications Office and the information provided to candidates directly addressing their inquiries to the Central Applications Office) Collecting documentation and personal data and grades input in the National Information System for Applications to Study Programmes in Croatia for candidates who have completed high school education before 2010 or outside the Republic of Croatia in order to be able to compete for enrolment in study programmes with candidates who finished high school in the Republic of Croatia

Creating ranking lists based on points obtained according to the terms of enrolment in the study programmes for candidates applying for study programmes with the aim of enrolling in higher education institutions in the Republic of Creatia

Collecting and analysing data of candidates outside the regular education system in Croatia enrolling in the first grade of secondary school Providing information on the national education system, foreign education systems and the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications

Providing information on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications

Recognition of foreign higher education qualifications Gathering and processing data and producing statistics and analytics on the level of the system by following trends

Active cooperation with external stakeholders (Ministry of Science and Education, Education, Science and Culture Committee of the Croatian Parliament, Croatian Rectors' Conference, Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, State Archives, Croatian Employment Board, Ministry of Public Administration, etc.)

Cooperating with institutions from the public and private sector, non-governmental and non-profit organisations

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- ASHE Agency for Science and Higher Education
- CAO Central Applications Office
- CEENQA -Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
- CPC Council of Polytechnics and Colleges
- CROOF Croatian Qualifications Framework
- ECA European Consortium for Accreditation
- EHEA European Higher Education Area
- ENIC European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility
- ENQA European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- EQAR European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
- ESG Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
- FC Field Committee
- MSE Ministry of Science and Education
- NARIC National Academic Recognition Information Centres
- NCSHETD National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development
- NISpVU National Information System of Application to Higher Education Institutions
- QAS Quality Assurance System
- SFC Scientific Field Committee

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