



ANNUAL REPORT

AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION 2011 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2012 ACTIVITY PLAN



Picture 1. Agency for Science and Higher Education Director, Prof. Dr. Jasmina Havranek with the international panel for the external review of ASHE: Prof. Dr. Domingo Do Campo, Ms. Janja Komljenović, Dr. Seamus Puirseil, Ms. Maria Cristina Pastor Varcacel and Dr. Kurt Sohm, during the site visit to ASHE in June 2011

INTRODUCTION

Dear readers,

It is a pleasure to present you with the latest annual report of the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education–ASHE.

Last year, 2011, was marked by the recognition of the international credibility of ASHE – our agency was admitted to full membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in October, and listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in November. This proved that ASHE fulfilled the criteria to be included in the list of agencies which work in the whole European Higher Education Area (EHEA), many of them responsible for external quality assurance processes in their national higher education systems. The recognition of ASHE work not only confirmed our credibility and independence, but also served as evidence that external quality assurance procedures in Croatian higher education were set up in accordance with best international practices, thus guaranteeing the quality of our work to all stakeholders in Croatian higher education and science.

ASHE was admitted to ENQA full membership and listed in EQAR primarily owing to its five year work on developing legal, professional and administrative platform for establishing the external quality assurance system in Croatian higher education and science. The ASHE efforts were recognized by the international review panel, presided by Dr. Seamus

Puirseil, former Irish Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) president and ENQA vice president. The panel completed the external review of ASHE in August 2011, producing a very positive report on our work and processes. The Report stated that ASHE was compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

At the national level, ASHE completed the first year of the re-accreditation process of higher education institutions in Croatia, which attracted a great interest of the national academic community, as well as the general public, thus confirming the importance of the ASHE role as the promoter of quality culture in higher education and science.

The re-accreditation procedures, as well as other external quality assurance processes – such as the thematic review of public research institutes – marked the beginning of a project which is quite unique in the recent history of Croatian higher education. It is unique primarily because it proves that external quality assurance in Croatian higher education is now fully functional and aligned with the highest European standards. However, the importance of this project lies primarily in the fact that it started a demanding five-year re-accreditation cycle of all higher education institutions in Croatia and will ultimately result in a comprehensive and objective assessment of the quality of the system.

In order to best implement the necessary changes, the system will require full responsibility of all stakeholders, as well as their mutual partnerships, which ASHE has been building with the academic and research community from the very beginning.

In the following period we will continue with external quality assurance processes in higher education and science; these are complex processes which require dedication and a high level of professionalism of all ASHE staff. I would like to use this opportunity to thank them, as well as all the representatives of the higher education institutions and scientific organisations which participated or will participate in our procedures, all international and Croatian panel members and students who have participated in many of our procedures, always very responsibly.

We are fully prepared to face the challenges ahead, remaining dedicated to our mission and the objectives we have set: to strongly support the Croatian system of higher education and science in improving its quality culture and positioning Croatian institutions on the global map of higher education and science.

Prof. Dr. Jasmina Havranek
Agency for Science and Higher Education Director

1 AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN BRIEF

ASHE defined its mission and vision, as well as its strategic goals, in documents available on its website at www.azvo.hr/en.

Mission

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

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

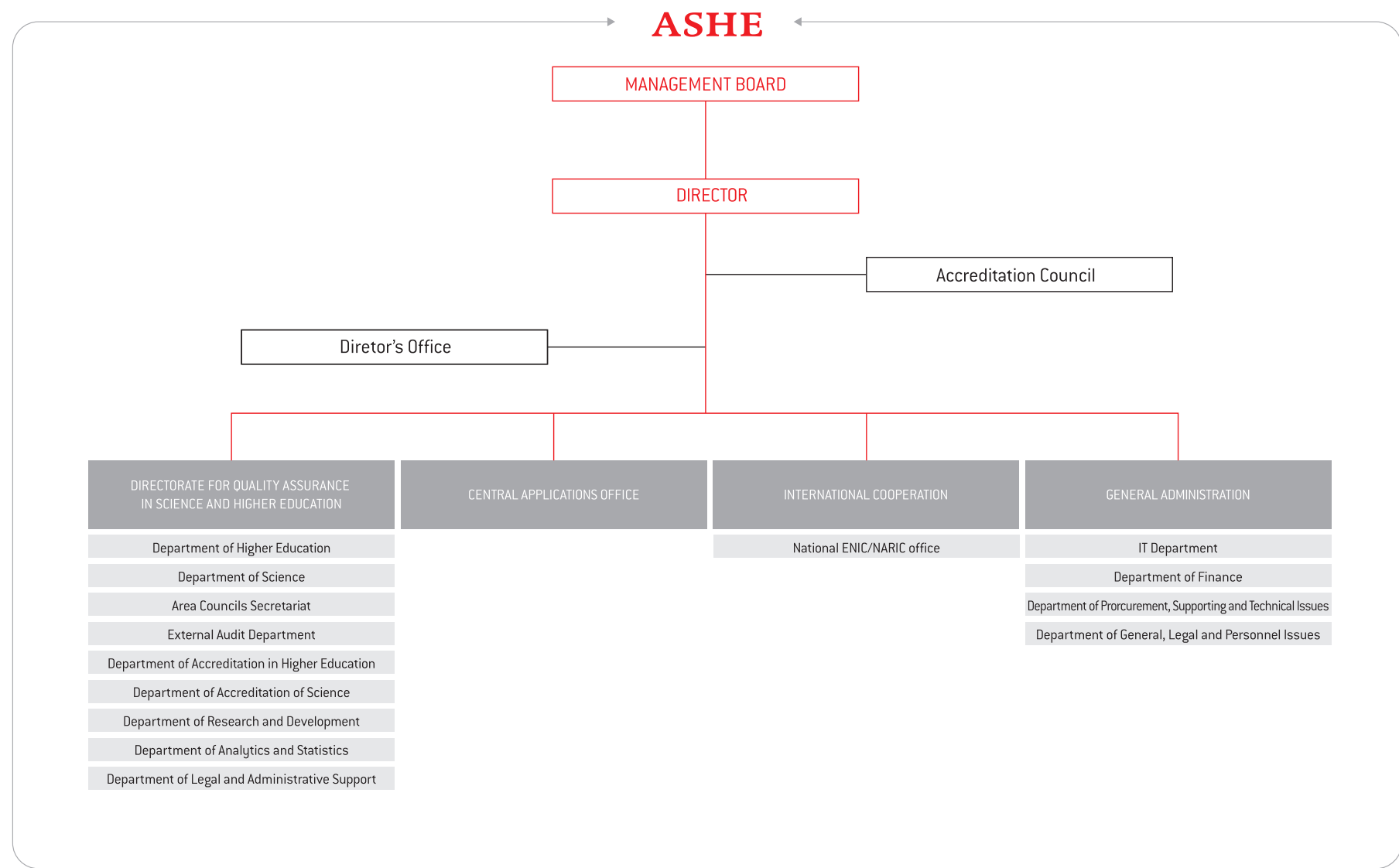
- quality improvement of higher education and science, as well as opportunities to attain specific educational levels;
- dissemination of reliable information on quality of academic standards to students, higher education institutions' management and the public;
- comparing the standards and quality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

Vision

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

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

Organisational chart



2 INTERNATIONAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

During June 2011, ASHE was visited by the international review panel, presided by Dr. Seamus Puirseil, former president of Irish Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and vice president of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). During the site visit, the panel talked with the ASHE management and staff, as well as representatives of Croatian higher education institutions, scientific organisations, experts from Croatia and abroad, representatives of the business community, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the National Council for Higher Education, the National Council for Science, the Rectors' Conference, students, etc.

On the basis of the site visit and the Self Evaluation Report drafted by ASHE, the expert panel produced a very positive report on ASHE work and processes, noting their compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The final report of the expert panel is available on the ASHE website, www.azvo.hr/en.

The reports specifically stressed the fact that ASHE, although a relatively new institution, managed very successfully and in a very brief period to build the legal, professional and administrative platform for the development of the quality

assurance system in science and higher education in Croatia. The report also commended the professional attitude and knowledge of the staff and management.

Based on the report, ASHE was admitted to ENQA full membership in October 2011, and listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in November. Thus ASHE fulfilled its legal obligation and confirmed the credibility of its processes, now formally recognized within the whole European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

3 REPORT ON THE EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES IMPLEMENTED IN 2011

3.1. RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In 2011 ASHE appointed expert panels for re-accreditation of higher education institutions within universities, colleges and polytechnics. In line with the Accreditation Council decision, 20 higher education institutions in the field of economics were selected for re-accreditation. All site visits to the institutions were completed in 2011.

By the end of the year, the Agency issued accreditation recommendations for 10 institutions, while the remaining nine

were still under review. The recommendations issued include four confirmations of fulfilment of the necessary conditions, two letters of expectations, four letters of expectations which include a prohibition of student enrolment, and eight denials of accreditation to dislocated study programs. The procedure was cancelled in case of one institution (Polytechnic for Social Sciences) due to its merger with the University of Zagreb Faculty of Law.

In 2011, the Accreditation Council invited to its sessions the members of the re-accreditation expert panels, as well as representatives of the re-accredited higher education institutions, in order to receive first-hand assessment of

the procedures as a step to further improve the system of re-accreditation of higher education institutions.

The Accreditation Council also adopted the Re-accreditation Plan for 2011/12, which covers 32 institutions in the field of technical sciences. The procedure will also include re-accreditation of research activities for those 20 higher education institutions that are also listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations.

Table 1. Accreditation recommendations in 2010/11

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION	Confirmation on the fulfilment of the conditions for performing higher education activities	Letter of expectation	Letter of expectation with a prohibition of student enrolment	Denial of accreditation for performing higher education activities, or a segment of higher education activities
University of Zagreb Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin	✓			
University of Zadar, Department of Economics	✓			
"Marko Marulić" Polytechnic in Knin	✓			
University of Dubrovnik, Department for Economics and Business Economics	✓ *		✓	
"Lavoslav Ružička" Polytechnic in Vukovar		✓		— professional programme <i>Physiotherapy</i> , Pregrada
University of Split Centre for Professional Studies		✓		
University of Rijeka Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija			✓	— undergraduate university programme <i>Business Economics in Hospitality and Tourism</i> ; specialisations in: <i>Entrepreneurship in Hospitality and Tourism</i> ; <i>Management in Tourism</i> ; <i>Management in Hospitality</i> ; <i>International Tourist and Hospitality Management</i> ; <i>Event and Leisure Management</i> and professional programme <i>Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism and Hospitality</i> ; specialisations in: <i>Management</i> , <i>Finances</i> , <i>Tourism</i> , <i>Hospitality</i> , <i>Gastronomy and Restaurant Management</i> , <i>Business Communications</i> , Zabok
University of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek Faculty of Economics			✓	— professional programme <i>Accounting</i> , Varaždin
American College of Management and Technology in Dubrovnik		✓ **	✓	
University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics and Business			✓	— undergraduate and graduate programme <i>Business Economics</i> ; specialisations in: <i>Finance</i> , <i>Accounting and Audit</i> , <i>Marketing</i> , <i>Management</i> , <i>IT Management</i> , <i>Trade</i> , <i>Tourism</i> , <i>Analysis and Business Planning</i> ; professional programme <i>Business Economics</i> ; specialisations in: <i>Tourism</i> , <i>Accounting and Finance</i> , <i>Secretarial Tasks</i> , Koprivnica — professional programme <i>Business Economics</i> ; specialisations in: <i>Tourism</i> , <i>Accounting and Finance</i> , <i>Secretarial Tasks</i> , Zabok — undergraduate university programme <i>Economics of Entrepreneurship</i> , Varaždin — undergraduate university programme <i>Entrepreneurship</i> , Bjelovar — undergraduate university programme <i>Business Economics</i> ; specialisations in: <i>Finance</i> , <i>Accounting and Audit</i> , <i>Marketing</i> , <i>Management</i> , <i>IT Management</i> , <i>Trade</i> , <i>Tourism</i> , <i>Analysis and Business Planning</i> , Koprivnica

* upon receiving evidence on the fulfilment of certain aspects of the letter of expectation, the Agency, on the basis of the Accreditation Council opinion, recommended to the Minister of Science, Education and Sports to issue a confirmation that the conditions have been fulfilled

** upon receiving evidence on the fulfilment of certain conditions listed in the accreditation recommendation, the Accreditation Council reached the opinion that the conditions were partly fulfilled, and the Agency recommended to the Minister to issue a letter of expectation setting a 1 year period for correcting the identified weaknesses

Picture 2. Members of the expert panel during the thematic evaluation of the Croatian Geological Survey in Zagreb



3.2. THEMATIC EVALUATIONS IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The procedure of thematic evaluation of the 25 public research institutes listed in the Croatian Register of Scientific Organisations was continued in 2011. At the beginning of the year, the expert panels for the evaluation were appointed, all consisting of international experts.

The members of the Accreditation Council invited the directors of the evaluated institutes to their sessions in 2011, asking for their comments on the panel reports. They offered their opinions and declared their full support for the external quality assurance system in science, expressing their satisfaction with the implemented evaluation and offering suggestions for further improvement of the procedure.

In addition to this, in 2011 the following procedures of thematic evaluations were launched:

- thematic evaluation of the self-accredited study programs at public universities,
- thematic evaluation of private scientific institutions and other legal persons listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations.

3.3. AUDITS

During 2011, all audit procedures of higher education institutions included in the 2010 plan were completed. The procedures, looking at internal quality assurance systems at higher education institutions, were carried out within the agreed dates, and there were no appeals on the procedures. The final grades for the institutions are shown in Table 2.

The efficiency of the internal quality assurance system of the University of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek Faculty of Philosophy and the University of Zagreb Faculty of Metallurgy were assessed to be in its early phase of development, and the Agency recommended a re-audit within 18 months. The internal quality assurance system of the University of J. J. Strossmayer Faculty of Civil Engineering was assessed as developed, and on October 3rd 2011 the Faculty was issued a certificate, containing the grade awarded to the QA system, as well as an assessment of its efficiency.

At its 14th session, held on April 19th 2011, the Accreditation Council adopted the Audit Plan for 2012, which includes 9 higher education institutions, and all procedures were launched before the end of 2011. In 2011 all 9 site visits took place, the draft reports were finished and all institutions are currently undergoing a follow-up. These procedures will be completed in 2012, when all reports will be published on the ASHE website.

The plan includes six public universities. The University of Dubrovnik is currently undergoing audit; upon its completion, ASHE will be able to produce a comparative assessment of the internal quality assurance systems of all Croatian public universities.

In May 2011 ASHE undertook a survey of the composition and efficiency of internal quality assurance systems of public and private higher education institutions in Croatia, and came up with the following data:

- 142 internal quality assurance units were established at higher education institutions (at universities, these also include libraries and research centres),
- 111 ordinances on QA systems were adopted, as well as 63 QA manuals,
- 42 internal audits were carried out.

In relative numbers, 92 % higher education institutions produced ordinances, 52 % produced manuals, and 35 % carried out internal audits.

Table 2. Quality assessment of higher education institutions included in the 2010 audit plan

ASHE criteria (based on ESG)	University of Zagreb Faculty of Metallurgy internal QA system	University of Osijek Faculty of Philosophy internal QA system	University of Osijek Faculty of Civil Engineering internal QA system
1.1	initial phase	initial phase	developed phase
1.2.1	initial phase	initial / developed phase	developed phase
1.2.2	initial phase	developed phase	developed phase
1.3	initial / developed phase	initial phase	developed phase
1.4	developed phase	initial phase	developed phase
1.5	initial phase	developed phase	initial / developed phase
1.6	initial / developed phase	initial phase	developed phase
1.7	initial / developed phase	developed phase	advanced phase
Total grade	initial phase	initial phase	developed phase

In 2011 we continued to foster the development and advancement of quality culture, and promote partnerships with all stakeholders in Croatian higher education. We organised a number of workshops and seminars for higher education management, representatives of internal quality assurance units and audit experts.

Table 3. Seminars and workshops

Name of the seminar/ workshop	Host	Date	Participants
Strategic planning for higher education institutions	University of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek	February 9 th 2011	Rectors, vice-rectors and deans
Strategic planning for higher education institutions	University of Zagreb	February 21 st 2011	Rectors, vice-rectors and deans
Strategic planning for higher education institutions	Council of Colleges and Polytechnics	February 22 nd 2011	Deans
Strategic planning for higher education institutions	University of Split	February 25 th 2011	Rectors, vice-rectors and deans
Internal and external audit	University of Zadar	June 15 th 2011	Quality Assurance Office, Quality Assurance Committee
Internal and external audit	University of Zadar	September 23 rd 2011	Department heads, Quality Assurance Office
Audit	ASHE	November 12 th 2011	Higher education institutions included in the audit plan for 2012
Annual workshop for audit experts	ASHE	December 14 th and 15 th 2011	Certified audit experts
Online course for audit experts	ASHE	whole year	Foreign academics

4 PROFESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC AND EXPERT BODIES IN THE SYSTEM OF SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

In 2011 ASHE continued to provide support to strategic and expert bodies in the system of science and higher education. We organised and prepared their meetings, drafted conclusions and monitored their implementation, as well as prepared analyses and reports. By ensuring successful functioning of these bodies, ASHE also indirectly contributes to better quality of the system of science and higher education, which is the key component of the ASHE mission.

4.1. NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE

In 2011 ASHE organised seven sessions of the National Council for Higher Education, five sessions of the National Council for Science and six sessions of the Scientific Area Councils. The number of the meetings decreased compared to previous years because most members' terms have expired and the councils were not able to muster quorum necessary to conduct the business. The number of sessions of the Scientific Area Councils decreased accordingly, since their work is closely related to the decisions of the National Council for Science. The new council members were appointed by the Croatian Parliament in November.

The strategically most important topic discussed by the National Council for Higher Education during 2011, in addition to the draft act on higher education, was the development of the Network of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes, the strategic document to which ASHE also actively contributed.

The other task of the National Council for Higher Education as well as ASHE was to finish external quality assurance procedures launched before the adoption of the new Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education. Having completed the procedures, the Council recommended to the Minister of Science, Education and Sports to issue licence for six new study programmes (one undergraduate university, three professional and two specialist graduate professional programmes) and one new private higher education institution (the College of Business "PAR" in Rijeka). The Council recommended denial of licence for one private higher education institution.

ASHE also participated in drafting the Annual Report of the National Council for Higher Education for 2010, adopted at the 24th session of the Croatian Parliament in November 2011.

The main topics discussed by the National Council for Science were related to new draft act on science, new Ordinance on Appointment to Scientific Grades and the draft document of the Network of Scientific Organisation

4.2. SCIENTIFIC FIELD COMMITTEES

The Scientific Field Committees passed a total of 1574 positive decisions on appointment to scientific grades (out of which 913 were based on personal rather than institutional request) and 49 negative decisions.

The data indicates that the highest number of decisions was passed by the Field Committee for Biomedicine and Health,

Chart 1. Number of sessions of the Scientific Field Committees in 2011

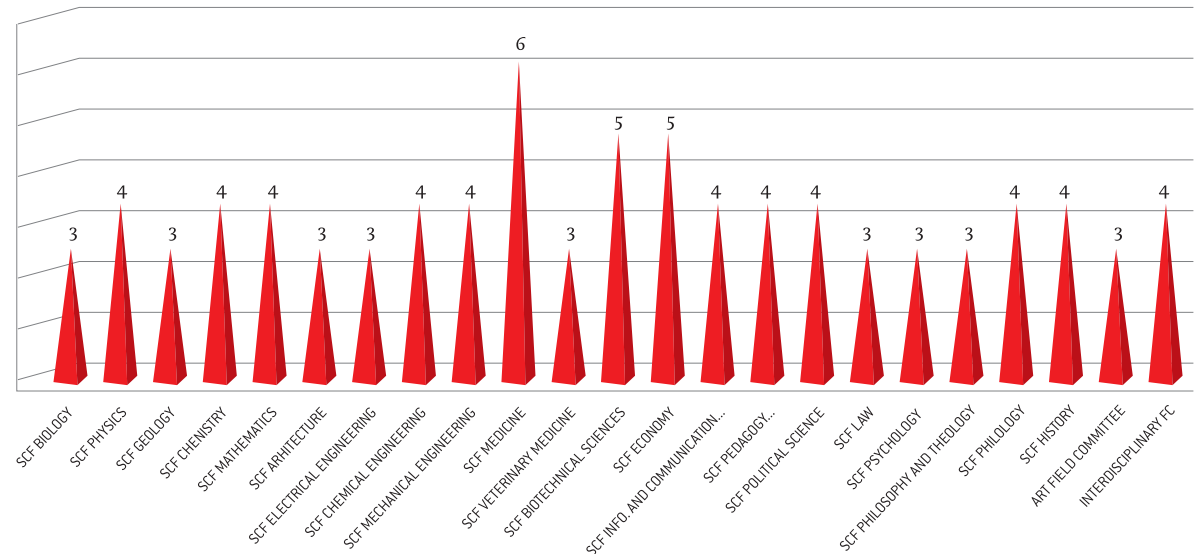
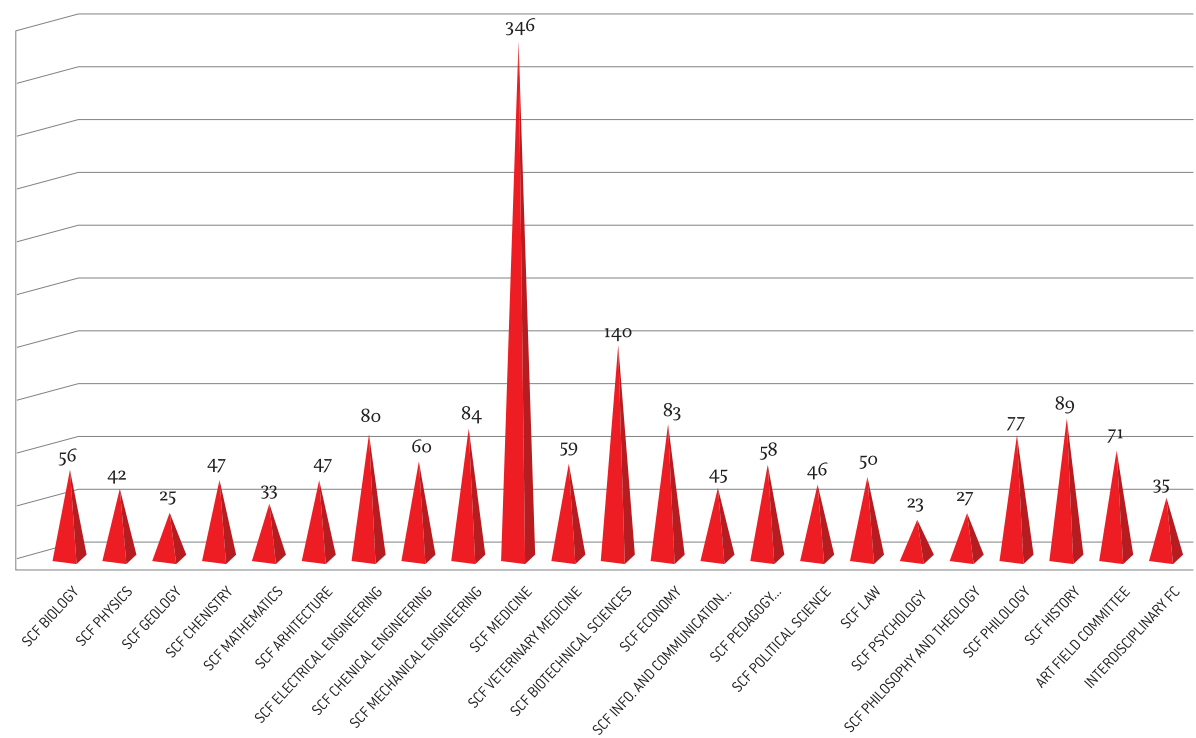


Chart 2. Number of decisions passed by the Scientific Field Committees in 2011



followed by the Committee for Biotechnical Sciences and the Committee for Humanities.

President, Prof. Dr. Marko Jelić, expired, and a new president was elected – Prof. Dr. Slavica Čosović Bajić, dean of the Technical Polytechnic in Zagreb.

4.3. COUNCIL OF POLYTECHNICS AND COLLEGES

In 2011 ASHE organised four sessions of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, comprised by deans of all polytechnics and colleges in Croatia. The Council currently has 42 members, out of which 15 are polytechnics and 27 are colleges. The Council discusses the topics relevant for the development of professional education and makes decisions in the common interest. In November 2011 the term of the

The Council of Polytechnics and Colleges has seven Field Committees operating within it, one for each scientific field, and ASHE also provides support to their work. These committees pass opinions on the fulfilment of minimal conditions for appointment to teaching grades, upon request of higher education institutions.

In 2011, 26 sessions of the Committees were held. A total of 381 positive opinions were passed, and the largest number was passed by the Committee for Social Sciences.

Chart 3. Number of sessions of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges Field Committees in 2011

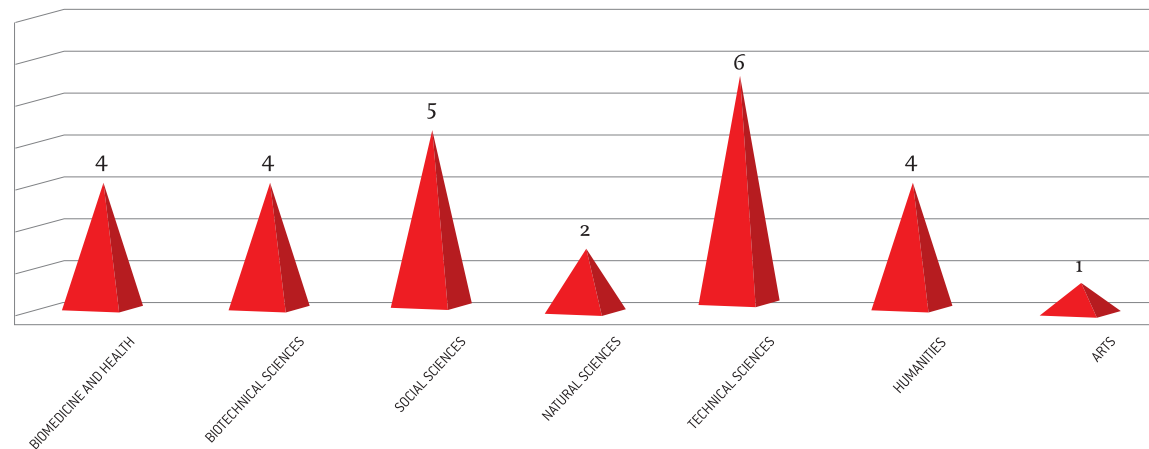
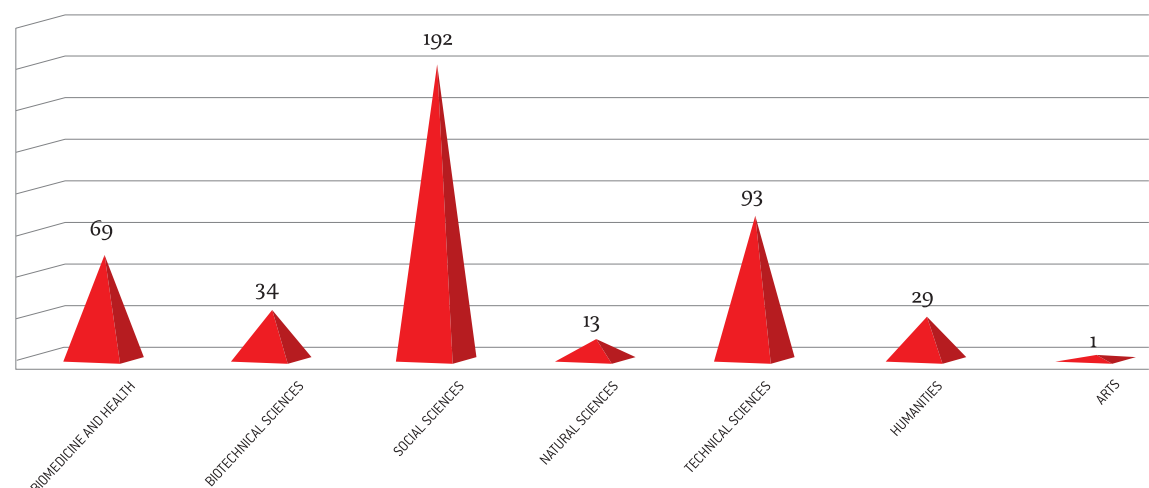


Chart 4. Positive opinions passed by the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges Field Committees in 2011



4-4- INTERDEPARTMENTAL WORKING BODY FOR LABOUR MARKET MONITORING

In 2011 and in cooperation with the *European Training Foundation (ETF)* ASHE prepared and coordinated two sessions of the Interdepartmental Working Body for Labour Market Monitoring. The Body was established following an OECD recommendation (*OECD Review of Tertiary Education, Croatia, 2008*) which called for a *powerful Inter-Ministerial Committee with external representation from key interests in society which would promote effective policy interfaces and working relationships between the tertiary education and other important policy areas, such as responding to labour market needs*. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports tasked ASHE with supporting the work of this body.

At the sessions, the participants presented the activities of the institutions represented in the body which are connected to monitoring and anticipating labour market needs and matching skills supply and demand. International experts also presented relevant experiences and best practices from several EU countries.

All of this enabled useful information exchange and provided a clear insight into the ongoing activities in Croatia related to connecting education with the labour market, and helped define coordinated activities necessary in the future. The collected information served as a basis for the 2012 Activity Plan sent to the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

5 NETWORK OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

At its 24th session on October 28th 2011, the Croatian Parliament adopted the strategic document of the Network of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes, drafted by the National Council for Higher Education in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education.

ASHE actively participated in drafting the document and data collection in cooperation with relevant institutions – Croatian

Employment Service, Chamber of Commerce, National Bureau of Statistics, the Institute of Economics and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. ASHE summarised the collected data in the Starting Points for the Network of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes, which is a part of the document elaborating the Network.

This strategic document contains guidelines and criteria for

establishing new higher education institutions and study programmes, as well as a future projection of establishment of new institutions. Its aims are to prevent further mushrooming of new institutions and programmes and to ensure that higher education in Croatia is aligned with the needs of society, taking into account the available material, human and financial resources, with the final goal of assuring and further improving the quality of the system.

6 APPLICATIONS TO STUDY PROGRAMMES

The Central Applications Office continued its activities related to enrolment to study programmes at Croatian higher education institutions, as presented in the table below.

In cooperation with the Zagreb Institute for Social Research, the Central Applications Office is carrying out a comprehensive analysis of the applications to undergraduate programmes in the past two years, which should provide insights into the quality of the applications system.

The Office also participated in developing the brochure on *Applications to the State Matura exam and study programmes 2011/12*, which was distributed to all fourth grade students in secondary schools in Croatia.

Table 4. Some numerical data on the 2011 activities of the Central Applications Office

Central Applications Office in 2011

Number of applications to the National Information System for Applications to Higher Education	280.145
Number of applicants	40.536
Number of applications verified	5.425
Number of study programmes applied to	751
Number of coordinators at higher education institutions working with the Office	137

Office staff participated in the activities of the Committee for Monitoring the State Matura and the National Information System for Applications to Higher Education (NISpVU), and ASHE and the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education developed a Draft Agreement stating the conditions, procedures and methods of testing and ranking applicants to study programmes. Moreover, the ASHE Management Board adopted a decision on establishing the Body for Improvement of the Application Procedure, aimed at enhancing cooperation with higher education institutions. The Body includes representatives of all public universities, mostly Vice-Rectors for student issues, as well as two representatives of polytechnics and colleges. The Body held two meetings in 2011.

The Central Applications Office regularly publishes the latest news related to the applications to higher education institutions on the website *Studij.hr*, which also contains software enabling prospective students to compare different study programmes with a multi-criteria tool, helping them to make an informed choice of a future programme. The Office is currently developing additional applications to help prospective students, which should also indicate the success rates in the application process, enabling students to do a test application which simulates the whole procedure, from application to ranking.

The Office also cooperates with the International Association of Admissions Organizations, the membership in which enables it to

cooperate with and meet similar institutions and offices.

Finally, the Central Applications Office continuously invests in the development of the quality of its services. One of the steps was to implement a system of receiving documentation sent by applicants directly via the NISpVU system, as well as a customer support system which significantly improved quality of communication with the applicants. Since the volume of work is expected to increase, further investment is planned in this direction. Additionally, due to the specificities of the application procedure, the Office staff organised their work in two shifts, and during weekends and holidays in the periods of greatest demand on their support.

7 RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

The ASHE National ENIC/NARIC Office, information centre on academic mobility and recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, carries out the administrative procedure of professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and participates in the procedures of academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and study periods, by producing guidelines upon request of the higher education institutions' offices for academic recognition.

In addition to the professional input to administrative procedures, the National ENIC/NARIC Office responds to questions of foreign and Croatian citizens and legal persons on the Croatian and foreign education systems, study programmes and qualifications.

In 2011 the National ENIC/NARIC Office:

- finished the professional recognition procedure for 1654 individual qualifications (99,64% of all requests received),
- replied to 127 requests to provide guidelines for academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications,
- issued 131 explanatory notes for higher education qualifications,
- replied to more than one thousand e-mails asking for information on recognition of higher education qualifications in Croatia and abroad, as well as Croatian and foreign education systems, study programmes and qualifications.

Chart 5. Countries in which the foreign higher education qualifications recognised in 2011 were issued

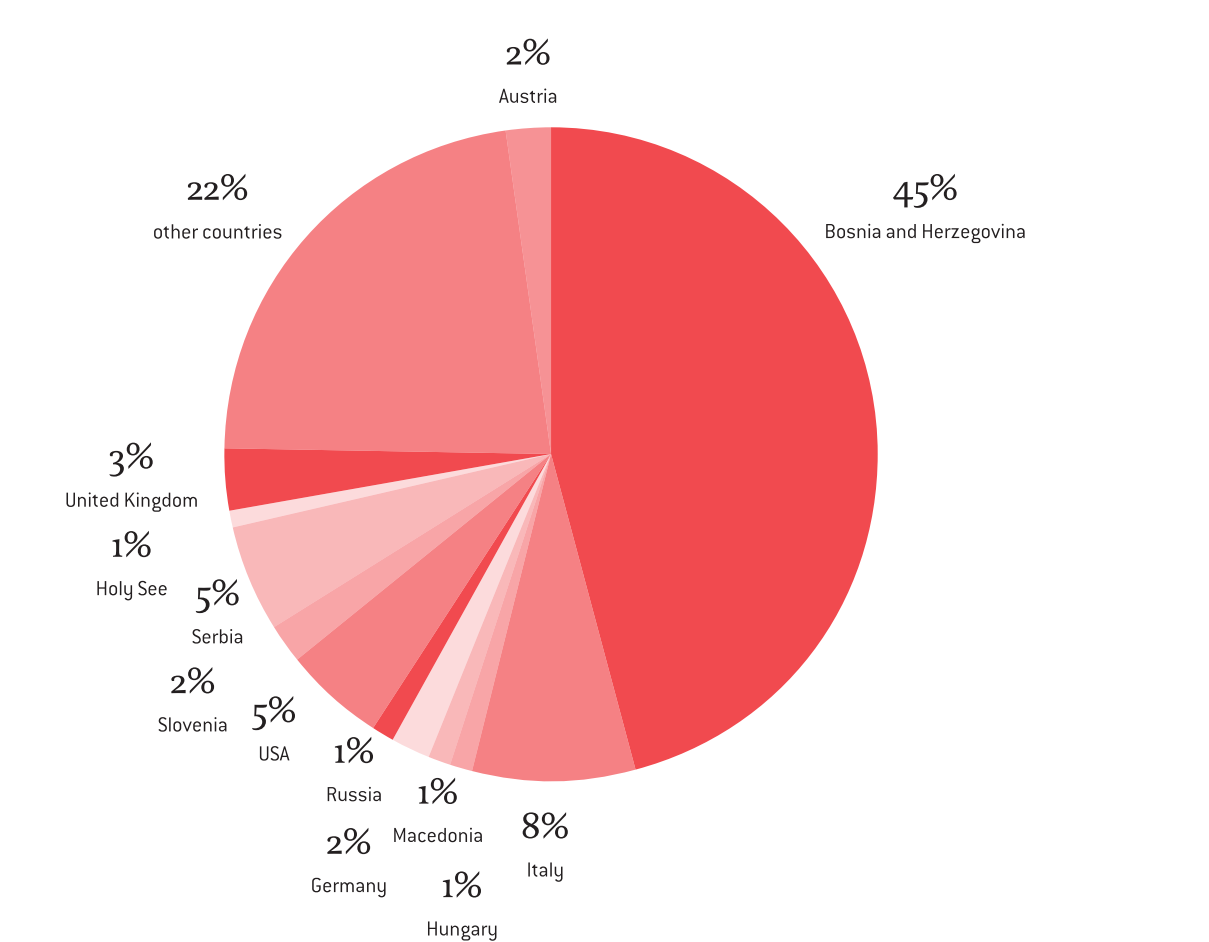
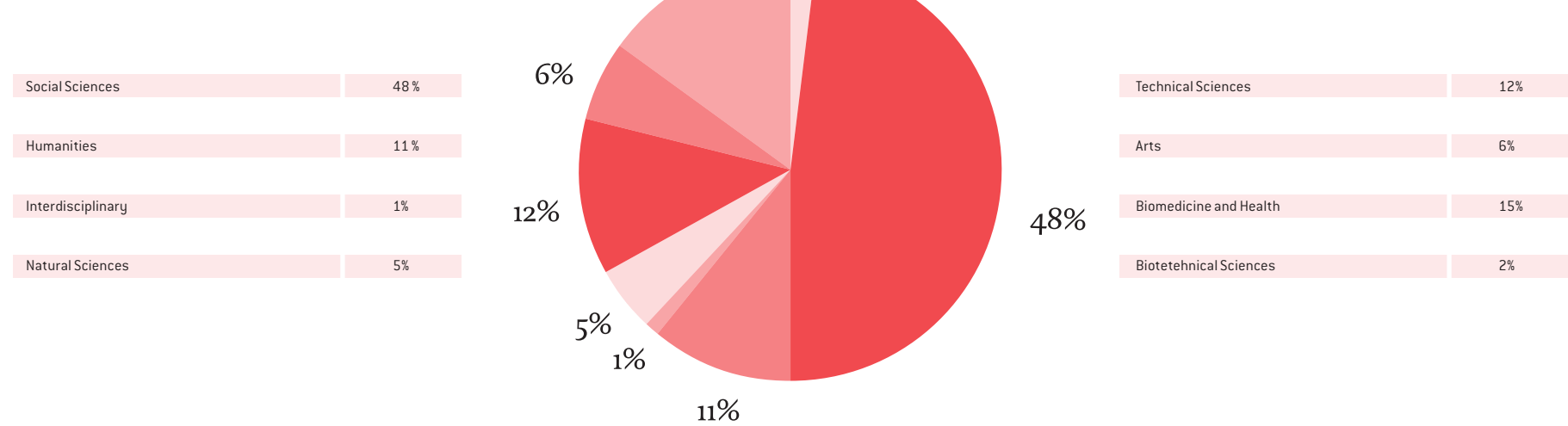


Chart 6. Scientific fields of foreign higher education qualifications recognised in 2011



8 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND EU PROJECTS

In 2011, ASHE continued its work as a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Forum for Institutional Management in Higher Education (OECD IMHE), and made preparatory steps for cooperating with the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA).

In line with the ASHE strategy of regional and European cooperation, ASHE continued its work in the Management Board of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEEQA), and in May hosted the general assembly of the network in Split. ASHE also actively cooperated with the regional initiatives, Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), on the topics of quality assurance in education, qualifications frameworks and evidence-based policy making.

Furthermore, ASHE representatives held presentations at numerous international seminars and conferences. To mention just a few: the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) annual conference in Washington, OECD IMHE seminar in San Sebastian, regional conference "From Quality Assurance to Quality Culture" in Sarajevo, conference of higher education experts in Moscow, conference organised in Ljubljana by the National Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NAKVIS) and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) conference within the pilot project "Institutional audits of Croatian higher education institutions for professional education" held in Zagreb.

Projects funded by the European Union

ASHE continued its participation in the TEMPUS project "Towards Equitable and Transparent Access to Higher Education in Croatia" which aims to ensure fair, equitable and transparent access to higher education in Croatia by removing financial obstacles to studying, collecting data and building capacities for policy-making in the field of higher education funding. In addition to project workshops, the EUROSTUDENT survey was organised, providing – for the first time – a comprehensive insight into the social and economic features of the student life in Croatia, with results comparable to those of other 26 European countries participating in the survey.

The ASHE National ENIC/NARIC Office is involved in a number of international projects funded by the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme, as well as projects funded by the member states via bilateral cooperation, all in connection to the mutual recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, academic and professional mobility, development and evaluation of learning outcomes, and mutual recognition of national accreditations of higher education institutions and study programmes at the European level.

Currently, ASHE is either a partner or an applicant in six project applications being considered for funding by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, and two by the IPA programme. The project applications were developed in cooperation with Croatian higher education institutions, other ENIC and NARIC centres and European networks ENQA and ECA. They are concerned with the development of national qualifications frameworks, recognition of prior learning, development and evaluation of learning outcomes, development of review reports and internationalisation of higher education.

Development of the National Information System for Higher Education and Science

ASHE continued to develop the project of the National Information System for Higher Education and Science (NISSHE), to be funded by the IPA programme (Human Resources Development). The draft project proposal, with 1.780.000 euro maximum budget, was accepted by the European Commission, and the contract forecast was published on the Commission website on March 25th, 2011.

The NISSHE system aims to include a significant number of parameters for generating analyses and statistics in the field of higher education and science, the lack of which is currently preventing informed decision-making in the area. NISSHE should lead to the coordination of decisions and guidelines adopted by various bodies, making them more transparent and based on realistic norms and standards, as well as more objective criteria and assessments.

10 FINANCIAL REPORT

ASHE is funded by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. ASHE revenue in 2011 was comprised of 9 accounts:

- A621153 – the National Council for Higher Education,
- A621155 – administration and general transactions,
- A621179 – the National Council for Science,
- A621182 – the National Council of Polytechnics and Colleges,
- A621186 – evaluation of scientific institutions,
- A621187 – evaluation of higher education institutions,
- K621178 – equipment,
- A621190 – audit of higher education institutions and scientific organisations
- T621188 – TEMPUS project.

Based on the financial reports, total revenue in 2011 amounted to 20.879.208 kuna. It consisted of:

- State budget resources for 2011 – 20.150.241 kn,
- Business revenue – 640.404 kn,
- Other revenue – 88.563 kn.

ASHE expenditure in 2011 amounted to 21.363.266 kn. It consisted of business expenditure in the amount of 20.877.096 kn and expenditure for acquisition of non-financial assets in the amount of 486.170 kn. ASHE expenditure funded from the state budget amounted to 20.150.241 kn, and the rest was funded from ASHE own funds.

Table 5. ASHE expenditure in 2011

EXPENSES		KN
A.	Business expenditure	20.877.096,00
1.	Staff expenses	9.266.980,00
1.1.	Salaries	7.672.748,00
1.2.	Salary contributions	1.323.217,00
1.3.	Other staff-related expenses	271.014,00
2.	Material expenses	11.575.780,00
2.1.	Services	7.821.980,00
2.2.	Remunerations	2.508.603,00
2.3.	Material and energy	317.822,00
2.4.	Other expenses	927.374,00
3.	Financial expenditure	34.334,00
B.	Acquisition of non-financial assets	486.170,00
TOTAL (A+B)		21.363.266,00

11 ACTIVITY PLAN FOR 2012

Taking into account the needs of the system of science and higher education as well as the ASHE 2012 Operative Plan, ASHE set the following objectives for the next period:

1. re-accredit all higher education institutions in Croatia working in the area of technical sciences, as specified in the 2011/12 Re-Accreditation Plan,
2. carry out thematic evaluation of self-accredited study programmes on public universities,
3. carry out thematic evaluation of private scientific institutes and other legal persons listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations,
4. carry out audits of higher education institutions, on the basis of the 2012 Audit Plan for higher education institutions,
5. enhance regional cooperation by organising the ENQA/GIQAC conference on implementing the ESG in the Balkans region in Zagreb, gathering representatives of all regional agencies assuring quality in higher education,
6. complete the project application to European Union funds for co-financing the annual 2013 ENIC/NARIC network meeting in Split,
7. implement international projects funded from the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme and funds of EU member states (bilateral cooperation), in connection to mutual recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, academic and professional mobility, development and evaluation

of learning outcomes, and mutual recognition of national accreditations of higher education institutions and study programmes at the European level,

8. continue international cooperation with foreign agencies for quality assurance in higher education and actively participate in conferences, workshops, etc.,
9. provide IT support to key business process in the systems of higher education and science,
10. reconstruct and develop the MOZVAG information system (second phase of reconstruction),
11. develop the National Information System for Science and Higher Education (NISSHE),
12. improve the system of applications to study programmes,
13. develop a conceptual model of the system for applications to graduate study programmes,
14. publish the results of the survey on applications to undergraduate and integrated (undergraduate + graduate) study programmes offered by universities and professional study programmes offered by non-university HEIs for 2010/11 and 2011/12, in cooperation with the Institute for Social Research,
15. organise the helpdesk for applications to study programmes offered by Croatian higher education institutions,

16. provide its expertise to improve quality of the system of higher education and science,
17. provide expert support to strategic decision-making of strategic and professional bodies in the system of science and higher education (National Council for Science, National Council for Higher Education, Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, Scientific Field Committees for appointment to scientific grades, Scientific Area Councils and the Arts Council, Interdepartmental Working Body for Labour Market Monitoring, Council for Financing Scientific Activity and Higher Education),
18. contribute to equitable access to higher education,
19. encourage academic and professional mobility,
20. further develop the internal quality management system,
21. uphold the public trust.

9 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

In the period between June 28th and July 16th 2011, 16 internal audits were carried out in different ASHE offices. The results of the audits were analysed in the Management Assessment, issued on July 25th 2011, which established that the ASHE Quality Management System (QMS) is effective.

In 2011 the QMS was improved with a new Dashboard application, which made the system fully transparent, enabling each staff member to search the QMS by using a single document – the Manual (which includes information on the QMS, charts, presentations, etc.) linked to various databases and applications.

Det Norske Veritas (DNV) company carried out an external audit of the QMS in September, assessing it with highest grades and commending the introduction of the Dashboard, as well as amendments to the Quality Policy, development of processes connected to new ASHE activities, availability of the process of development management to all employees, highly detailed and well organised planning and implementation of internal audits, detailed and serious approach to collecting information on ASHE customers' satisfaction, as well as analyses of recommendations and suggestions for improvement which served as a basis for further development of the established external quality assurance procedures.

A Quality Assurance System was established, based on the QMS, ASHE Strategy, the operative plan for the current year, the implementation and the analysis of the effectiveness of the activities as well as the achievement of the established short-term objectives, the internal and external audits' results and the Self-Evaluation. A Manual for the Quality Assurance System was also developed, and, building on the implemented audits, a committee was appointed to draft a report on the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance System which concluded that all ASHE activities were implemented in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The report also listed recommendations for improvement, primarily focusing on the external quality assurance procedures for higher education institutions and scientific organisations. The report was adopted and made available to ASHE staff via the ASHE intranet.

Other activities in 2011

In 2011 ASHE continued to collect and analyse data on the system of science and higher education. On its website, ASHE regularly published statistical data on higher education institutions, study programmes, number of students etc. In addition to this, the Directory of Study Programmes is

available on the ASHE website in Croatian, and, since May 2011, in English. The Directory provides a list of all study programmes accredited in the Republic of Croatia and enables multi-criteria search of the database: by higher education institution, study programme type, scientific area and field or the location of studying.

Furthermore, ASHE continued to regularly inform the public on its numerous activities, through cooperation with the leading Croatian media outlets, own electronic newsletter, and regular news updates on the www.azvo.hr website, covering not only ASHE activities but also developments in the field of science and higher education in Croatia and the world.

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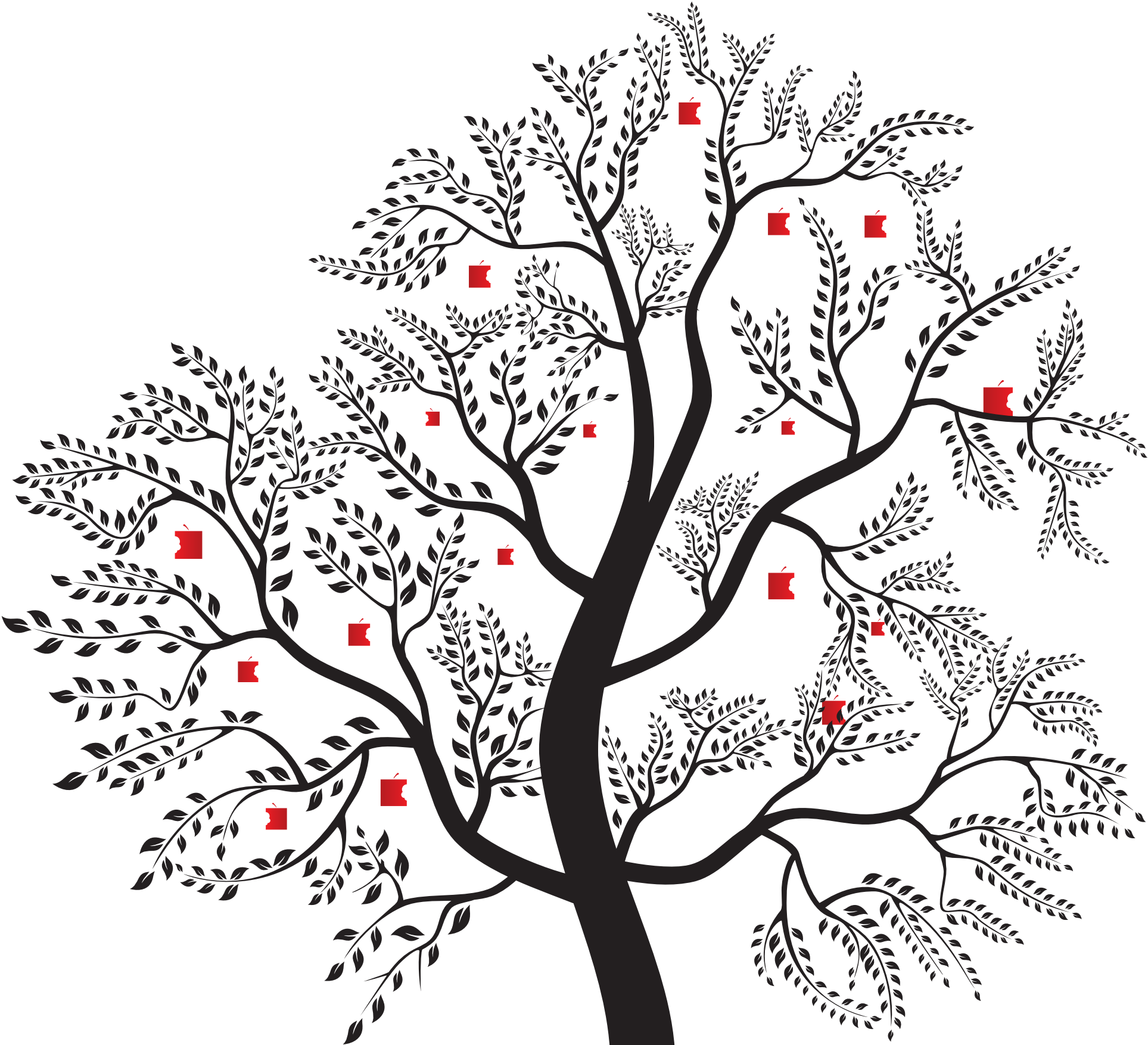
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LIST OF TABLES:

- Table 1. Accreditation recommendations in 2010/11, p. 3
- Table 2. Quality assessment of higher education institutions included in the 2010 audit plan, p. 4
- Table 3. Seminars and workshops, p. 4
- Table 4. Some numerical data on the 2011 activities of the Central Applications Office, p. 6
- Table 5. ASHE expenditure in 2011, p. 9

LIST OF CHARTS:

- Chart 1. Number of sessions of the Scientific Field Committees in 2011, p. 5
- Chart 2. Number of decisions passed by the Scientific Field Committees in 2011, p. 5
- Chart 3. Number of sessions of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges Field Committees in 2011 , p. 6
- Chart 4. Positive opinions passed by the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges Field Committees in 2011, p. 6
- Chart 5. Countries in which the foreign higher education qualifications recognised in 2011 were issued, p. 7
- Chart 6. Scientific fields of foreign higher education qualifications recognised in 2011, p. 7





CONTENTS

	P		P		P
INTRODUCTION	1	4. PROFESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION	5	7. RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS	7
1. AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN BRIEF	2	4.1. NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE	5	8. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND EU PROJECTS	8
2. INTERNATIONAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION	3	4.2. SCIENTIFIC FIELD COMMITTEES	5	9. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES	8
3. REPORT ON THE EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES CARRIED OUT IN 2011	3	4.3. COUNCIL OF POLYTECHNICS AND COLLEGES	5	11. FINANCIAL REPORT	9
3.1. RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	3	4.4. INTERDEPARTAMENTAL WORKING BODY FOR LABOUR MARKET MONITORING	6	12. ACTIVITY PLAN FOR 2012	9
3.2. THEMATIC EVALUATIONS IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION	4	5. NETWORK OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES	6	13. CONTACTS	10
3.3. AUDITS	4	6. APPLICATIONS TO STUDY PROGRAMMES	6		