

Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education
2010 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2011 OPERATIONAL PLAN

2014



agency for science and higher education



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March 2011



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1 INTRODUCTION

*The more I want to get something done ,
the less I call it work!*

Richard Bach

Dear readers,

It is a distinct pleasure to present you with the 4th Annual Report of the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE).

In 2010 ASHE celebrated its anniversary with a conference “How to make Croatian Higher Education Competitive”, in the beautiful city of Dubrovnik, a world heritage jewel. With esteemed guest lecturers from United States and Europe and representatives of Croatian academic community, we discussed world trends in higher education quality assurance and university ranking as well as challenges and goals set before Croatian higher education. ASHE has established numerous contacts with relevant institutions and experts in higher education quality assurance, both home and abroad, and with the exchange of experience and good practice it continues to raise awareness of the necessity of quality culture and in such a way contribute to the development of competitive and recognisable Croatian higher education and science.

The anniversary coincided with an award, received in May 2010: Steering Committee of the European Regional Economic Forum, an organisation seated in Brussels, recognised our Agency as an example of good practice in the implementation of quality assurance in higher education and science, and we presented Croatian experiences at two international conferences, in Italy and Slovenia.

This recognition served as an additional incentive to take the challenges ahead with even more enthusiasm and responsibility. In 2010 first external QA evaluation procedures in accordance with the new Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education were initiated. The procedures in question are the first cycle of re-accreditation of higher education institutions, thematic evaluation



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of all public research institutes in the Republic of Croatia, and external quality assurance audit of 3 higher education institutions.

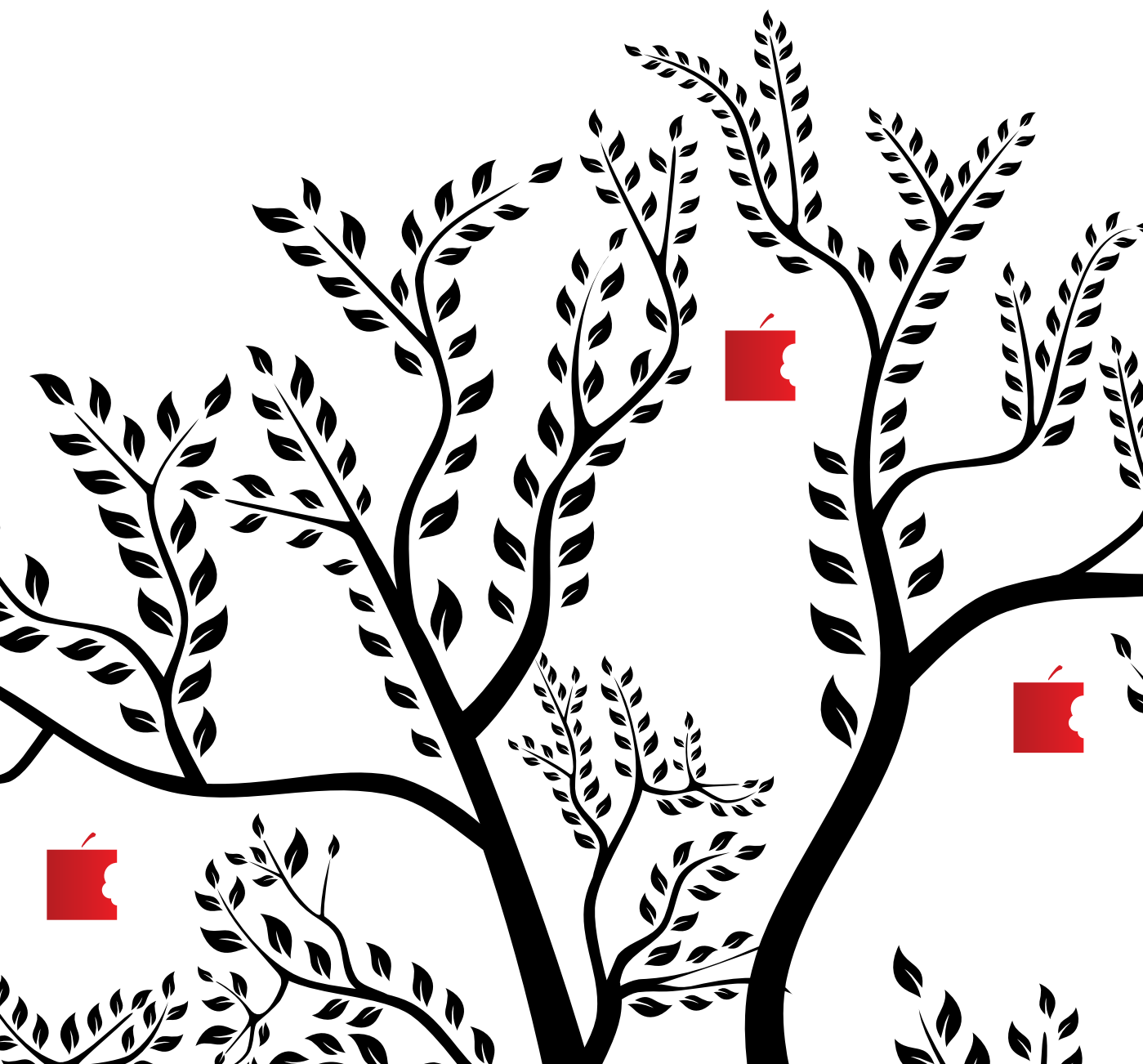
As a result, we entered the New Year with a lot of enthusiasm and confidence!

Considering that all the formal requirements have been met, this is the year in which we expect to become a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The main requirement, an international evaluation of ASHE, is scheduled for June 2011 and coordinated by the Spanish Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research of Andalusia (AGAE).

Joining ENQA, the umbrella organisation for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), will not only present a confirmation of the reliability of our work, but will also have a positive impact on mobility of teaching staff, scientists and students. It will enhance the international recognisability of quality of Croatian higher education and scientific institutions, as well as allow for a better positioning of our higher education on international level.

To further this goal, we will continue to foster cooperation and open dialogue with Croatian academic and scientific community, and act as an equal partner to our international colleagues in defining future guidelines for development of higher education in Europe and beyond.

Professor Jasmina Havranek, PhD
Director of the Agency for Science
and Higher Education



2 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 Re-accreditation in Science and Higher Education

2.1.1 Re-accreditation in Science

In July 2010 the Republic of Croatia adopted the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence (OG 83/2010). According to the Ordinance, scientific organisations are required to harmonise their general acts and activities with the provisions of the Ordinance within a 1-year period. Upon completion of this harmonisation period (which ends in July 2010), the Agency will initiate re-accreditation of scientific organisations.

During this period, the Agency will prepare all the necessary documentation and inform scientific organisations on the new re-accreditation procedure. All scientific organisations funded from the state budget are subject to re-accreditation procedure¹ within the next 3 years, and a periodic re-accreditation every 5 years.

Re-accreditation of scientific organisations is fully within the purview of the Agency. ASHE drafts and adopts re-accreditation documents in accordance with the best international practices, adopts the annual re-accreditation plan, appoints committees, organises site-visits, and finally, on the basis of the re-accreditation procedures carried out (which include self-evaluation and site visit), and the opinion of the Accreditation Council, issues accreditation recommendation with an evaluation of quality of the scientific organisation and recommendations for its improvement.

Re-accreditation of scientific organisations is carried out in 5-year cycles. All documents in the re-accreditation procedures are published on the ASHE website.

With accreditation recommendation, the Agency recommends to the Minister to:

- issue a confirmation that requirements for performing the activities, or parts of the activities, are met, if the accreditation recommendation is positive
- deny a license for performing the activities, or part of the activities, if the accreditation recommendation is negative
- issue a letter of expectation with a time limit of up to three years to remove deficiencies

¹Private scientific organisations and other legal entities that receive funds from the state budget are subject to periodic re-accreditation only in parts that are funded by state budget

Accreditation recommendation is public and it can influence the budget of scientific organisations.

2.1.2 Re-accreditation in Higher Education

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* (OG10/2010), with which the requirements for evaluation of higher education institutions were defined, was adopted in February 2010, finally allowing for the initiation of re-accreditation procedure. Apart from necessary requirements, quality is also assessed through re-accreditation. Re-accreditation results in either:

- issuance of a confirmation on fulfilling requirements for performing the activity or part of activity;
- deny the license for performing the activity, or part of the activity;
- issuance of a letter of expectation with a time limit of up to three years to remove deficiencies

and assessment of HEIs quality, with recommendation for quality improvement and development. Final re-accreditation quality assessment is published on ASHE website.

Early in 2010, the Agency prepared drafts of the following documents pertaining to re-accreditation procedure, in accordance with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and international good practice:

- Re-accreditation of higher education institutions
- Guidelines for drafting self-evaluation reports of higher education institutions within universities
- Guidelines for drafting self-evaluation reports of polytechnics and colleges
- Criteria for the assessment of quality of higher education institutions within universities
- Criteria for the assessment of quality of polytechnics and college

These drafts were made available for public discussion that included all stakeholders (higher education institutions, student unions, business community, non-governmental organisations,

relevant ministry etc.) Before this public discussion, the documents were reviewed by two international higher education experts, from the US and Europe. One segment of the public discussion was particularly focused on the criteria for the evaluation of HEIs and in this segment almost all of stakeholders' comments and suggestions entered the final version of the text. After the public discussion ended, the Accreditation Council adopted the final documents at its 5th session held in June 2010, and the documents were published on ASHE website. At the same session, the Accreditation Council also adopted the 2010/2011 Re-accreditation Plan that includes 20 HEIs with study programmes from the field of economy:

- Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb
- Faculty of Economics, University of Split
- Faculty of Economics, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
- Faculty of Economics, University of Rijeka
- Department of Economics and Business Economics, University of Dubrovnik
- Department of Economics, University of Zadar
- Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, University of Zagreb
- Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management Opatija, University of Rijeka
- Department of Economics and Tourism dr. Mijo Mirković, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula
- University Centre for Professional Studies, University of Split
- VERN Polytechnic
- Zagreb School of Management
- Polytechnic School for Social Sciences
- Polytechnic Lavoslav Ružička in Vukovar
- Polytechnic Marko Marulić in Knin
- Zagreb School of Economics and Management
- College of Market Communications Agora
- Libertas Business College
- American College of Management and Technology in Dubrovnik
- Business School Zagreb.

Of the 20 institutions, 3 asked for a postponement. Since all 3 institutions provided legitimate reasons, they were allowed the postponement of re-accreditation for the next academic year.

Higher education institutions included in this year's re-accreditations were required to submit their self-evaluations in Croatian and English by 1 December 2010. On 30 June 2010 the Agency organised a thematic workshop in order to help them with that task. In addition, ASHE provided a direct on-line help with writing self-evaluations on our QA Forum.

In May, an international public call for experts was issued for all those interested in participating in re-accreditation procedures as panel members.

The panel comprises 5 members:

- four university professors in scientific-teaching grade or/and artistic-teaching grade (for universities and their units), and at least two college professors (in re-accreditation of polytechnics and colleges). Two members of the panel are foreign experts;
- a student
- instead of one representative of teaching staff, an expert from the business community can be appointed to the panel.

All higher education institutions included in re-accreditation procedure submitted their self-evaluations during December, at which time the Agency began to form the expert panels. Proposals of the panel composition were sent to higher education institutions, to which HEIs could submit their comments.

Site visits to HEIs were arranged for March and April 2011. Trainings for the members of expert panels will be organised before the site visits.

Additional information on the re-accreditation procedure, as well as documentation pertaining to the procedure, is available on ASHE website.

2.2 Thematic Evaluation in Science and Higher Education

Thematic evaluation in higher education and science is a procedure where a single segment of the system of higher education and science is evaluated. The procedure is carried out by ASHE on the basis of Accreditation Council's decision, but it can also be initiated by a reasoned proposal of the minister, evaluation object or student union.

The methodology of thematic evaluation is determined on a case basis.

ASHE Accreditation Council appoints an expert panel with at least three members (generally, at least one member is a foreign expert), experts for the topic or the aim of the evaluation. Members of the expert panel guarantee the confidentiality of data obtained by signing Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement. ASHE trains the members of the expert panel.

Outcome of the thematic evaluation is the final report by the expert panel, which includes an assessment of the compliance with the topic of the review.

Institution evaluated can reply to the final report within 20 days. Final report and the reply of the institution are forwarded to the body which initiated the evaluation, and published on ASHE website. If the assessment is negative, ASHE can initiate the re-accreditation procedure.

2.2.1 Thematic Evaluation of Public Research Institutes

Thematic evaluation of public research institutes was set as one of the strategic activities of ASHE in 2010/2011.

The final outcome of thematic evaluation is thematic evaluation report on all 25 public research institutes in Croatia, with the analysis of the current state in each of five scientific fields, as well as review of each institutes, including recommendations for enhancement and opportunities for possible increase of efficiency by merging with other institutes within similar scientific field. The institutes will have a chance to give their opinion on assessments made by the expert panels. Final report is expected in September 2011.

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Thematic evaluation report will be submitted to the National Council for Science, Accreditation Council of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, and the Parliamentary Committee for Education, Science and Culture, as well as published on ASHE website.

Finally, reports of thematic evaluations can serve as guidelines to the National Council for Science in drafting the Network of Public Research Organisations document, whose adoption is regulated by the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education.

Experience gained during this process will be used in establishing criteria and procedure of re-accreditation of all research organisations. ASHE will, as well as in the case of adopting criteria for re-accreditation of higher education institutions, use the best international practice and foreign expertise when adopting these criteria. The recommendations regarding the criteria will then be open for public discussion lasting one month. Thematic evaluation of public research institutes includes the drafting of self-evaluation and site visit of the expert panel. All documents pertaining to the procedure are published on ASHE website and reviewed by prominent Croatian scientists.

Because of the large number of institutes from the area of social sciences and humanities (7 in each), the Accreditation Council decided that 2 panels will be appointed for each area. Also, with regard to the size of the Ruđer Bošković Institute, the Accreditation Council decided that 2 expert panels will visit the said institute (one for the area of natural sciences and one for biomedicine and health).

In July 2010 the institutes were sent notice on the initiation of thematic evaluation, and were given a deadline for submission of self-evaluations - in both Croatian and English
- by 1 December 2010.

During this period, the Agency organised several preparatory seminars and workshops for the institutes:

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- in September 2010 a seminar entitled “Evaluation and Quality Assurance in Science Systems” with guest lecturer Dr. Verena Kremling, Head of Office for Evaluation of the Leibnitz Association of Research Institutes from Germany,
- in October 2010 two workshops on drafting self-evaluation documentation,
- in October 2010 a workshop on “Strategic planning and making of strategic plan for public research institutes in the Republic of Croatia”, with lecturer Mrs Nataša Škrbić.

A public call was put up on ASHE website for members of expert panels in this procedure; the call was also sent to numerous international addresses. At the end of the year, the Accreditation Council appointed the members of expert panels from database of experts. Each panel comprises 3 renowned international scientists. Site-visits to institutes are starting at end of February 2011, and final report of thematic evaluation is expected in September 2011.

Table 1 Public research institutes in the Republic of Croatia are divided by evaluation areas

HUMANITIES I

- Croatian Institute of History
- Institute of Art History
- Institute of Archaeology

HUMANITIES II

- Institute of Croatian Language and Linguistics
- Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research
- Institute of Philosophy
- Old Church Slavonic Institute

NATURAL SCIENCES

- Ruđer Bošković Institute
- Institute of Physics
- Croatian Geological Survey
- Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries

BIOMEDICINE AND HEALTH

- Ruđer Bošković Institute
- Institute for Medical Research and Occupational Health
- Croatian Institute of Veterinary Medicine
- Institute for Anthropological Research

BIOTECHNICAL SCIENCES

- Croatian Forest Research Institute
- Agricultural Institute
- Institute of Agriculture and Tourism
- Institute for Adriatic Crops and Karst Reclamation

SOCIAL SCIENCES I

- The Institute of Economics
- Institute for Tourism
- Institute for Public Finance
- Institute for International Relations

SOCIAL SCIENCES II

- Ivo Pilar Institute
- Institute for Social Research
- Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies

2.2.2 Thematic Evaluation in Higher Education

Thematic evaluation is one of the evaluation procedures defined by the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*. It is a procedure that can be used for assessing various aspects of higher education institution's activities, with the final outcome a report related to the subject of evaluation. The procedure, therefore, does not end with a formal outcome. In case of a negative review, the Agency can initiate a re-accreditation procedure on official duty, or at the suggestion of the Minister.

At its 5th session held in June 2010, the Accreditation Council adopted a document entitled Thematic Evaluation Procedure. At the request of the Faculty of Medicine of the University in Split, a thematic evaluation was initiated in June 2010 for study programmes Medicine and Dental Medicine, with regard to compliance with the Directive 2005/36/EC. For each of the two study programmes, the Agency appointed an international 3-member expert panel that received study programmes' documentation. The procedure is still ongoing.

Additional information on thematic evaluation can be found on ASHE website.

2.3 Audit

The model of external quality assurance audit of Croatian higher education institutions implemented by ASHE is in accordance with the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*. The model was developed on the basis of results of pilot audits carried out within the CARDS 2003 project „Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education in its Quality Assurance Role and the Development of a Supporting Information System“.

Both the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education* and *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) stipulate that the responsibility for the quality of higher education lies primarily with HEIs.

Forming an efficient QA unit is an incentive to quality culture development on an institutional level. Institutional QA system, the work of QA units and their contribution to development of quality culture are all subject to external audit.

The 2nd edition of the *Manual for Audit of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Croatia*, and *Ordinance on External Audit of Quality Assurance Systems at Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Croatia* were both adopted at the 6th session of Accreditation Council held on 1 June 2010. At the same session, the Accreditation Council also adopted an annual plan of external audits of higher education institutions for 2010, which included 3 HEIs: University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek Faculty of Civil Engineering and Faculty of Philosophy, and University of Zagreb Faculty of Metallurgy in Sisak. A workshop was organised for the representatives of management and QA units of the 3 institutions on 9 July 2010 to help them prepare for the audit procedure. In accordance with the procedure outline, first 3 stages of audit were completed in 2010. Fourth and final stage - the follow-up - will be carried out during 2011, effectively completing the procedure.

The External Audit 2011 Plan was adopted by the Accreditation Council at its 6th session held on 1 June 2010, and amended at the 9th session held on 9 October 2010. The Plan includes 9 higher education institutions. A workshop was organised for the representatives of QA units at HEIs that have been included in the External Audit 2011 Plan on 12 November 2010.

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To ensure credibility, ASHE paid special attention to education and training of audit experts. External QA audit procedures are carried out by 5-member committees that include Croatian and international experts, student representatives and representatives of business community. During 2010 we steadily invested in training of audit experts.

In October 2010 education of the third generation of audit experts was completed. Participants included students, representatives of business community and professors at polytechnics and colleges. Total of 20 out of 22 applicants successfully completed the seminar and received certificates.

Annual workshops, integral part of audit expert training, were held in Zagreb on 14 and 15 December 2010, this time for all 3 generations of ASHE audit experts. The participants expressed their satisfaction with workshops and seminars organised so far, and supported further transfer of knowledge in quality assurance.

The External Audit Department designed an on-line audit course for their international experts. The course, hosted on ASHE website, was completed by 9 foreign experts so far.

During 2010, ASHE continued to foster development of the quality culture in Croatian higher education area. Providing support to higher education institutions in establishing their QA units, ASHE organised a series of seminars aimed at good practice exchange and knowledge transfer in national quality assurance system.

From May to September, a series of seminars was organised for all public universities and Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, allowing for representatives of their respective quality assurance units to present their activities so far, including examples of good practice and challenges they meet:

- University of Dubrovnik, 24 May 2010
- University of Zadar, 26 May 2010
- University of Rijeka, 27 May 2010

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- Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, 7 June 2010
- University of Pula, 15 June 2010
- Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, 12 September 2010
- University of Zagreb, 15 September 2010
- University of Split, 20 September 2010

In March 2010 a workshop was organised for the representatives of student unions, entitled “Student participation in quality assurance systems at Croatian higher education institutions, and their experiences with the implementation of Bologna process by 2010”.

Information presented during these workshops and seminars for QA units show that:

- the majority of HEIs has not yet adopted their mission, vision and strategy
- university faculties and departments are waiting for the universities to come up with their missions, visions and strategies first
- quality assurance system documentation is scarce at the majority of institutions
- there is no direct approach to quality culture development within HEIs
- no funding is secured for quality assurance units at HEIs
- persons appointed to QA units are for the most part professionally involved in other activities at their institutions, and are often in conflict of interest
- continuity of work of QA units is not being secured
- the work of QA units is insufficiently transparent.

Public higher education institutions point out the lack of funds as the primary problem for effective functioning and development of QA units.

Activities of ASHE include data collection and production of system-wide analyses on development and effectiveness of higher education institutions’ internal quality assurance systems.

In May 2010 ASHE sent out the annual survey to QA units at public and private HEIs in the Republic

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of Croatia, with questions related to structure and efficiency of QA systems at their respective institutions (criteria for appointment to QA units, system documentation, implementation of internal QA audits, and implementation of good practice in developing the system).

Data collected in May 2010 shows that:

- 102 QA units have been established at Croatian higher education institutions
- 43 ordinances on quality assurance and 28 quality assurance system manuals have been adopted
- 20 internal quality assurance audits have been carried out.

In accordance with the adopted *Criteria for assessing the level of development and efficiency of QA systems at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia*, from the data obtained via surveys and discussions held at workshops and seminars, we concluded that - on the national level - HEIs’ quality assurance systems are at this time in transition between preliminary and initial phase of development.

Incentive to the development of quality culture was also given through the participation at the “Processing the Bologna Process: Current Losses and Future Gains” round table, held on 5-6 March 2010 at the University of Zagreb, as well as through participation at the “Higher Education Reform : Inventory 2010” conference, held at the Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, University of Zagreb, on 9-10 April 2010.

Implementation of audit procedure in Croatia and exchange of good practice within EHEA gave incentive to cooperation and exchange of audit experts.

Three ASHE audit experts participated as committee members in the pilot project of Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO) - “Institutional Audits of Croatian Higher Education Institutions for Professional Education”, with a representative of ASHE External Audit Department as an observer. Presentation of project outcomes is expected in March 2011. Participation in this

project was a valuable experience, since it provided an opportunity to compare the two models of external QA audits and further develop our own competences. A protocol on the exchange of experts was signed with the German Accreditation Agency Specialized in Accrediting Degree Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics (ASIIN), and we are looking forward to further cooperation. The quality of our experts was also recognised in Greece, with requests for participation in various evaluation procedures. We have excellent collaboration with colleagues from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are well acquainted with our system and are open to various types of cooperation with ASHE.

Supporting international cooperation and the exchange of good practice with agencies and HEIs within EHEA, External Audit Department participated in designing the leaflet used for presenting our work at The Fifth European Quality Assurance Forum “Building Bridges: Making sense of QA in European, national and institutional contexts”, held from 18-20 November 2010 in Lyon, France.

At the international conference “Institutional Strategic Quality Management ISQM 2010” in Sinaia, Romania, 14-16 October 2010, we presented Croatian students’ participation in quality assurance procedures and the implementation of Bologna reforms. An article titled „Student participation in quality assurance in Croatia“ was published in the „PROCEEDINGS of 2nd International Conference Institutional Strategic Quality Management in Higher Education ISQM 2010, Sinaia, Romania, October 14-16, 2010“, Volume I, p. 175-178.

2.4 Initial Accreditation

2.4.1 Initial Accreditation for Carrying Out a Scientific Activity

With the 2009 *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*, and the *Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-Accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of Licence* (adopted in July 2010), implementation of initial accreditation for carrying out scientific activity became the responsibility of ASHE. Institutions apply to the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES), but follow documentation and forms made by ASHE.

In 2010, the Agency received 2 requests for initial accreditation for carrying out scientific activity. One was sent back for amendments and harmonisation with new documentation and forms prescribed by the Agency, while the other one could not be accepted as the institution in question was a public research institute. The procedure of the initial accreditation of public scientific organisations cannot legally be launched before the strategic document of the Network of Public Scientific Organisations is adopted. The document is required by the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education* and is to contain guidelines and additional criteria for establishment of public scientific organisations. It is adopted by the Croatian Parliament upon the proposal by the National Council for Science.

ASHE checks the compliance with minimal conditions, organises a visit of the expert panel, and within 60 days the Accreditation Council issues an accreditation recommendation for performing scientific activity and forwards it to MSES. Criteria used in this assessment were developed in accordance with the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*, and this *Ordinance*, in which the requirements are clearly defined. Criteria were improved in comparison with the previous legislative framework - for example, the minimal number of research staff employed was increased.

The procedure of checking compliance with the minimal requirements is carried out by a three-member expert panel, which can include foreign experts. One member of the panel can also be an expert from business sector, working in the field closely related to the scientific activity under evaluation. Site-visit of the expert panel usually takes 1 day.

After the site visit, members of the expert panel submit a report to ASHE on a standardised form.

The report includes an assessment of the fulfilment of minimal conditions to perform scientific activity. If a panel member wishes to add something to the common report, he/she is allowed to submit a minority report, as an annex to the common report.

The organisation which is evaluated is allowed to comment on the report. The commentary of the institution is sent to the Accreditation Council, which can then decide to ask the opinion of the expert panel, or it can reach the opinion on the commentary without consulting the panel. Based on the opinion of the Accreditation Council, ASHE issues an accreditation recommendation. If this recommendation is positive, MSES issues a license to the institution; in case it is negative, MSES denies the issuance of a license. The accreditation recommendation is published on ASHE website.

The license and a decision by which the license is denied to the applicant are administrative acts. The applicant does not have the right of appeal against the administrative acts, but may initiate an administrative dispute at the Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia.

2.4.2 Initial Accreditation for Providing Higher Education

Initial accreditation of higher education institution cannot be initiated before the Croatian Parliament adopts strategic documents for the network of higher education institutions. These documents are proposed by the National Council for Higher Education, and shall include guidelines and criteria for establishing higher education institutions and study programmes, as well as projections of establishment of new higher education institutions, pursuant to the Article 18 Paragraph 3 of the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*.

2.4.3 Initial Accreditation for New Study Programmes

According to the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*, initial accreditation is obligatory for all private higher education institutions' study programmes as well as those of public polytechnics and colleges.

Although the strategic document for the network of higher education institutions has not yet been adopted, based on the recommendation of the National Council for Higher Education, and the fact that initial accreditation takes a certain amount of time, at the 10th session of the Accreditation Council held on 22 November 2010, Council members discussed the procedure, and reached the conclusion that the applicants should be allowed to begin preparing for the initial accreditation of study programmes. This means that the Agency will accept requests for the implementation of new study programmes but the final recommendation will be issued only after the strategic documentation for the Network of Higher Education in the Republic of Croatia has been adopted.

Preliminary activities include drafting and submitting a Study defined by the Guidelines for Drafting Proposals of New Study Programmes and published on Agency website, and a review of the Request. At its 10th session in November 2010, the Accreditation Council adopted the following documents:

- Initial Accreditation of Study Programmes
- Guidelines for Drafting Proposals of New Study Programmes.

Accreditation Council appoints a panel that comprises 3 representatives of Croatian academic community:

- 2 representatives of teaching staff (appointed to teaching-scientific i.e. artistic-teaching grades or teaching grades – assistant professor, associate professor, full professor or college professor), and
- 1 student.

Instead of one representative of teaching staff, an expert from the business sector or one working in the field closely related to the scientific activity under evaluation can be appointed to the panel. In place of one Croatian, a foreign professor can be appointed to the expert panel. The panel is expected to go through all the documents used in the initial accreditation of study programme (Review Form, Guidelines for Drafting Proposals of New Study Programmes, legal acts

and subordinate regulations pertaining to the procedure). The panel also makes a 1-day site-visit. Before the site-visit, all members of the panel have to undergo training where they are informed on tasks, procedure and purpose of the initial accreditation of study programmes.

Additional information on the initial accreditation of study programmes, as well as documentation pertaining to the procedure, is available on the ASHE website.

2.5 Justifiability of Public Funding of Study Programmes at Public Universities

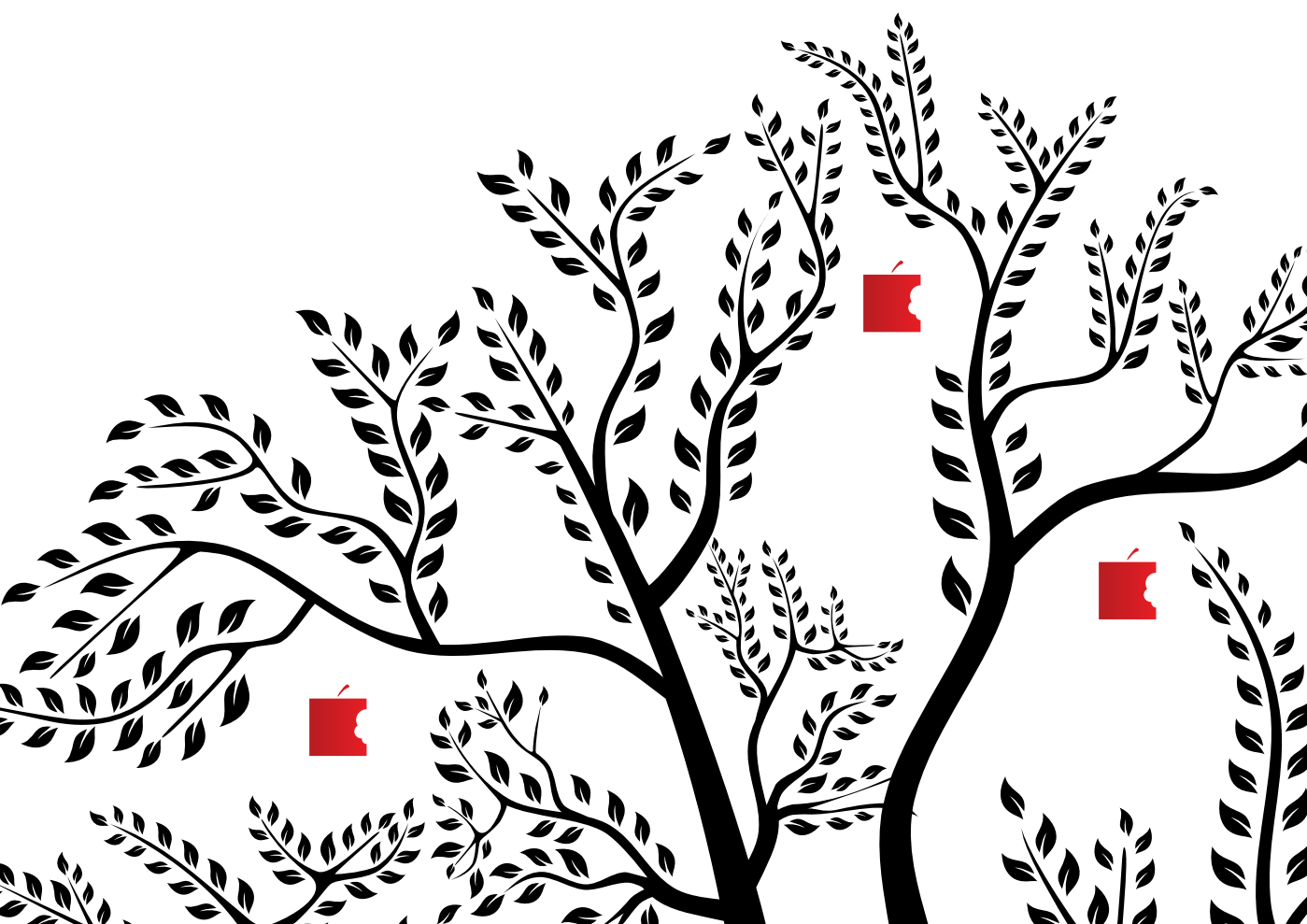
In accordance with the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*, all public universities are responsible for their own reviews on whether minimal requirements for implementation of new study programmes have been met (according to the criteria set by the *Ordinance on the Content of 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*), i.e. the public universities have been allowed the possibility of self-accreditation.

However, if they wish to be funded from the state budget, the institutions have to sign an agreement with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, but only after receiving a positive opinion from the Agency.

Issuing opinions on justifiability of public funding of public universities' study programmes is carried out in accordance with the Article 20, Paragraph 10 of the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education* and *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*.

At its 5th session held in June 2010, the Accreditation Council adopted criteria for assessing justifiability of public funding of public universities' study programmes. The criteria are published on ASHE website and prescribe that study programme should be innovative and in accordance with both current scientific theories and labour market needs, in line with the university strategy, and should not in any way lower the quality of the existing study programmes in that field, with regard to human and material resources, etc.

The Accreditation Council will accept the requests until 1 April 2011, after which it will consider all the requests received, issue an opinion on the justifiability of public funding, and forward the approved programmes to MSES by 1 June. This shall be done in order to plan the funding of new programmes within the development budget, and not disrupt the funding of the existing programmes.



3 EXPERT AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC AND EXPERT BODIES IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 Higher education

One of the responsibilities of ASHE is providing support to strategic and expert bodies in higher education. During 2010, the Department of Higher Education organised 11 sessions of National Council for Higher Education, 2 joint sessions of both National Councils (together with the Department of Science), 6 sessions of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, and 27 sessions of the scientific field committees of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges.

Organisation of these sessions included arranging the schedule with presidents of the bodies, drafting all necessary documents and presentations, convening sessions, and compiling all conclusions, recommendations and decisions adopted.

Department of Higher Education completed all the procedures for determining conditions on issuance of licenses for 25 new study programmes and 3 new higher education institutions, which were carried out according to the provisions of *Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education* since the requests were received before the enactment of the new *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*. Based on procedures carried out, the National Council for Higher Education recommended to the Minister that licenses be issued for 25 new study programmes (1 university undergraduate, 3 university graduate, 5 professional, 4 specialist graduate, 9 postgraduate specialist and 3 postgraduate university study programmes) and 2 new private colleges (license was denied to one of them).

Chart 1 Number of issued licences for new study programmes in 2010



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Department of Higher Education drafted a report on the work of the National Council for Higher Education in 2009, listing all the activities and recommendations adopted by the Council in 2009, and including a brief overview of the state of higher education in Croatia. The report was adopted at the 22nd session of the Croatian Parliament held on 11 February 2011.

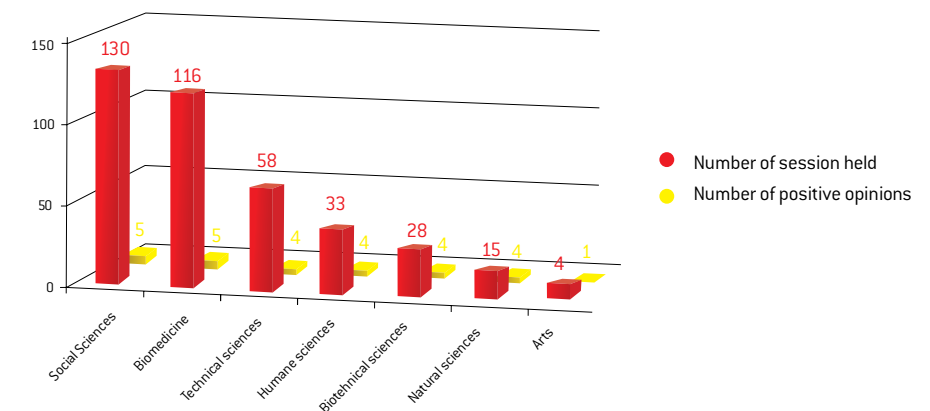
Providing support to the National Council for Higher Education with regard to the strategic document of the Network of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes in the Republic of Croatia, for which the Council issues a proposal to the Croatian Parliament (in accordance with the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*), Department of Higher Education gathered all the necessary data and together with Department of Analytics and Statistics drafted the “Starting Points for the Network of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes”. The document was submitted to the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Parliament.

Based on the data regarding application and enrolment of candidates through the NISpVU system in 2010/2011, an analysis of the enrolment in higher education institutions was carried out.

Within the Department of Higher Education, the Section for Professional Programmes coordinates the work of Council of Polytechnics and Colleges that comprises 44 members (15 polytechnics and 29 colleges). There are 7 scientific field committees of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, one for each scientific area. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of scientific field committees, in 2010 we improved the way documentation on appointment into teaching grades is delivered to committee members, making it available in electronic form on ASHE website. In 28 sessions of the scientific field committees of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges in 2010, a total of 384 positive opinions for the appointment into teaching grades of lecturer, senior lecturer and college professor were issued.

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Chart 2 Number of positive opinions for the appointment into teaching grades issued



In 2010 a Union of Polytechnic and College Students was established, with their president being a representative at the Croatian Student Union. Amendments have been made to the *Decision on the Requirements for Grading Teaching and Professional Activity in the Procedure of Appointment into Teaching Grades*, in order to raise the existing minimal requirements. Decision was sent to the National Council for Higher Education for consent. *Declaration on Position and Rights of Professional Studies in the Republic of Croatia* has also been adopted.

In 2010 ASHE was assigned with the task of coordinating the work of the Interdepartmental Working Body for Labour Market Monitoring, created in 2010 by decision of the ASHE director, as one of the measures within the Economic Recovery Programme of the Croatian Government. Two sessions of this body (which includes representatives of academic and business community, students, relevant ministries, Croatian Employment Service and ASHE) have been held so far. It is this kind of cooperation that is needed for improving the long-term integration of higher

education and labour market, and with that employability and competitiveness, in line with the Bologna reform and the EU 2020 Strategy.

Overall activities of the Agency for Science and Higher Education have been recognised by the Steering Committee of European Regional Economic Forum (EREF) from Brussels, which chose ASHE as an example of good practice. A representative of Department of Higher Education had an opportunity to present ASHE activities at the European Regional Economic Forum held in June 2010 in Gorizia, Slovenia.

3.2 Science

ASHE assisted scientific organisations in the Republic of Croatia in improving their activities, and participated in national, regional and international activities related to science. ASHE unified and coordinated activities of all bodies responsible for creating policies and strategies for science in the Republic of Croatia (National Council for Science, scientific area councils, scientific field committees, working groups and expert commissions established by the National Council for Science, etc.) As a result of ASHE's involvement, information flow among these institutions is faster and more accurate, enabling the institutions to be better and more efficient in their work.

ASHE serves as a link between the National Council for Science and other public bodies and business organisations such as the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Committee for Education, Science and Culture of the Croatian Parliament, National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development, universities and its units, Bureau of Statistics, Croatian Institute for Technology, Business-Innovation Centre of Croatia, Croatian Chamber of Commerce, etc.

ASHE provided expert and administrative support to the National Council for Science, which included preparing materials and collecting data for Council sessions, writing minutes, proposals, statements, decisions and conclusions related to Council tasks in appointments to scientific positions, establishing criteria for appointments to scientific positions, appointments to scientific positions in interdisciplinary scientific fields and criteria for enrolment into the Register of Scientific Organisations, evaluation of scientific organisations, adoption of Statutes, and other items and complaints related to science, drafting of the National Council for Science Annual Report and drafting of the proposal for the National Council for Science Annual Financial Plan .

In 2010 the Department organised 9 sessions of the National Council for Science, 9 sessions of scientific area councils, 77 sessions of scientific field committees and dozen meetings of various working groups and expert committees.

The task of the scientific area councils is to discuss matters in the purview of the National Council for Science related to individual scientific areas and art disciplines. ASHE prepared session

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materials, invited members to sessions, organized sessions and drafted minutes, conclusions, opinions and statements adopted at Council sessions.

In 2010 Scientific Area Councils held 9 sessions: 3 by Scientific Area Council for Natural Sciences, 2 by Scientific Area Council for Biotechnical Sciences, 1 by Scientific Area Council for Social Sciences and 3 by Scientific Area Council for Humanities.

Some of the subjects discussed were the draft *Act on Science, Statute on Scientific and Artistic Areas, Fields and Branches*, criteria for appointment to scientific positions, priority research, evaluations of the results of research projects and decision on their funding in 2010, calls for proposals for Croatian Science Foundation Board members, categorisation of journals, requirements for appointments to scientific positions, issues regarding the work of scientific field committees etc.

Scientific field committees carry out a part of the procedure for appointment to scientific positions and make the final decisions on the appointments. National Council for Science established 23 scientific field committees. With a decision from May 2010, a Committee for Interdisciplinary Research Area (science, art) was established.

In 2010, scientific field committees carried out procedures of appointment to scientific positions in line with the provisions of the *Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education* (OG 123/03, 105/04, 174/04, 46/07), Decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia (OG 2/07), *Statute on Criteria for Appointment to Scientific Grades* (OG 84/05, 100/06, 138/06, 120/07, 116/10) and *Statute on Constitution and Activities of the Scientific Area Councils and Field Committees* (OG 118/05, 55/09 and 38/10).

Office for Field Committees also participated in the events related to drafting of the new *Statute on Criteria for Appointment to Scientific Grades*..

Scientific Field Committees held a total of 77 sessions: Committee for the Field of Biology (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Physics (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Geosciences (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Chemistry (4 sessions); Committee for the Field of

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Mathematics (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Chemical Engineering, Mining, Petroleum and Geological Engineering, Metallurgy, Textile Technology and Graphic Technology (5 sessions); Committee for the Field of Mechanical Engineering, Shipbuilding, Traffic and Transport Technology, Aviation, Rocket and Space Technology (4 sessions); Committee for the Field of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Architecture, Urbanism, Geodesy and Civil Engineering (2 sessions); Committee for the Field of Fundamental Medical Sciences, Clinical Medical Sciences, Public Health and Health Protection, Dentistry and Pharmacy (6 sessions); Committee for the Field of Veterinary Medicine (5 sessions); Committee for the Field of Agricultural Sciences, Forestry, Wood Technology, Biotechnology and Food Technology (4 sessions); Committee for the Field of Economy (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Information and Communication Sciences (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Pedagogy, Educational and Rehabilitation Sciences, Logopedics and Kinesiology (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Political Science, Sociology, Social Geography and Demography, Social Work and Security and Defence (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Law (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Psychology (4 sessions); Committee for the Field of Philosophy and Theology (3 sessions); Committee for the Field of Philology (4 session); Committee for the Field of History, Art History, Art Science, Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology (3 sessions); and Committee for the Field of Dramatic Arts (theatre and media), Film Arts (film, electronic and media art of motion pictures), Music Art, Visual Art, Applied Arts, Dance Art (3 sessions).

A total of 1324 items were reviewed, out of which 1208 appointments to scientific grades and 116 appointments to grades in arts.

ASHE was also responsible for functioning of all working groups and expert committees established by the National Council for Science.

ASHE participated in drafting the *Statute on the Constitution and Activities of Scientific Area Councils and Field Committees* (OG 38/2010), and amending the *Statute on Criteria for Appointment to Scientific Positions* (OG 71/2010 and OG 116/2010). The amendments were required to establish the Committee for Interdisciplinary Research Area (science, arts), and to enable its functioning.



4 ANALYTICS AND STATISTICS

MOZVAG is an information system used in evaluating study programmes proposed by higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia, which serves as a database of all licensed study programmes being performed. It is also used in audits of scientific organisations and higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia..

MOZVAG contains the following user modules:

- MOZVAG - HEIs;
- MOZVAG - study programmes;
- MOZIR - bilingual module for expert panels;
- Directory of Study Programmes - on-line module for browsing accredited study programmes;
- MOZVAG - audit;
- MOOSIK - bilingual module for audit committees.

In 2010 an analysis was carried out regarding inadequacies and necessary improvements of MOZVAG for the purpose of an upgrade.

- Preliminary activities have been carried out for the issuance of new licenses with exact information on single and double study programmes.
- Preliminary activities have been carried out for the issuance of new licenses with exact information on legal successors that are delivering the programmes.
- An analysis of conditional licenses was carried out.

MOZVAG is continuously being developed, according to the needs of the Agency and changes in its operational processes. Considering the complexity and diversity of procedures carried out by ASHE - which include higher education as well as research institutes, accreditation and audit - its current upgrade resulted in low integration of data and the system as a whole. The plan is to solve this problem by creating registers (of higher education institutions, study programmes, teachers, scientists, students), and a model of data storage that will enable the integration and analysis of data from various sources, including the information systems and databases outside the Agency.

The project of National Information System of Higher Education and Science (NISVOZ) would at the same time present:

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- informational support to key business process in the system of higher education and science
- source of data for national and international statistics and evidence-based decision making.

The project includes:

- analysis of operational processes (procedures, decision-making protocols, participants) in ASHE, and relevant business processes of stakeholders,
- development of a register of higher education institutions and scientific organisations, study programmes, teaching staff, scientists and students,
- development of a model of data storage, for the purpose of statistical processing and analyses necessary for generating national statistics and strategic decision-making in higher education and science,
- development of user rules and guidelines to ensure protection of data and business processes in user network, and development of rules ensuring data input.

The development of NISVOZ will be funded by the European Commission through IPA programme pre-accession support for the 2007-2013 period.

ASHE is drafting the necessary project and tender documentation.

Directory of Study Programmes, available on ASHE website, was created with an aim to provide a one-stop-shop for information on all levels of accredited study programmes available in the Republic of Croatia. It lists all study programmes accredited through the procedure defined by the *Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education*, i.e. those with licenses issued by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports upon the recommendation of the National Council for Higher Education. Directory of Study Programmes provides information on accredited study programmes to general public; Directory listing therefore represents a final step of a successful accreditation of a study programme.

The ASHE Directory is also hosted on the websites MojPosao (by Educentar, recruitment and training agency) and Study in Croatia (portal for foreign students created by the Institute for the Development of Education)

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Directory of Study Programmes allows a multi-criteria search, providing users with additional information, such as the institution delivering the programme (type and name of higher education institution), type, category and level of study programmes, duration of programme and number of ECTS, scientific area and field, location where the programme is delivered, and academic/professional title or level.

English version of the Directory of Study Programmes will be made available at the beginning of 2011, and with this the Agency will join the European Qrossroads project, the European database of higher education institutions' study programmes, run by ECA (European Consortium for Accreditation), which integrates information from different quality assurance agencies' databases.

In 2010, data required for the establishment of the Network of Higher Education in the Republic of Croatia was gathered and analysed. The analysis included data on all higher education institutions and study programmes, as distributed by counties, number of students at HEIs, number of students at the final grades of secondary schools, and number of unemployed, i.e. economic situation in individual counties.

In order to run the procedures better and easier, an application was designed for monitoring re-accreditation of higher education institutions, as well as interactive diagrams for thematic evaluation of scientific organisations and higher education institutions.

The National Database of Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications in the Republic of Croatia was developed within the MATRA MPAP Dutch Assistance programme aimed at aligning Croatian regulatory framework with the 2005/36/EC Directive on recognition of foreign professional qualifications and creating the adequate institutional and administrative preconditions. The database serves as a tool for providing information on the regulated professions in the Republic of Croatia and is simultaneously a technical instrument for archiving data on the recognition of professional qualifications in Croatia.



5 STATE MATURA EXAMINATION AND APPLICATIONS TO STUDY PROGRAMMES

In the first half of 2010, the ASHE Central Applications Office (CAO) was involved in numerous activities regarding the Summer cycle of admissions to higher education institutions in the academic year 2010/2011. From January to July, CAO accepted candidates' documentation (in person and by mail), and verified their personal information and grades in the system.

In 2010, CAO representatives participated in university fairs in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, Zadar and Osijek where they answered questions from HEIs and candidates. In Rijeka and Osijek, informative meetings were organised with HEIs' coordinators to inform them on the new system of applications to study programmes through the National Information System for Applications to Higher Education Institutions (NISpVU), as well as the application procedure and their tasks.

The Office handled a large number of inquiries regarding the applications to State Matura, standardised national exam for secondary school graduates, that were received on daily basis. CAO also communicated with HEIs' coordinators, answering their questions on using NISpVu and the application procedure, and resolved problems of system users as well as individual enrolment cases. CAO informed higher education institutions on all the news and activities that needed implementation, and at their request amended additional conditions for enrolment.

During the State Matura examination, representatives of CAO participated in supervision of candidates taking exams in their schools, and filed reports to the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education. CAO also gathered candidates' complaints regarding irregularities during the examination, complaints regarding results of the exams and, in case of absence from examination, documentary evidence that justified the absence. ASHE examination committee submitted its opinion regarding these issues to the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education.

At the end of April, CAO organised video-conference for HEI coordinators in order to provide information on the possibilities of NISpVU system in the process of additional assessments of candidates' skills and competences. Coordinators were guided in the use of NISpVU, and CAO continued to follow their activities within the system and remind them of deadlines. After the ranking list was published, CAO handled individual complaints on placement, and

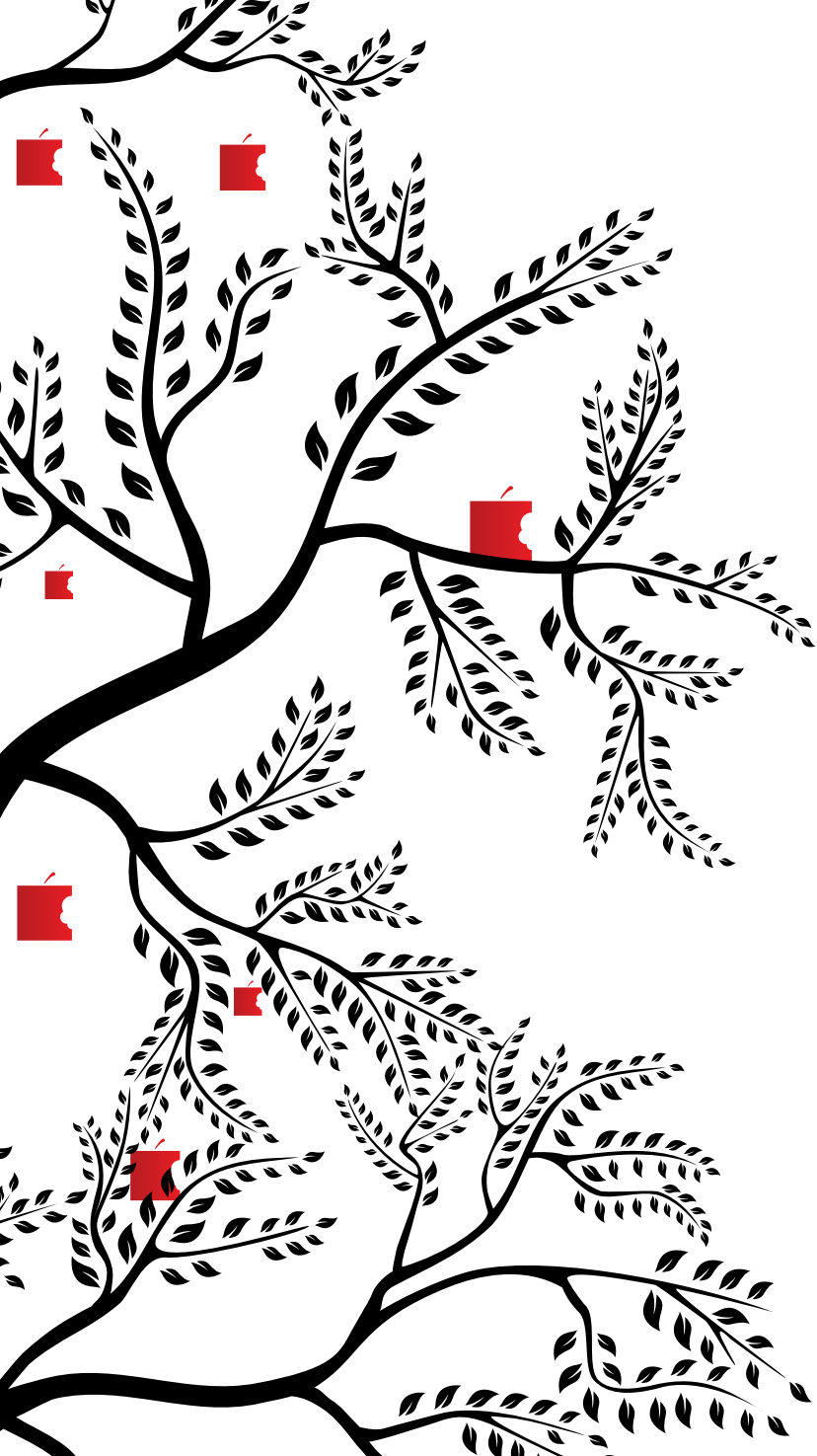
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organised the return of original documentation and archiving of all the documents that have been received.

In August and September, the same activities were carried out for the Autumn cycle of admissions.

In September and October, CAO in collaboration with MSES, National Centre for External Evaluation of Education and CARNet, Croatian academic and research network, participated in the amending the *Ordinance on State Matura Examination*, and preparing the brochure "State Matura 2009/2010 and Applying for Study Programmes". The brochure was printed in November and distributed to all fourth-grade students and higher education institutions. CAO also collected data on the enrolment requirements for the academic year 2011/2012 from higher education institutions, and fed them to NISpVU system.

In order to provide candidates with access to latest information, CAO updates www.studij.hr website daily. Important notices are also published via Twitter.



6 CROATIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

ASHE participates in the activities of the Operational Team in support of the Government Committee for Adoption of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CQF).

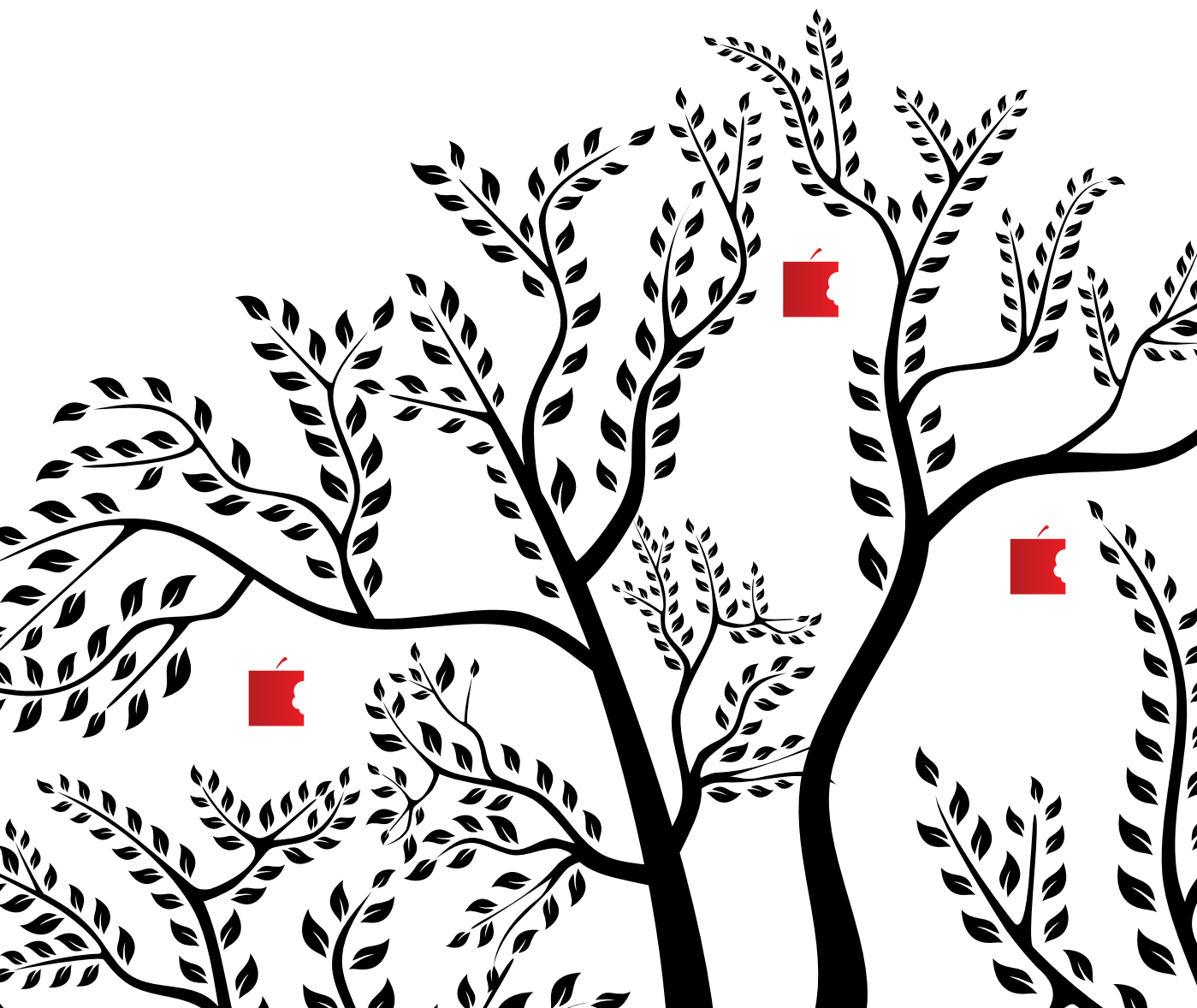
Upon completion of the work of the Committee for the Development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (from 2007 until the end of 2009), on 20 May 2010 the Government of the Republic of Croatia established the Committee for the Implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework, which includes social partners and other stakeholders. The Committee held its first session on 30 November 2010. In addition, on 10 September 2010 the Government of the Republic of Croatia issued a decision establishing the Operational Team in Support of the Committee for the Implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework.

According to the decision, the task of the Committee is to ensure the implementation of CQF and the adopted plan of activities. The goal is to competently refer qualifications “made in” the Republic of Croatia with regard to the European Qualifications Framework. The Committee submits its annual report to the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

The Operational Team comprises experts from institutions represented in the Committee for the Implementation of CQF who showed interest in participation and have previous experience in CQF-related activities.

During 2010, preparatory work for the implementation of CQF for the most part included the implementation of series of commitments that were agreed upon as a part of the integration of CQF with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF Advisory Group and National Coordination Point), and also the implementation of activities within the MSES IPA project “Further Development of CQF” supporting the work of the Committee and Operational Team.

The most important element of the CQF implementation is defining the legal framework, which will serve as a basis for the preparation of a report on integration with the European Qualifications Framework and Qualifications Framework of European Higher Education Area. The framework is to be fully defined in 2011.



7 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The 2009 legislative changes created necessary preconditions for the external evaluation of ASHE, which will serve as a basis for ASHE application for full membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2011.

The ENQA Steering Committee brought a decision by which the Spanish Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Research of Andalusia (AGAE) was confirmed as the coordinator of external evaluation of ASHE. AGAE representative Ms Nieves Pascual participated in the preliminary visit to ASHE (from 11 to 13 October 2010), and the site visit of the expert panel, an obligatory part of the external evaluation will take place in June 2011.

Agency for Science and Higher Education Director, prof. Jasmina Havranek PhD, was appointed to the International Advisory Board of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) for the 2011-2013 period.

Professor Havranek was also appointed a member of the Steering Committee of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE Network). At the proposal of CEEN Steering Committee, ASHE accepted to host the next CEEN annual workshop, i.e. Steering Committee meeting that will take place in May 2011 in Split.

In addition, ASHE Director participated in the evaluation of the Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki (TEI), at the invitation of the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency of Higher Education - HQAA.

7.1 Membership in International Associations

The Agency for Science and Higher Education is a full member of the following international associations:

- International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
- Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE Network)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Forum for Institutional Management in Higher Education (OECD IMHE)

7.2. Participation in International Conferences

With the aim of exchanging useful information and staying up to date with the latest insights in the field of quality assurance in science and higher education, ASHE staff is dedicated to constant trend monitoring and participation in the key international events in the field.

In 2010 representatives of ASHE participated in seminars and workshops organised by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and other relevant organisations, and followed the development of the system of recognition of higher education qualifications on international level, among other by participating in annual conferences of ENIC and NARIC networks.

In 2010, representatives of ASHE also participated as lectures at international conferences:

- Focusing on the National level and on the implementation in the European level in the European Student Summit (ESS2010) panel, held on the margins of the 2010 Ministerial Conference in Budapest/Vienna
- European Regional Economic Forum (EREF) in Gorizia (Slovenia) entitled „Competencies and Values for Sustainable, Knowledge-based Competitiveness – A New Agenda for European Regions“ and held on 7-8 June 2010, where ASHE activities were presented and chosen as an example of good practice
- 2nd International Conference: Institutional Strategic Quality Management ISQM 2010, held on 14-16 October 2010 in Romania, where we presented “Student participation in Quality Assurance in Croatia”. Article of the same title was published in “PROCEEDINGS of 2nd International Conference Institutional Strategic Quality Management in Higher Education”, Volume I, p. 175 - 178.
- National ENIC/NARIC Office accepted the invitation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Chevening Alumni Association to provide consultant services to the project “Building institutional capacities for recognition of foreign qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, a technical assistance project aimed at establishing recognition policies and practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the best EU practices.
- Within the Cluster Knowledge, Taskforce Fostering& Building Human Capital (TFBHC) of the

Regional Cooperation Council, ASHE participates in coordinating the National Qualification Frameworks cluster. At the regional meeting of the Clusters of Knowledge Task Force in Sarajevo in December 2010, ASHE presented the progress made with the Croatian Qualifications Framework and proposed further cluster activities to the countries from the region.

- ASHE presented its new procedures at the Forum Cafe of the 5th European Quality Assurance Forum held in Lyon, France, from 18 to 20 November 2010.



8 RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

ASHE National ENIC/NARIC Office participates in recognition of foreign higher education qualifications by implementing the procedure of professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and issuing recommendations for academic recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad, upon request by higher education institution' offices for academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications. In addition to expert support for recognition procedures, National ENIC/NARIC Office provides information and communicates with interested organisations and persons on daily basis, via official communication and e-mail.

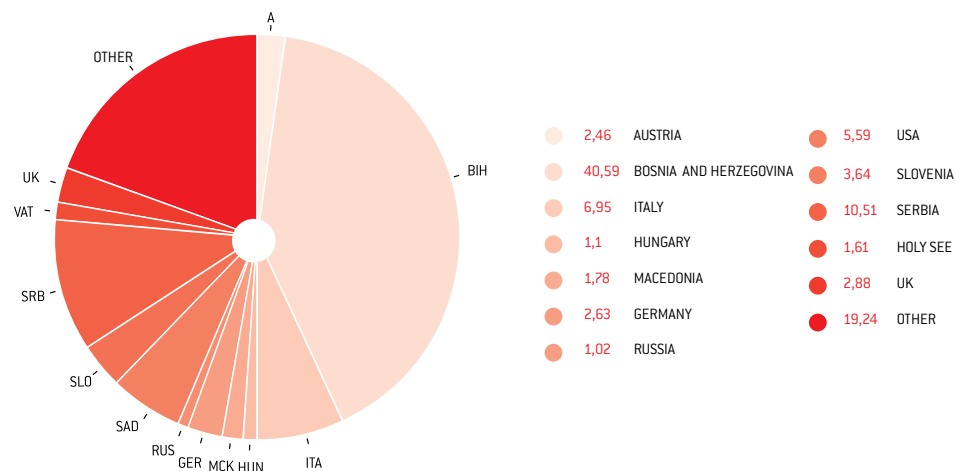
In 2010 ASHE National ENIC/NARIC Office received 1187 requests for professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, 70 requests for recommendations for academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and 48 requests for professional interpretation of various higher education qualifications. The Office replied to more than 1100 e-mail inquiries on professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in the Republic of Croatia and abroad, as well as on foreign and Croatian higher education systems and foreign and Croatian higher education study programmes and qualifications.

Out of the total number of requests for recognition of foreign higher education qualifications received, 1163 or 90% were submitted by Croatian citizens, while the remaining were submitted by foreign citizens, mostly citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who submitted more than 5% of the total number of requests.

As in the previous years, the majority of foreign higher education qualifications received for recognition was issued in the neighbouring states, primarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Chart 3 Statistical overview of applications for professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in 2010:



To improve the procedure of recognition of foreign HE qualifications, National ENIC/NARIC Office upgraded the existing information system. The goal was to enter and analyse the data on recognition of foreign higher education qualifications through one integrated system. The system upgrade allowed for the automated drafting of documents (conclusions, guidelines, recommendations, decisions, statements etc.) in recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, and providing information on the national and foreign qualifications.

The *Act on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications* delegated to the National ENIC/NARIC Office the task of drafting the *Ordinance on the National Database of Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications in the Republic of Croatia*, hosted by ASHE. The Office also produced a user manual for the database.

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National ENIC/NARIC Office accepted the invitation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina *Chevening Alumni Association* to provide consultant services to the project “Building institutional capacities for recognition of foreign qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, a technical assistance project aimed at establishing recognition policies and practices in line with the best EU practices. Together with the colleagues from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Office staff developed “Rules for Recognition and Evaluation of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications for the Purpose of Employment and Continuing Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, presented to the ENIC Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2010.



9 TEMPUS

Tempus (The Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies) is an EU assistance programme that supports the modernisation of higher education and creates an area of co-operation in countries surrounding the EU. Established in 1990, the scheme now covers 27 partner countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. Each of the Tempus partner countries receives funding for the National Tempus Office, tasked with administering and promoting the programme at the national level, and providing support to project applicants and institutions participating in the programme - primarily higher education institutions, often in cooperation with public authorities, companies and civil society organisations active in the field of higher education. The Republic of Croatia joined the EU Life Long Learning Programme at the end of 2010 and is no longer eligible for Tempus funding. The activities of the National Tempus Office are thus no longer necessary, and the ongoing and future Tempus projects, in which the Croatian institutions can participate on a self-financing basis, will be supported by the National Contact Point at the Croatian Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes.

The National Tempus Office carried out the following activities:

1. Monitoring activities:

- organisation, monitoring and reporting to the European Commission on meetings with representatives of 15 projects that started in 2008 and 2009 and are implemented by Croatian higher education institutions.

2. Information and promotion:

- presentation of the new call for project proposals in Zagreb, February 2010,
- presentation of project monitoring and dissemination to the academic and business community at the University of Osijek, June 2010,
- publishing the brochure "TEMPUS IV in the Republic of Croatia", in Croatian and English, which presented all the projects from the TEMPUS IV programme (2008 and 2009) that included Croatian higher education institutions
- participation in numerous meetings of Tempus projects' consortia
- publishing reports and news on the programme on ASHE website.

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3. Cooperation with the European Commission:

- participation in the Tempus Project Representatives Meeting held in Brussels, Belgium, in March 2010
- participation in the Tempus Project Representatives Meeting held in Antwerp, Belgium, in December 2010

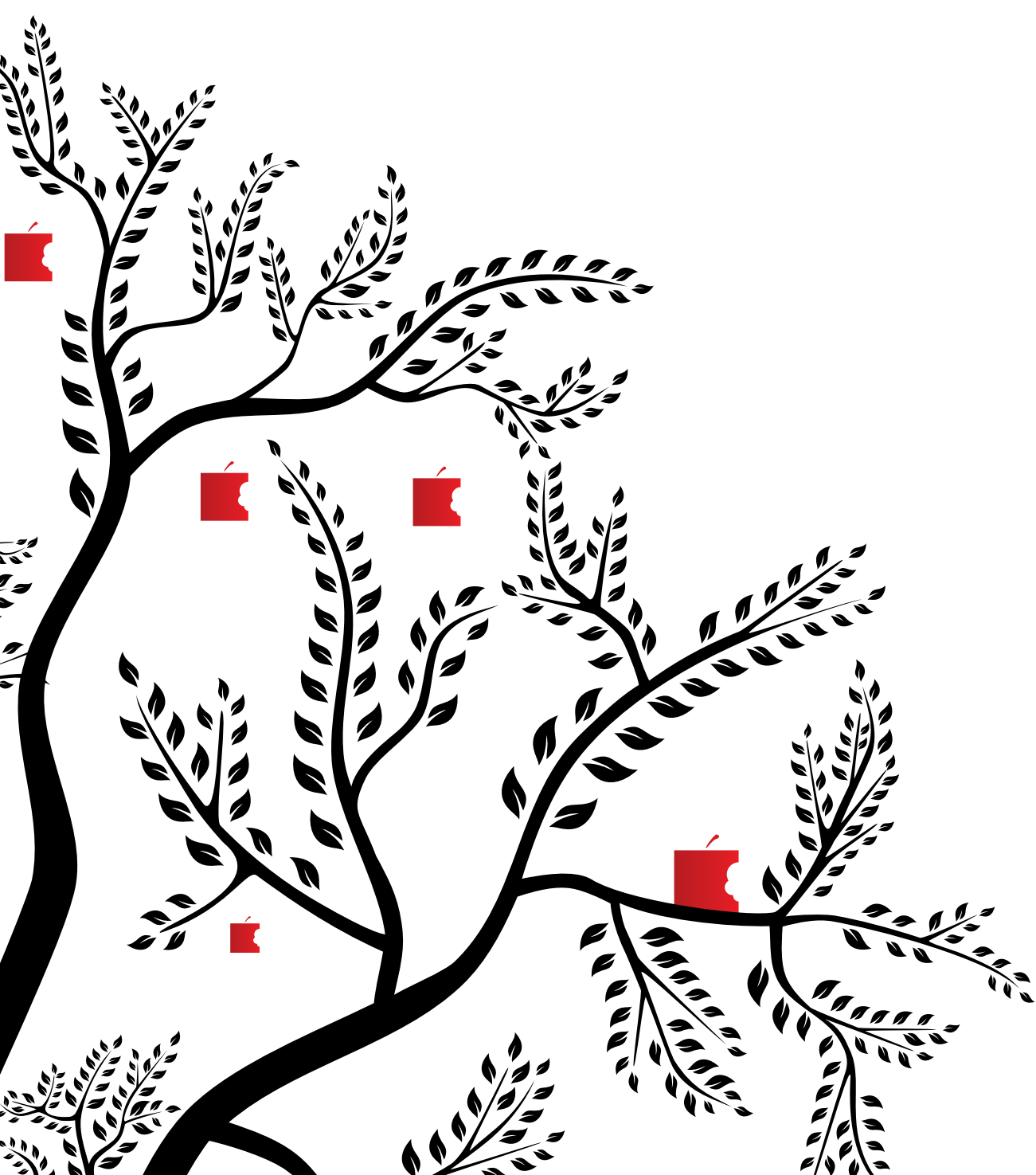
4. Administrative activities and cooperation with the Delegation of the European Union, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Ministry of Finance:

- daily cooperation on project co-financing, financial procedures, promotional activities etc.
- regular administrative activities and reporting to the European Commission on the activities carried out and funds spent.

5. Cooperation with the Croatian HERE (*Higher Education Reform Experts*) team:

- organisation of the conference “Higher Education Reform - Inventory 2010” at the Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, 9-10 April 2010, and publication of the conference conclusions
- financing the participation of Croatian experts in international conferences: seminar on recognition of higher education qualifications held in Tallin, Estonia, in June, and seminar on the social dimension of higher education held on Cyprus in November
- preparation for the establishment of a new group of experts in reform of higher education (Bologna Experts), as a part of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme.





10 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

10.1 Compliance of the Manual and other Quality Management System documentation with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education

The *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education* redefined ASHE responsibilities. In line with the new act, in 2009 ASHE carried out a re-organisation and formed the Accreditation Council - a new body in charge of making decisions on all procedures of external evaluation of quality assurance in higher education and science. During 2010 ASHE harmonised its Quality Management System (QMS) documentation with the Act. This included some new amendments to the Manual, which defined the new scope of Agency activities, and included ASHE Organisational Chart, changes in subordinate regulations and representation of duties and responsibilities of new Agency bodies.

In addition to the Manual amendments, there were also amendments to the written procedure PP 5.5-1 "Managing responsibilities, levels of authorisation and communication", with additional focus put on external communication of individual departments. Aside from updating the existing work instructions, new instructions were made for all ASHE activities regarding the external quality assurance audit. Some changes were introduced regarding the methods in which individual processes and procedures are followed (external and internal audits, procurement, procedures carried out by the Central Applications Office, external communication of all departments etc.)

10.1.1 Internal Audit of QMS

In June 2010 internal audits of all departments were carried out, in accordance with the annual plan of internal audits. Results of internal audits were 4 minor nonconformities - mostly regarding insufficient knowledge of QMS documentation and lack of work instructions for the new activities. There were also 14 observations suggesting that each department should define its external communication, considering that the role of ASHE changed with the new legislation. After the corrective actions have been carried out, ASHE Quality Assurance manager finalised the Management Assessment on 20 July 2010. The Management Assessment evaluates the actual implementation of recommendations from the external audit report (which is annually conducted by the Det Norske Veritas certification company), analyses the results of internal audits, results of a survey on users' satisfaction, results of a survey on employees' satisfaction and participation in ASHE work and effectiveness of employees' training and professional development. Improvements and other activities related to the QMS are also proposed within the Assessment, and it also includes reports

from all heads of departments on individual departments' activities.

Management Assessment reviews the efficiency of ASHE quality management system and lists short-term goals for the following period, as well as recommendations for system improvements.

10.1.2 External Audit of QMS

External audit of QMS is carried out once a year, on the basis of the internal audit and the Management Assessment. In 2010 it was carried out on 28 September. Representative of Det Norske Veritas Adriatica (DNV) reviewed whether ASHE carried out all the activities pertaining to the DNV recommendation from the previous external audit. Quality assurance manager informed DNV on all improvements and activities carried out in relation to improving the QMS. DNV representative paid special attention to backup procedures carried out by the IT department.

The result of external audit were 4 commendations, related to internal and external communication of all departments and QMS documentation, i.e. improvements in the way individual stages of procedures and processes are represented. Recommendations for improvement of QMS were pertaining to the inclusion of ISO 9001:2008 (E) sub-clause 7.3 - design and development.

After the external audit, new written procedure PP 7.3-1: "Development management" was introduced, as well as new forms, OB 7.3-1- URR-0-1: "Development request/suggestion" and OB 7.3-1-URR-0-2: "Assessment of development justifiability, cost of investment and cost-effectiveness".

In 2010 SRCE, the University Computing Centre, upgraded the existing information system, MOZVAG for External Audit Department, including an additional database Moosik, used for monitoring the course of external QA audit of higher education institutions.

Implementation of the 7.3 written procedure was carried out by External Audit Department, presenting the development of Moosik database in new QMS documents.

10.2 Development of QA System

ASHE quality assurance system comprises the 2010-2014 strategic document, internal QA system carried out through QMS, external quality assurance system, which is manifested in cooperation with other stakeholders in higher education and science (through organisation of numerous seminars with topics on external evaluation of quality assurance in higher education institutions and scientific organisations), procedures of external evaluation of quality assurance in science and higher education (re-accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes, external QA audit of higher education institutions , thematic evaluation of scientific organisations), and quality assurance policy. All QA documents are published on ASHE website.

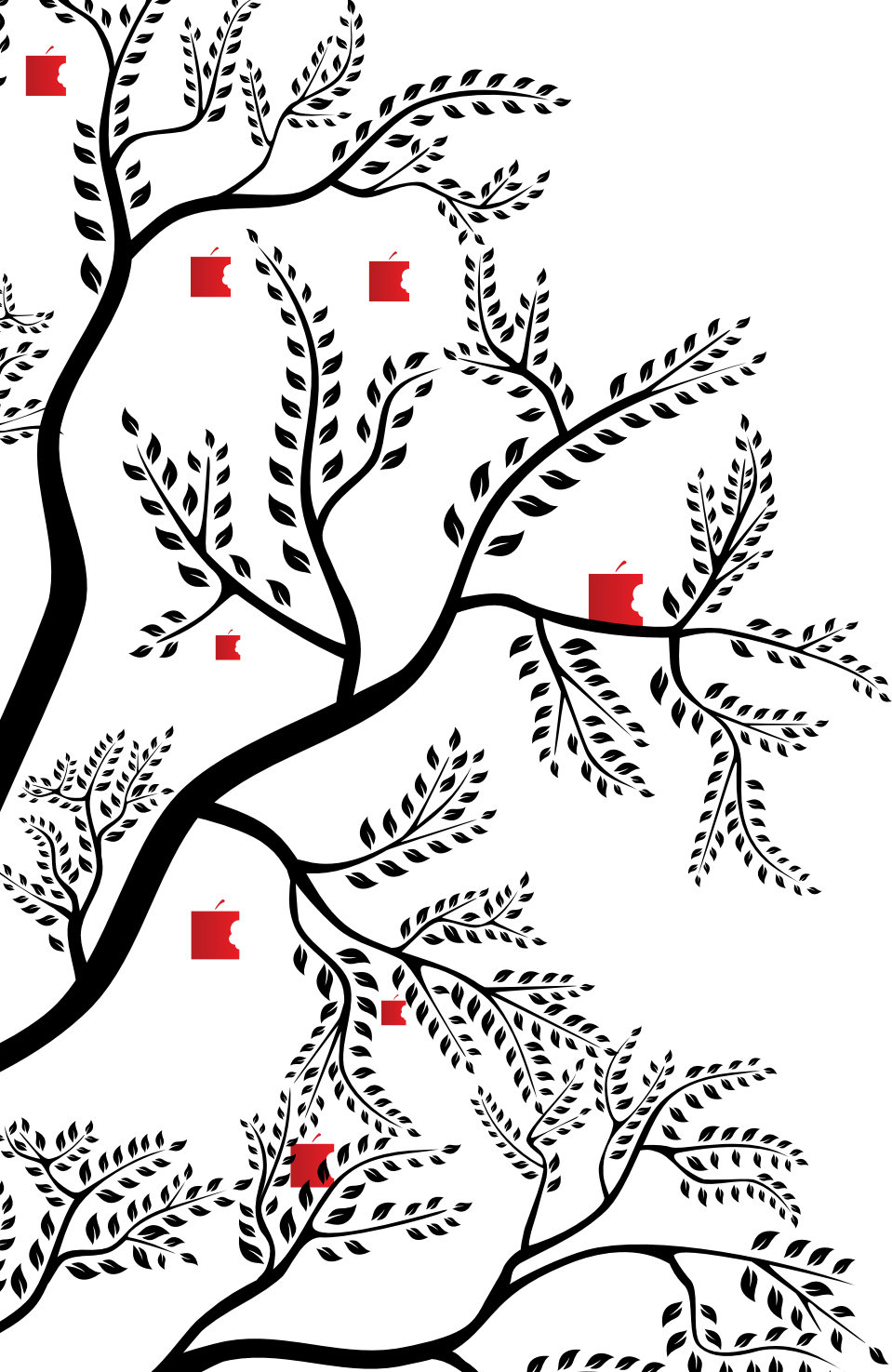
The effectiveness of quality assurance system is monitored through analyses of the activities carried out, as described by heads of departments for QA evaluations in their reports. The analyses carried out showed that ASHE quality assurance system is effective and in compliance with the ESG.



11 LEGAL ISSUES

In accordance with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education and ASHE general acts, ASHE re-organisation was continued throughout 2010, with Department for Professional and Administrative Support (that comprised Section for Finance and Accounting, IT Section, Section for Procurement, Support and Technical Issues and Section for General, Legal and Personnel Issues) being transformed into General Administration with the following departments: IT Department, Department of Finance, Department of Procurement, Support and Technical Issues, Department of General, Legal and Personnel Issues, and their respective sections.

During 2010, Department of General, Legal and Personnel Issues was involved in drafting and harmonising ASHE's general acts with current Croatian legislation, activities related to personnel management (implementation of public tenders, drafting employment contracts, managing registers, etc.), activities pertaining to archive and records management etc.



12 PUBLIC RELATIONS

Informing the public on ASHE activities and effective cooperation with relevant media firmly demonstrate Agency's dedication to continuously support the development of quality in Croatian science and higher education, as well as protect public interest with maintaining high standards of higher education qualifications.

Throughout 2010, ASHE continued to strengthen its position with regard to preserving public trust, and improving public perception and recognisability of its work. We established excellent cooperation with leading media in the country, and boast an ever-growing archive of media releases on ASHE. In an effort to better inform the public on our activities, in 2010 we began publishing and periodically distributing a newsletter via e-mail. Such a method of informing, which seeks to encourage the exchange of useful information from the area of science and higher education, is aimed at both professional and general public - all the stakeholders in science and higher education, heads of government institutions, Croatian scientists abroad, businessmen, media representatives, etc.

Also, since October 2010 the Agency has a new, redesigned website at www.azvo.hr, rich in content and designed in a way that provides clear insight into all ASHE activities, with regular updates and news from the area of science and higher education worldwide.

In addition to strengthening on-line communication, ASHE published a number of print publications in 2010 - reports, brochures and leaflets about its activities. Apart from the 2009 Annual Report, in 2010 ASHE also published a 2010-2014 Strategy in Croatian and English, as well as a promotional leaflet "External quality assurance procedures in Croatian science and higher education: Call for QA experts 2010/2011", which described all the evaluation procedures and was presented at the 5th European QA Forum.

The Agency also published a leaflet entitled "2009/2010 State Matura and Applications to Study Programmes", and in cooperation with MSES prepared and printed 50.000 copies of the brochure that was distributed to all secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia. In December 2010, the Agency issued a publication on Tempus IV projects implemented in Croatia.

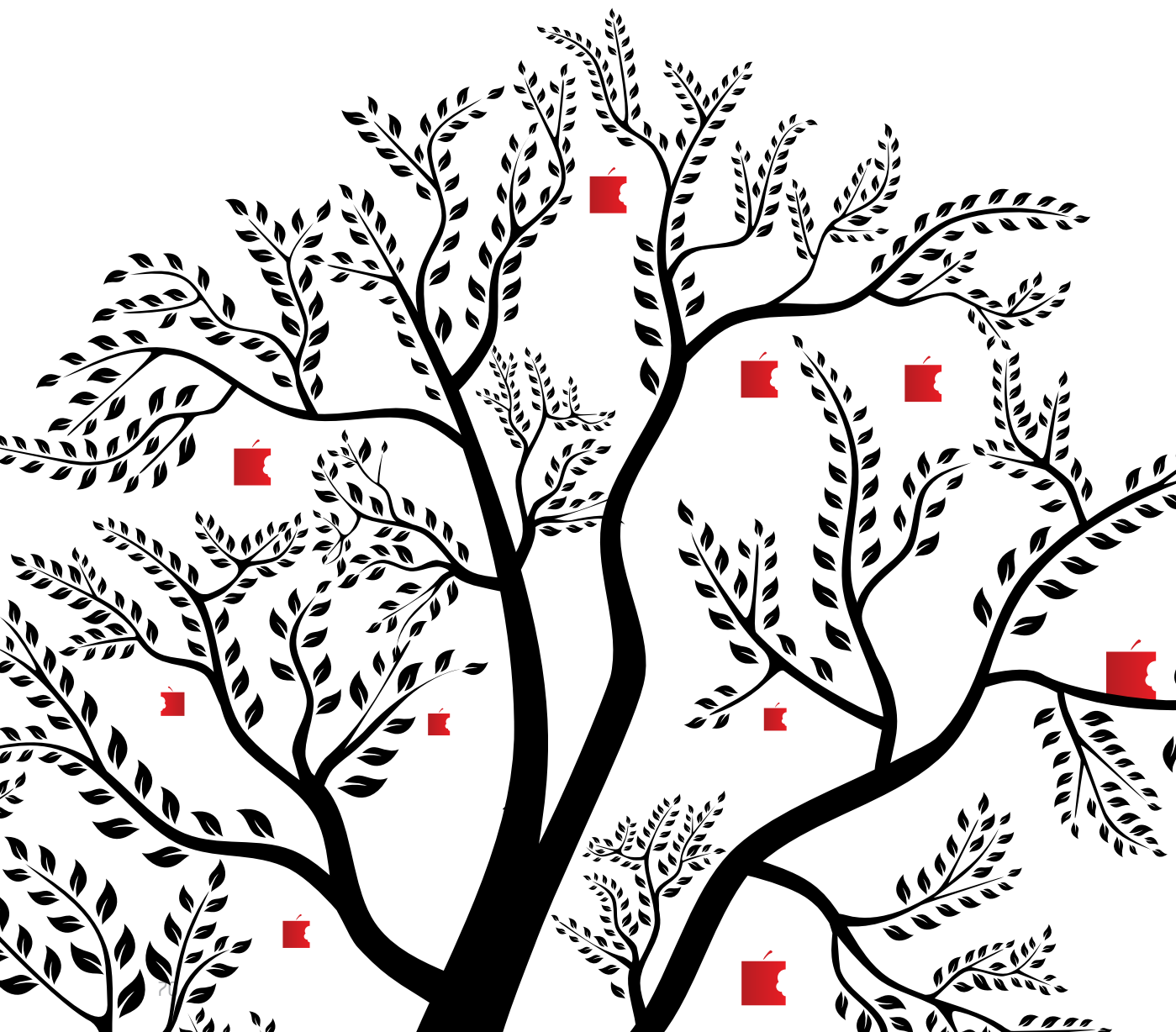
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In addition to participating in the 5th European QA Forum, ASHE also participated in university fairs in Zagreb, Split and Osijek. Representatives of ASHE informed the visitors on application for study programmes at higher education institutions in 2011/2012, and presented the State Matura and Applications to Study Programmes” brochure, promotional leaflets and Central Applications Office multimedia presentation.

In 2010, successful cooperation was achieved with various institutions in the fields of science and higher education, but also other organisations. As already mentioned, ASHE cooperated with web-portal MojPosao and Educentar in exchanging information on study programmes in the Republic of Croatia, as well as in designing “Compare Study Programmes” application, which was launched on the Studij.hr website in December 2010. The website, launched in 2009, is also a result of cooperation between the Agency for Science and Higher Education and Educentar, which was also presented to the media. The Agency also had a successful collaboration with the Institute for Development of Education in designing the “Study in Croatia” website, also by exchanging data from the Directory of Study Programmes.

The 3rd Congress of Art Historians, held on 25-27 November 2010 in the Mimara Museum in Zagreb, and Scholarships Fair organised by the Institute for the Development of Education on 20 October 2010 in the National and University Library in Zagreb, were both held under the auspices of the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

We planned all these activities with the aim of demonstrating transparency, strengthening the positive public perception of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, and encouraging the exchange of information among the stakeholders. We shall continue to strive to the same goals in future.



13 FINANCES

ASHE is funded by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. ASHE revenue in 2010 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 - external quality assurance audit of higher education institutions and scientific organisations
- T621188 – TEMPUS project

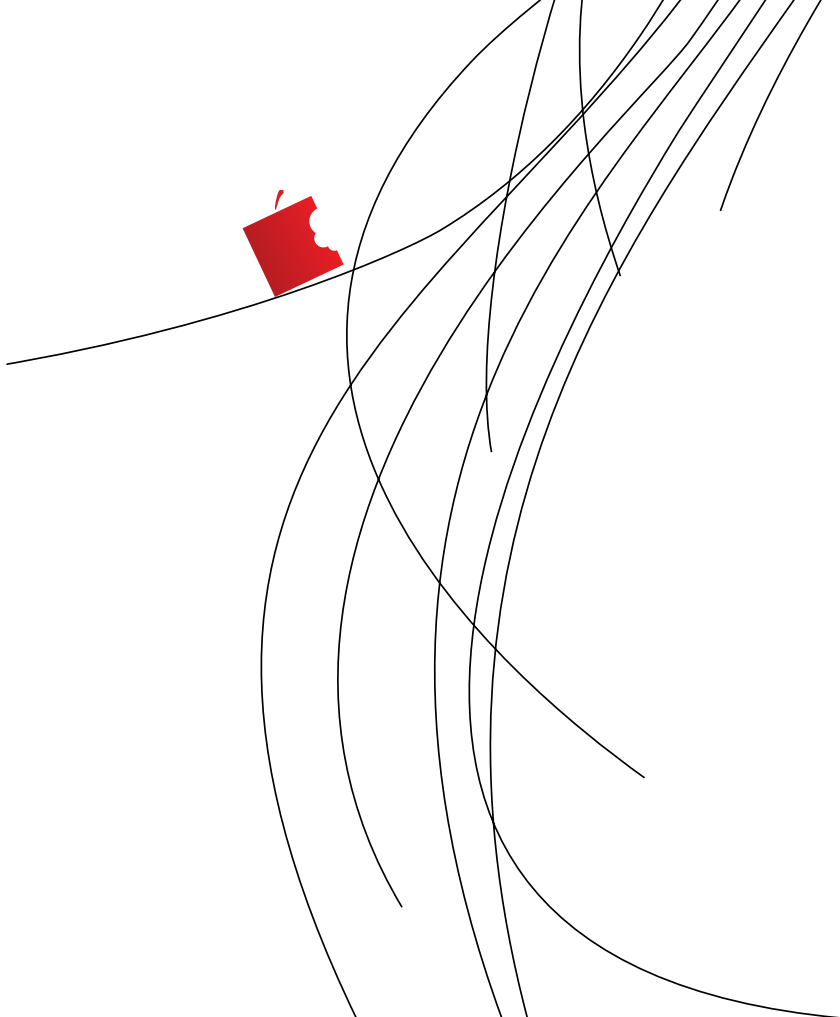
Based on the financial reports, total revenue in 2010 amounted to 21.266.019 kn. It consisted of:

- State budget resources for 2010 - 20.450.020 kn,
- Tempus project – 248.273 kn (European Union funds)
- Business revenue - 468.426 kn,
- Other revenue - 99.300 kn.

ASHE expenditure in 2010 amounted to 20.663.365 kn. It consists of business expenditure in the amount of 19.972.665 kn and expenditure for acquisition of non-financial assets in the amount of 690.700 kn. ASHE expenditure funded from the state budget amounted to 20.450.020 kn. The remainder was financed from Agency's own funds and international funds.

Table 2 ASHE expenditure 2010

EXPENDITURE	kn
A Business expenditure	19.972.665
<i>1 Staff costs</i>	8.771.710
1.1 Salaries	7.345.530
1.2 Salary contributions	1.206.138
1.3 Other staff costs	220.042
<i>2 Material costs</i>	11.170.109
2.1 Service costs	7.808.718
2.2 Remuneration costs	2.329.913
2.3 Material and energy expenditure	407.062
2.4 Other costs	624.416
<i>3 Financial expenditure</i>	30.846
B Acquisition of non-financial assets	690.700
TOTAL (A+B)	20.663.365





14 AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FOLLOWING PERIOD

Taking into consideration the needs of higher education and science in the Republic of Croatia, the Agency for Science and Higher Education set the following goals for 2011:

1. complete the external evaluation of ASHE in accordance with the ESG, which is a prerequisite for membership in ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) and meet all the requirements for the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)
2. carry out procedures of external quality assurance in science and higher education, in accordance with the *Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education*, as outlined by the 2011 annual plan
3. develop and upgrade the information systems relevant to ASHE and Croatian higher education and science
4. provide training for stakeholders in higher education and science
5. provide professional support to QA units at Croatian higher education institutions
6. coordinate the establishment of national benchmarks for scientific fields
7. develop a programme for planning, monitoring and follow-up of activities regarding evaluation of higher education institutions and scientific organisations
8. finalise the project documentation and tender for the National Information System of Higher Education and Science (NISVOZ) IPA project
9. upgrade MOZVAG (information system of support for ASHE business processes)
10. upgrade the database of evaluation experts (evaluators, auditors)
11. publish analyses and statistics on accredited study programmes, higher education institutions and trends in higher education and science (Directory of Study Programmes)
12. provide information on the requirements for enrolment in study programmes at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia, processing applications to study programmes in 2011/2012, and drafting reports on application and enrolment to higher education institutions.
13. develop National Information System for Applications to HEIs (NISpVU) and provide support to its users (candidates and HEI coordinators)
14. draft a proposal for the new *Act on Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications*
15. participate in drafting the new legislative package for the system of science and higher education in the Republic of Croatia

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16. participate in drafting the legislation pertaining to the Croatian Qualifications Framework
17. provide support to strategic and expert bodies in science and higher education (National Council for Science, National Council for Higher Education, Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, Interdepartmental Working Body for Labour Market Monitoring, Scientific Area Councils, Scientific Field Committees etc.)
18. research international quality assurance systems
19. further develop cooperation with similar agencies abroad, as well as with application offices
20. disseminate the culture of quality assurance
21. justify the public trust, continuously inform the public on ASHE activities and cooperate with the relevant media in Croatia and abroad
22. continuously improve the internal quality assurance system
23. enhance the quality of services provided by ASHE
24. provide ASHE staff with further education and training.



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