

2015 ANNUAL 2016 ACTIVITY REPORT PLAN



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AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION









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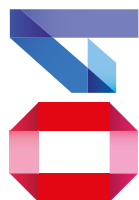
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DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Dear readers,

The past year was very dynamic, as it was marked by many social and political changes, which occurred both in Croatia and abroad. These changes are reflected in all the spheres of society, including higher education, science and stakeholders involved.



The Agency was also affected by these changes, while doing its best to adapt and bearing in mind its mission – fostering the importance of quality assurance in higher education and science, with the aim of continuous improvement of the quality of activities of higher education institutions, scientific organizations and the Croatian higher education and science in general, as well as its recognition within the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education is the Croatian agency responsible for quality assurance in higher education and science. As its roles are safeguarding and ensuring the quality of these areas, which are crucial for the country's development, it is extremely important to maintain the Agency's integrity and independence, in line with European recommendations.

Let me take this opportunity to mention some of the most important activities that marked the previous year.

The Agency re-accredited approximately 40 higher education institutions that deliver study programmes in the areas of biomedicine and health, natural sciences, arts and law. Other higher education institutions in the technical area and private universities were also evaluated. Higher education institutions licensed in the re-

accreditation procedures received a confirmation of compliance with European standards, while diplomas awarded by these universities are recognized abroad. The accreditation protects higher education qualifications awarded in Croatia, and confirms their credibility and authenticity. Without accreditation, qualifications cannot be recognized at an international level, which is important for both Croatian citizens and students from abroad who wish to pursue education at our higher education institutions.

Several other institutions will be re-accredited at the beginning of 2016, which will complete the first evaluation cycle. That will be the first time that all Croatian higher education institutions will have gone through external evaluation. Why is this so important? The findings and recommendations made during the first re-accreditation cycle will serve as a basis for decision-making in the system of higher education and science. This will inevitably open some of the most pressing concerns (such as the funding of higher education and science) and provide a basis for future decision-making. The activities carried out system-wide should positively affect students, who are and should be, at the heart of the education process, in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process.

It is very important for the Agency as an institution in charge of re-accreditation to hear opinions and proposals from all stakeholders

to continually improve its processes. For example, we have learned that higher education institutions find an impartial re-accreditation procedure to be an important factor motivating the initiation of quality improvement processes. Members of the expert panels also pointed out that the changes to the system of higher education in Croatia are necessary, which would be underpinned by the re-accreditation process.

There is still a lot of work ahead, as we are making preparations for the second re-accreditation cycle. Stronger emphasis will be placed on learning outcomes of study programmes, as well as on drafting and adopting relevant documents in cooperation with the academic community.

Notable activities carried out in the previous year include the re-accreditation of scientific organisations outside the system of higher education and public scientific institutes. This procedure will result in the first Register of Scientific Organisations with fully re-accredited scientific organizations. This is a pre-condition for the new cycle of evaluation of public and private scientific organisations and future science (and higher education) funding policies, which are based on the evaluation results.

We have launched the process of re-accreditation of doctoral

*ASHE's Management Board adopted the 2015 Annual Report and 2016 Activity Plan via e-mail.

study programmes, aimed at ensuring that the higher education qualifications that award the academic title "doctor of science" (PhD) reflect study programmes of high quality, internationally comparable and aligned with minimal legal conditions.

In 2015, we carried out a new round of evaluation of scientific quality for the purpose of establishing scientific centers of excellence. Six new research groups were given this designation of scientific excellence. At the moment, there are 13 scientific centers of excellence in Croatia, in all areas of science, with some 300 researchers pursuing excellent and internationally recognized research.

Another important novelty marked the previous year. Our Central Applications Office administered electronic applications to graduate study programmes via the National System of Applications to Graduate Studies (NISpDS). For now electronic applications have been administered only at the constituents of the University of Rijeka, but plans have been made to gradually introduce this system to other higher education institutions in Croatia. The Agency's staff developed this complex information system, saving the Agency several million kuna, given the high prices of such systems on the market. This type of application has many advantages, such as reducing costs and paperwork and providing fair access to higher education.

Among our international activities, I would like to mention our visit to Turkey, Egypt and Russia. At the invitation of the World Bank we held a presentation at the workshop on quality assurance in higher education. The Agency was recognized as one of examples of best practice in the establishment of quality assurance systems and in carrying out external evaluation, and it shared its experience with other participants.

Furthermore, we have launched an initiative in the region and invited other regional bodies – agencies – to discuss our experience in carrying out external evaluation, and to share information on our activities and plans. Recognition of accreditation decisions and higher education qualifications was among the most important topics of discussion. These events could be drivers of successful cooperation in the future.

This year we have been working hard to have our membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) renewed. The evaluation will be carried out by independent external experts, which will confirm that the Agency operates in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Finally, I would like to mention an important document that we published earlier this year – the Agency's Strategy 2016–2020. In

the coming period emphasis will be placed on further improvement of quality culture in higher education and science, as well as on international cooperation with other institutions and agencies.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to all my colleagues for their efforts and contributions to the achievement of our goals, to all those who have acknowledged our work and who have been involved in our activities in any way. Also, I would like to thank to ASHE staff and all the students who work with us.

In the light of changes that I referred to earlier, I hope that education will finally get a role it deserves and that it will become a true driver of the country's development.



Professor Jasmina Havranek, PhD

Director of the Agency for Science and Higher Education

2015 IN REVIEW

- Re-accreditation of **40 higher education institutions** was carried out.
- A total of **157 expert panel members** participated in the re-accreditation of higher education institutions.
- **48 scientific organisations** outside the system of higher education and public scientific institutes were re-accredited.
- **22 initial accreditations** were carried out for the delivery of new study programmes; based on the carried out procedures, the Minister of Science, Education and Sports received a recommendation to issue licences for 14 study programmes, one recommendation to deny a licence for the delivery of a new study programme, while other requests are still being processed.
- An initial accreditation procedure was carried out for performing a higher education activity for **one higher education institution** which resulted in a positive recommendation.
- **Four initial accreditation procedures** for carrying out a scientific activity were carried out.
- **42 positive opinions** were made **on the justifiability of public funding**.
- Evaluation of scientific quality was carried out for the purpose of establishing scientific centres of excellence and **six new centres** were established.
- **Three ASHE certificates** were awarded to quality assurance systems at higher education institutions **for a five-year period**

(the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture at the University of Zagreb, the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the University of Rijeka, and the Polytechnic of Zagreb).

• **The National Council** for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development held **nine sessions**.

• **Scientific Area Councils** held **10 sessions**.

• **Scientific Field Committees** held **96 sessions**; **980 decisions** were made on appointment to scientific grades or artistic-teaching grades and **74 negative decisions** were made on appointment to scientific grades.

• The Council of Polytechnics and Colleges held **seven sessions**.

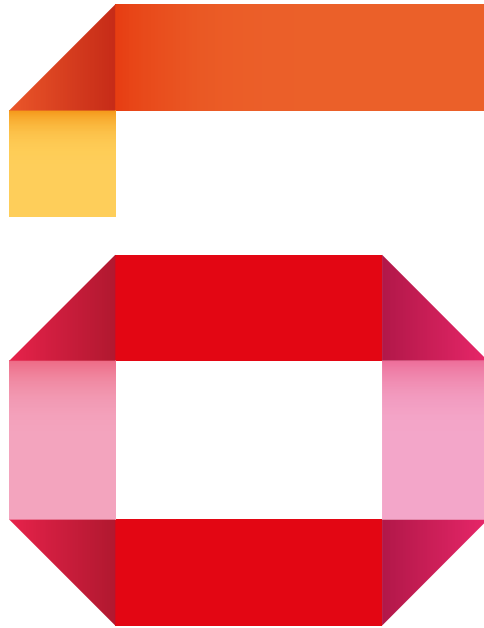
• **Scientific Field Committees** held a total of **26 sessions**; a total of **288 positive opinions** were made on meeting criteria in the procedures of appointment to teaching grades.

• **The Committee for Ethics** in Science and Higher Education held **nine sessions**.

• In the **summer enrolment period**, there were a total of 37,528 slots available at all Croatian higher education institutions, and of out 42,739 applicants that applied, **30,331 applicants secured their right to enrol**; in the **autumn enrolment period**, there were a total of 8239 slots available, and out of 8,784 applicants that applied, a total of **3,929 secured their right to enrol**.

• Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office **recognized 1700 foreign higher education qualifications** for the purpose of employment.

• ASHE has been involved in **ten international projects**.



EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

For the purpose of quality assurance in science and higher education, ASHE continued its external evaluation procedures in 2015. ASHE coordinated the re-accreditation of higher education institutions, scientific organisations outside the system of higher education and public scientific institutes and launched re-accreditation of

postgraduate (doctoral) study programmes. ASHE also coordinated the work of expert panels in the initial accreditation in science and higher education. This year, the Agency conducted the second round of evaluation of scientific quality for the purpose of establishing scientific centres of excellence.

RE-ACCREDITATION

Re-accreditation of higher education institutions in the academic year 2014/2015

In 2015, the final year of the first re-accreditation cycle, ASHE carried out the evaluation of higher education institutions that deliver study programmes in the fields of biomedicine and health, natural sciences, arts and law. ASHE also evaluated other higher education institutions in the field of technical sciences, and private universities.¹

According to the Higher Education Institutions Re-accreditation Plan, this involved re-accrediting 40 higher education institutions – 16 faculties, five academies of arts, 12 university departments, three private universities, two polytechnics (for one polytechnic a part of activities was evaluated) and two colleges.

1. Academy of Dramatic Arts, University of Zagreb
2. Academy of Fine Arts, University of Zagreb
3. Academy of Applied Arts, University of Rijeka
4. DIU Libertas International University in Zagreb
5. Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Technology, University of Zagreb

6. Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry, University of Zagreb
7. Croatian Catholic University in Zagreb
8. Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Technology, University of Split
9. Faculty of Medicine, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
10. Faculty of Medicine, University of Rijeka
11. Faculty of Medicine, University of Split
12. Faculty of Medicine, University of Zagreb
13. Department of Biology, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
14. Department of Biotechnology, University of Rijeka
15. Department of Physics, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
16. Department of Physics, University of Rijeka
17. Department of Geography, University of Zadar
18. Department of Informatics, University of Rijeka
19. Department of Chemistry, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
20. Department of Mathematics, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
21. Department of Mathematics, University of Rijeka

22. Department of Professional Studies, University of Dubrovnik
23. Department of Art and Restoration, University of Dubrovnik
24. Department of Health Studies, University of Zadar
25. Faculty of Law, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
26. Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka
27. Faculty of Law, University of Split
28. Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb
29. Faculty of Science, University of Split
30. Department of Art and Restoration, University of Zagreb
31. School of Dental Medicine, University of Zagreb
32. University North in Koprivnica
33. Faculty of Textile Technology, University of Zagreb
34. Arts Academy, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
35. Arts Academy, University of Split
36. VERN' Polytechnic – a part of the activity
37. Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Zagreb
38. College of International Relations and Diplomacy Dag Hammarskjöld
39. College for Inspection and Personnel Management
40. University of Applied Health Studies in Zagreb

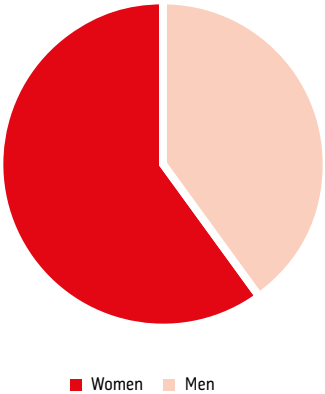
¹ Most higher education institutions delivering study programmes in the technical field were evaluated in the academic year 2011/2012, while most private higher education institutions were evaluated in the academic year 2012/2013.

Four colleges included in the 2014/2015 Reaccreditation Plan have asked for a postponement. They will be evaluated at the beginning of 2016, and this will complete the first five-year re-accreditation cycle of all higher education institutions in Croatia.

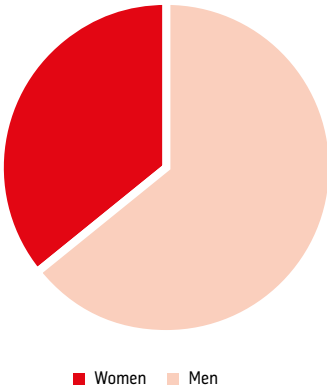
A total of 157 expert panel members – professors from Croatia and abroad, students and representatives of the business sector participated in the re-accreditation of higher education institutions last year. They are independent and internationally renowned experts, selected based on their excellence and achievements in

a particular discipline. All expert panel members are trained in workshops organised by ASHE where they are informed about the procedure and specific nature of the Croatian system of science and higher education.

Students



Members of expert panels from Croatia



Foreign expert panel members

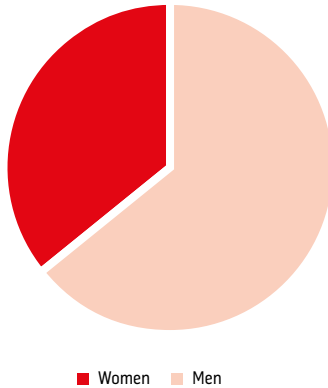


Chart 1: Distribution of reviewers by gender

Country	Number of professors
Croatia	47
Other countries	89

Table 1: Distribution of reviewers by country of employment

Zemlja	Number of professors
Austria	2
Belgium	2
Czech Republic	3
Denmark	2
Estonia	2
Finland	2
France	1
Ireland	5
Italy	3
Latvia	1
Lithuania	5
Hungary	4
Netherlands	3
Norway	1
Germany	11
Poland	1
Romania	1
Slovenia	6
Spain	1
Sweden	1
Switzerland	2
United Kingdom	20

Table 2: Distribution of reviewers by country of employment

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Most reviewers who participated in the procedures came from Croatia, United Kingdom and Germany.

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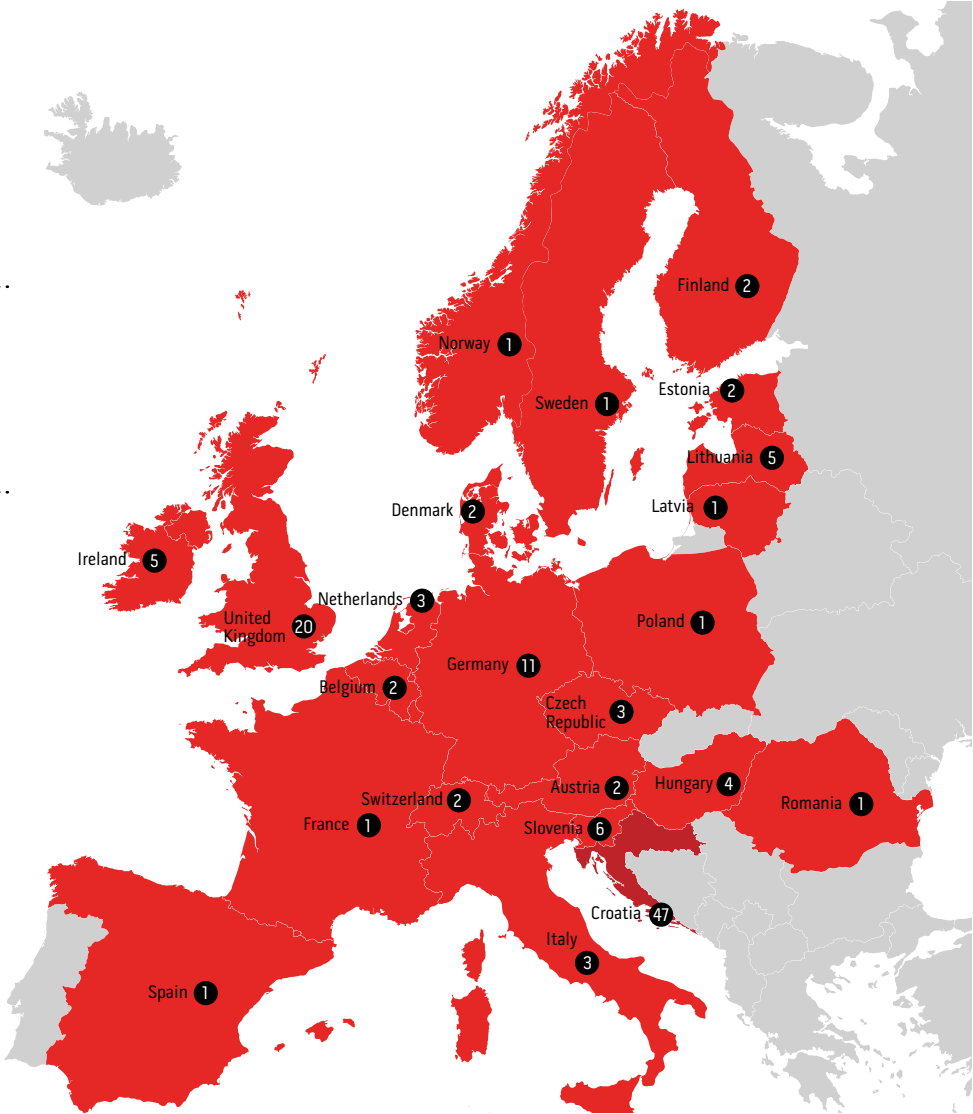


Chart 2: Distribution of reviewers by country of employment

The re-accreditation procedure consists of several stages. After the Higher Education Institutions Re-accreditation Plan for the Academic Year 2014/2015 was published, ASHE started to make arrangements for some 40 evaluation procedures. ASHE coordinators who are trained for such activities were in charge of the organisation.

In the autumn of 2014, ASHE staff held a workshop aimed at preparing the self-evaluation reports for higher education institutions undergoing re-accreditation, while a forum titled 2014/2015 Re-accreditation of higher education institutions was opened on the ASHE website. This way all higher education institution undergoing the re-accreditation procedure received equal and transparent support in the drafting of self-evaluation reports. All posts on the Forum were public and available to all interested parties.

Assessment of the re-accreditation procedure in the academic year 2014/2015

Every year after the re-accreditation procedure is completed, higher education institutions and expert panel members (foreign and Croatian panel members and students) receive a questionnaire on their opinion on ASHE and its role in the procedures. ASHE uses feedback from higher education institutions and members of expert panels to improve the procedures and ASHE coordinators use it as guidelines in their work prior to, during and after the re-accreditation procedure. Similarly, ASHE received information which will be useful for the second cycle of the re-accreditation.

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„I am very impressed with the efficiency and the overall organisation of the procedure. “

*Professor Katharina Stärk Spallek, reviewer
The Royal Veterinary College, London*

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In June 2015, user satisfaction questionnaires were sent to higher education institutions that underwent re-accreditation in March, April and May 2015, and to Croatian and international expert panel members.

The answers are mostly positive and suggestions helpful, which is a good indication that ASHE, during the five years of the first cycle of re-accreditation, carried out all the planned activities and improved the process of evaluation and the quality of services, taking into account previous recommendations.

- Representatives of higher education institutions have pointed out in their answers that an independent and high-quality re-accreditation is an important factor motivating the initiation of the processes of higher education institutions' quality improvement. According to them, this process is a good opportunity for a higher education institution to objectively examine its advantages and disadvantages.



Re-accreditation of the Department of Art and Restoration of the University of Dubrovnik

They also recommended revising standards and criteria, which is already being done as a new model of re-accreditation is being developed, with an emphasis of the new concept of evaluation being on learning outcomes and the implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework.

- Croatian members of expert panels (including students) highlight in their comments the professionalism, expertise and good communication with ASHE staff, while the re-accreditation is described as a positive experience in which they have learned a lot. Networking with colleagues from abroad and the exchange of experiences and good practices are mentioned as the advantages of the procedure.

They also point out that changes to the system of higher education in Croatia are necessary, while re-accreditation will provide strong arguments and a sound basis for carrying out such changes. Such an analysis of higher education institutions should be the starting point to competent authorities for policy-making in higher education and science. They find that the process of re-accreditation is necessary if we want to improve the system of higher education in Croatia.

A recommendation was issued to draft an internal manual on higher education system in Croatia that would help foreign members of expert panels, which is planned for a new cycle of re-accreditation.

- Foreign expert panel members assessed their participation in the process to be very useful as they were introduced to Croatia's system of higher education and science and the re-accreditation procedure and methodology. They find the procedure to be very detailed and clear, and they believe higher education institutions will find it useful for improving the quality of their work. However, they did suggest reducing the number of necessary documents and wished the site visit would last longer so they would get a deeper insight into characteristics of each institution.

In particular, they commended the high level of professionalism, expertise and kindness of ASHE staff, as well as the efforts they put into preparing and organizing the visits.

*„Thank you for the efforts you put in
organizing our visit to Croatia.
You have done an excellent job with the
organisation, making our main task,
academic excellence, that much easier.“*

*David Quin, reviewer
Institute of Art Design and Technology, Dublin*

The second round of user satisfaction questionnaires was sent in December to a small group of higher education institutions which underwent re-accreditation in November 2015, as well as to Croatian and foreign members of expert panels.

- Croatian members of expert panels (including students) assessed ASHE coordinators as highly qualified, professional and fair. The training they received helped them in their future work, and criteria were generally described as good, as well as all the guidelines and

instructions provided by coordinators during re-accreditation. They suggested placing more emphasis on the link between the industry and study programmes in the criteria and to pay more attention to the expertise and competence of HEI teaching staff.

- Foreign members of the expert panels have proposed reducing the number of re-accreditation criteria in the next re-accreditation cycle.

With the re-accreditation of higher education institutions in the academic year 2014/2015 ends the first five-year cycle in which all higher education institutions were evaluated. The system of higher education in Croatia was evaluated for the first time in its entirety, which will provide a clear insight into the advantages and disadvantages of each institution, field of science and the entire system. The beginning of a new cycle of re-accreditation is planned for 2016, with a greater emphasis on learning outcomes of study programmes. A lot of work is ahead, which, among other things, includes the creation and adoption of documents for a new model of re-accreditation, in collaboration with other stakeholders in higher education and science.

RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015: SYNTHESIS

Re-accreditation of higher education institutions and their study programmes in the academic year 2014/2015 included a very heterogeneous group of higher education institutions – all higher education institutions delivering study programmes in the field of natural sciences and arts, faculties of medicine and law in Croatia. Each of these groups can be independently analysed.

Scientific area of biomedicine and health

- 1. Faculty of Medicine, University of Zagreb,
- 2. Faculty of Medicine, University of Split
- 3. Faculty of Medicine, University of Rijeka
- 4. Faculty of Medicine, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek
- 5. School of Dental Medicine, University of Zagreb
- 6. Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry, University of Zagreb
- 7. Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Zagreb
- 8. Department of Professional Studies, University of Dubrovnik
- 9. Department of Health Studies, University of Zadar
- 10. Department of Biotechnology, University of Rijeka
- 11. Polytechnic of Applied Health Studies in Zagreb

This group of evaluated higher education institutions involved all schools of medicine that deliver integrated graduate study

programmes awarding the academic title “Doctor of Medicine” (MD). In addition to higher education institutions that deliver study programmes in the field of basic medical sciences, there is a relatively large proportion of study programmes delivered in the field of clinical medical science in the area of biomedicine, especially the study of

nursing which is delivered by 19 HEIs in Croatia. The proportion of students studying in the scientific field of biomedicine and health in the total number of students in the academic year 2013/2014 in Croatia accounted for 9.3%. Distribution of students by fields within this area is presented below*:

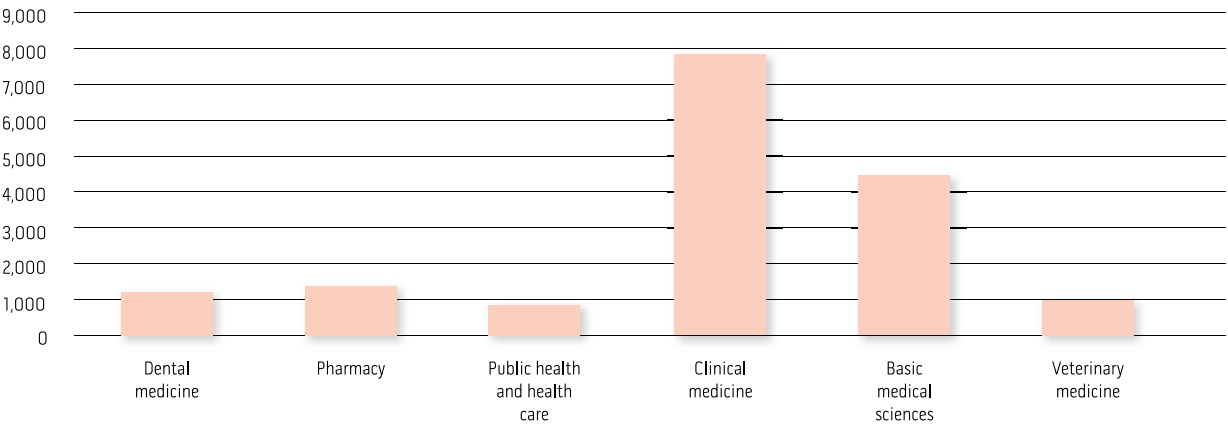


Chart 3: Number of students in the scientific area of biomedicine and health by field

Biomedicine and health

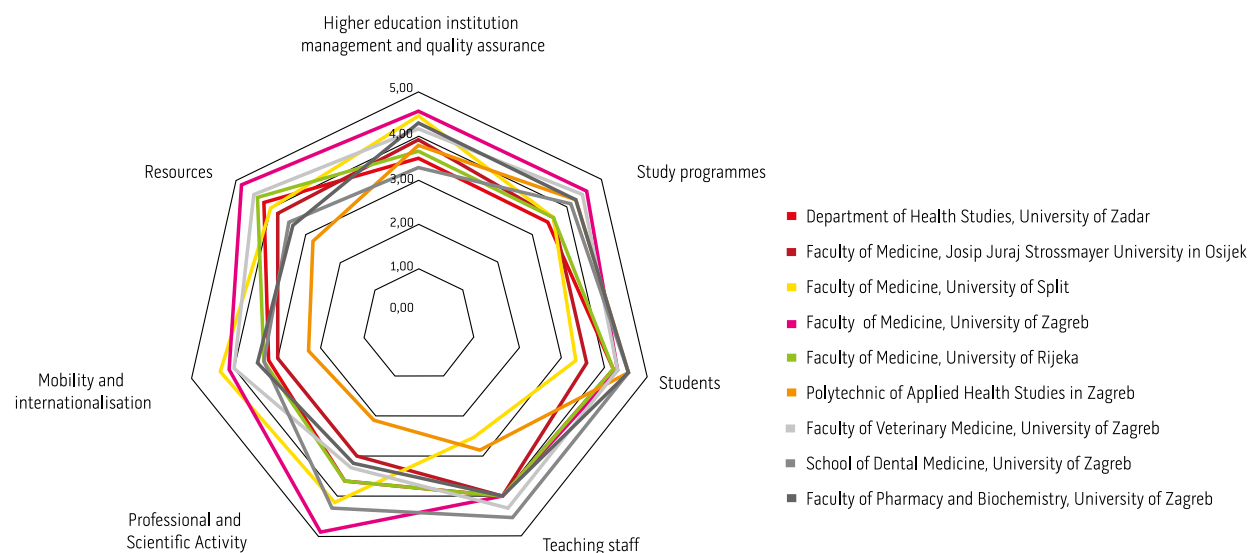


Chart 4: Expert panel grades

Expert panels' reports indicate a high degree of homogeneity in the categories of quality management and quality assurance, study programmes and the quality of student support, with grades ranging between partly and mostly implemented. The differences are more apparent in the categories related to teaching staff, professional and scientific activity, mobility and resources. The quality of professional and scientific activity of the faculties of medicine received higher marks, and they received the highest grades by individual standards.

Scientific area of natural sciences

1. Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb,
2. Faculty of Science, University of Split,
3. Department of Biology, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
4. Department of Physics, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
5. Department of Chemistry, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
6. Department of Mathematics, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
7. Department of Physics, University of Rijeka
8. Department of Mathematics, University of Rijeka
9. Department of Informatics, University of Rijeka
10. Department of Geography, University of Zadar

According to the data for the academic year 2013/2014, 4.3% of the total number of students in Croatia study in the study programmes in the area of natural science. Professional study programmes are not delivered in this discipline, and they are also not delivered by private higher education institutions.

Natural sciences

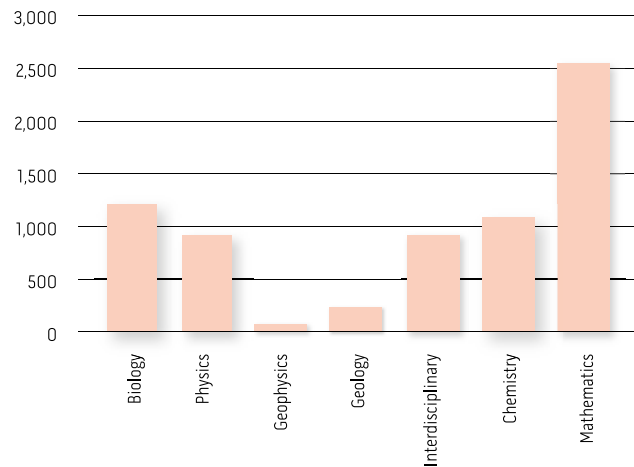


Chart 5: The number of students in the scientific area of natural sciences by field

It should be noted that the scientific area of natural sciences includes scientific fields. Higher education institutions that deliver study programmes in the natural sciences mostly do not deliver study

Scientific area of natural sciences

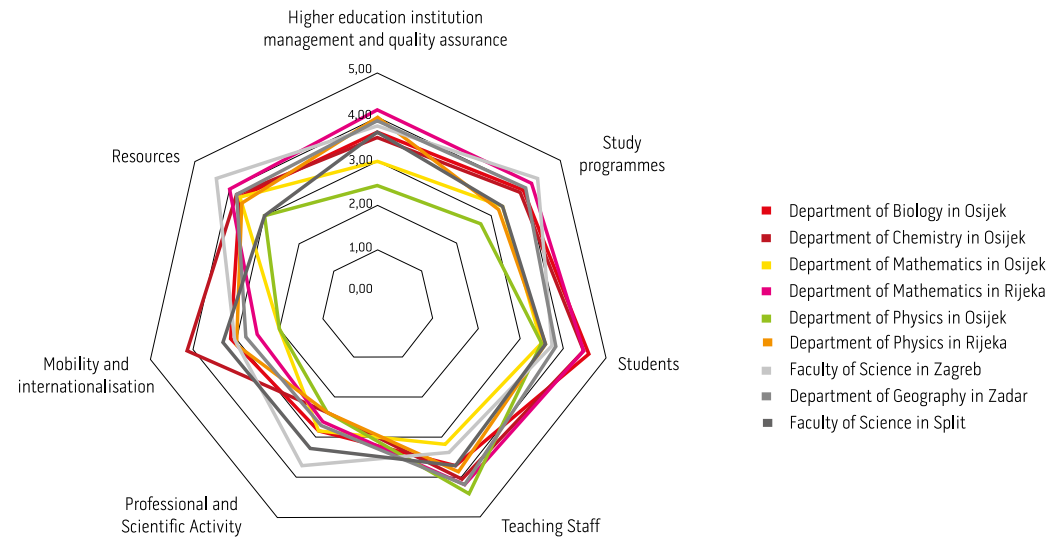


Chart 6: Expert panel grades

programmes in all the scientific fields. At the same time, there are departments delivering courses only in certain fields of natural sciences at universities, namely Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,

the University of Rijeka and the University of Zadar. The University of Zagreb and the University of Split have science faculties among their components, which deliver study programmes in these fields.

Expert panels' reports in this area indicate the highest degree of homogeneity in the categories of the quality assurance of teaching staff, while additional improvements are required in the area of mobility and internationalization and professional and scientific activities of higher education institutions, particularly smaller departments at the universities.

Area of social sciences – the field of law

- 1. Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb,
- 2. Faculty of Law, University of Split,
- 3. Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka,
- 4. Faculty of Law, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek.

The number of students in the area of social sciences who study in the field of law within the social sciences area (9.67% of all students in the academic year 2013/2014), is twice the number of students studying, for example, in the whole natural sciences area (4.3%). In the field of law, there are ten professional study programmes, four specialist professional graduate study programmes, four integrated study programmes, 13 postgraduate specialist university study programmes and three doctoral study programmes. These programmes are delivered at faculties, polytechnics and colleges, and university and professional study programmes at the faculties of law were evaluated in the academic year 2014/2015.

The area of social sciences, the field of law

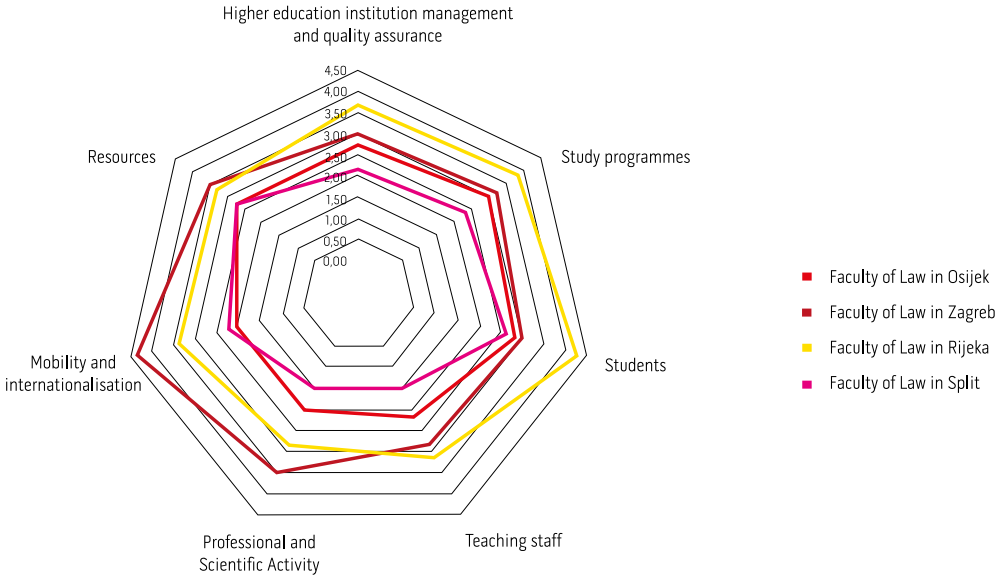


Chart 7: Expert panels' grades

Expert panels' grades show that the higher education institutions received relatively good grades for the first standard – higher education institution management and quality assurance. Additional efforts should be taken to improve student support and study programmes (save for the Faculty of Law of the University of Rijeka), and the expert panels' recommendations referred to the need to reduce the number of students in some groups, high enrolment quotas and high teacher – student ratio. Professional and scientific activities at all faculties in this group received an average grade of less than 3.40.

The field of Arts

- 1. Academy of Dramatic Art, University of Zagreb,
- 2. Academy of Fine Arts, University of Zagreb,
- 3. Academy of Applied Arts, University of Rijeka,
- 4. Arts Academy, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek,
- 5. Arts Academy, University of Split,
- 6. Department of Art and Restoration, University of Dubrovnik.

The number of students in the artistic field accounts for only 1.4% of the total number of students in the Republic of Croatia. Distribution of the number of students by field is as follows *:

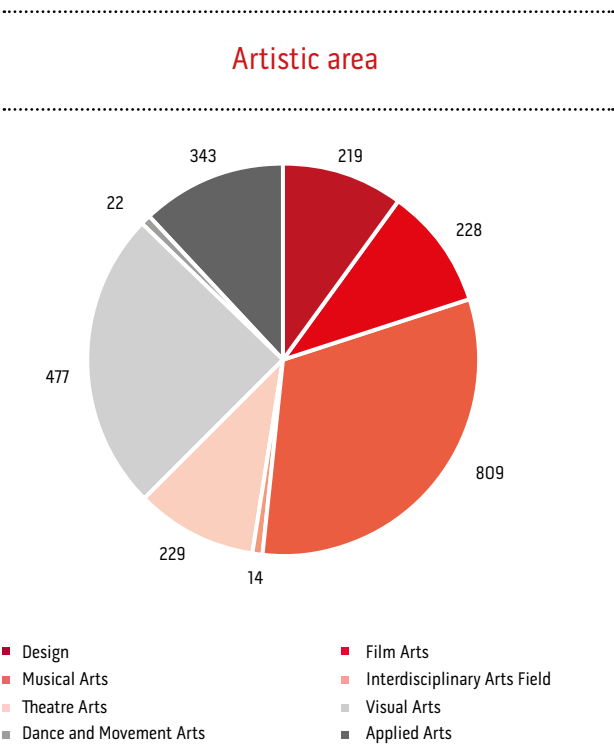


Chart 8: The number of students in the artistic area by field

In addition to the faculties mentioned above, study programmes in the artistic area are delivered by polytechnics and colleges. During this academic year, re-accreditation carried out in this area covered only faculties and university study programmes.

The artistic area differs from other areas due to the fact that it is a relatively small area considering the number of students. However, considering the number of study programmes (104), this is one of the larger areas, which results in a very favorable teacher: student ratio. However, the expert panels involved in the re-accreditation procedure evaluated the artistic production and not their scientific and professional activity.

Expert panels' grades

The criteria related to teaching staff and student support received the best grades from the expert panels, while some improvements are needed in the scientific and professional activities, mobility, internationalization and resources (equipment, space and administration resources and finances).

Artistic area

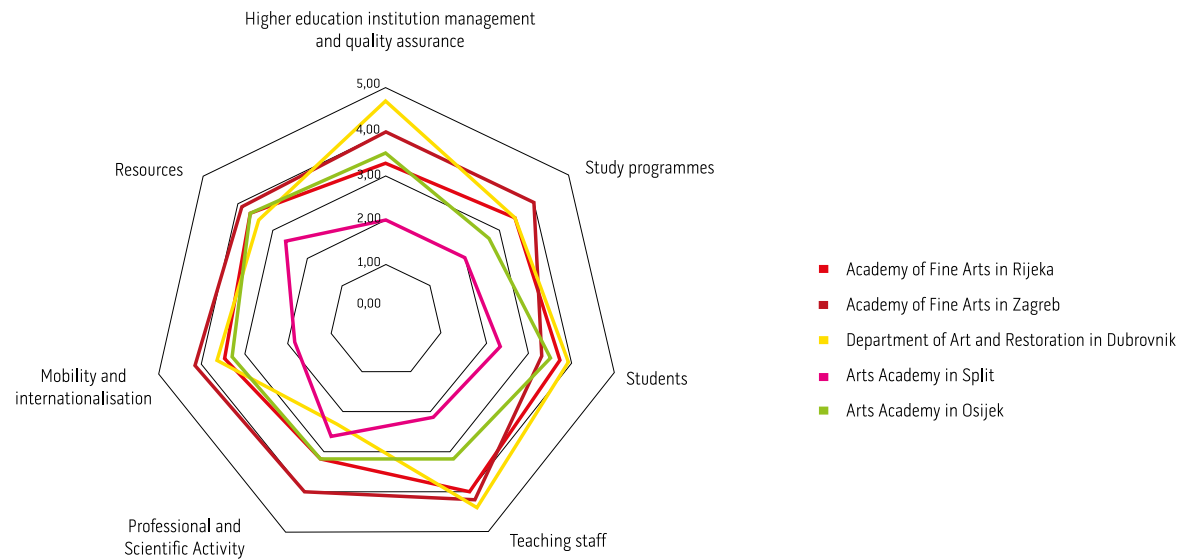


Chart 9: Expert panels' grades

Visual presentation of quality grades

Expert panels' grades are not comparable because re-accreditation is a form of external evaluation of the fulfilment of minimum academic requirements and the assessment of quality of higher education institutions. Higher education institutions cannot be compared according to this kind of assessment, and they are included in this synthesis for the purpose of analysing standards that are best graded or worst graded for an individual area.

RE-ACCREDITATION OF SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATIONS OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTES

In July 2014, ASHE initiated the re-accreditation of 70 scientific organisations outside the system of higher education and public scientific institutes², and carried out the re-accreditation of 48 scientific organisations in 2015.

By 31 December 2015 ASHE's accreditation recommendations were issued with the following outcomes:

- Issuing confirmations that the requirements for performing a scientific activity are met to 12 scientific organisations;
- Issuing letters of expectation with a three-year deadline to seven scientific organisation;
- Refusal to grant licences for performing a scientific activity to seven scientific organisations;
- Re-accreditation of 13 scientific organisations in the area of biomedicine and health will be carried out in January and February 2016.

As regards the rest of scientific organisations included in the 2014/2015 Scientific Organisations Re-accreditation Plan, comments on the final reports or on the Accreditation Council's opinions are being prepared.

This will result in the first Croatian Register of Scientific Organisations with fully accredited scientific organisations. This is a precondition for the new cycle of evaluation of private and public scientific organizations and the future policy on state funding for science (and higher education) based on learning outcomes.

² Scientific organisations outside the system of higher education and public scientific institutes are all institutions entered in the Register of Scientific Organisations (legal entities performing a scientific activity in accordance with the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education), other than universities and their components and public scientific institutes.

RE-ACCREDITATION OF UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL) STUDY PROGRAMMES

In 2013 and 2014 ASHE carried out thematic evaluation of doctoral study programmes, based on which the Minister of Science, Education and Sports requested that ASHE perform re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes.

The purpose of re-accreditation of doctoral study programmes is to ensure that the higher education qualifications that award the academic title "doctor of science" (PhD) reflect study programmes of high quality, internationally comparable and aligned with minimal legal conditions. By carrying out this quality assurance procedure, ASHE ensures that Croatian doctoral programmes and the qualifications they offer satisfy domestic and international minimal criteria of academic excellence. The procedure includes a check of compliance with minimal legal conditions and an independent review based on quality criteria.

In 2014 and 2015 ASHE conducted a series of preparatory activities and consultations with the academic community and other stakeholders for the development of criteria and evaluation procedures. Among other things, ASHE invited rectors of public universities to appoint their representatives to the working group for drafting the criteria for re-accreditation. They appointed their vice-

rectors for science and other university representatives responsible for the quality of doctoral studies. Working group was joined by representatives of public scientific institutes and PhD candidates' associations.

The working group proposed the criteria and areas to be subject to evaluation to the Accreditation Council, and ASHE held a public discussion on the Draft of the said document. Upon completion of the public discussion, within the consultation process, ASHE invited the working group and introduced them to the submitted comments, suggestions and objections to the Draft document. The working group examined the submitted proposals and objections and after the harmonization of the text of the document, they submitted a final version to the Accreditation Council. At its 69th session held on 15 December 2015, ASHE'S Accreditation Council adopted the proposed text of the document titled *Re-accreditation of Postgraduate University Study Programmes in Croatia: Principles and Criteria*, as a basic document for the implementation of external evaluation of the quality of doctoral study programmes and other accompanying documents. They also adopted the 2016 Re-accreditation Plan, which includes doctoral study programmes delivered in the area of technical sciences, biotechnology, natural science and biomedicine.

INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Initial accreditation of study programmes

ASHE carried out the procedures of initial accreditation of study programmes in 2015. The procedure includes checking compliance of study programmes with the strategic document of the Network of Higher Education Institutions, the examination of received documents, visits of expert panels to higher education institutions, administrative and professional support provided by ASHE during site visits, drafting of the final report and making accreditation recommendations.

In the past year ASHE received 22 requests for initiating the procedure of initial accreditation of new study programmes from polytechnics and colleges and one private university.

Based on the carried out procedures, the proposal was made to the Minister to issue licences for 14 study programmes:

- Four Undergraduate Professional Study Programmes;
- Two Undergraduate University Study Programmes;
- Six Specialist Professional Graduate Study Programmes;
- Two Graduate University Study Programmes;
- One request received a negative recommendation from the Accreditation Council. Other requests are ongoing.

Almost all recommendations refer to the study programmes in the area of social sciences and only two study programmes are delivered in the area of biomedicine and health.

Initial accreditation for performing higher education activities

In 2015, ASHE carried out the procedure of initial accreditation for performing higher education activities for one higher education institution which was given a positive recommendation.

Initial accreditation for performing a scientific activity

SHE also carries out the procedure of initial accreditation for carrying out a scientific activity, that is, establishing a scientific organisation or listing an existing scientific organisation in the Register of Scientific Organisations in a new scientific area³.

Initial accreditation for performing a scientific activity includes the following stages:

- Reviewing the submitted documentation;
- Site visit of the expert panel to a scientific organisation;
- Writing the final report;
- Issuing the Accreditation Recommendation.

In 2015, ASHE received four requests for initial accreditation for performing a scientific activity. All requests for initial accreditation were completed in 2015.

Three requests for initial accreditation for performing a scientific activity were given ASHE's positive recommendation, and one request received ASHE's positive recommendation for three scientific areas, while a negative accreditation recommendation was issued for one scientific area.

³ All public scientific institutes and all scientific organizations founded by the Republic of Croatia may start carrying out a scientific activity, or enter such activity in the court register only on the basis of the license for carrying out a scientific activity. Private scientific organizations may also seek accreditation to perform a scientific activity. The license for performing a scientific activity is a prerequisite for receiving state funding for research and research projects.

JUSTIFIABILITY OF PUBLIC FUNDING OF NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES

ASHE passes an opinion on the justifiability of public funding of new study programmes at public universities, set up by their senates, on the basis of their alignment with the Network of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes. Based on the received requests, ASHE issued 42 positive opinions on the justifiability of public funding in 2015.

Most university study programmes are delivered in the area of biomedicine and health, followed by the social sciences, the humanities and technical sciences.

According to the level of studies, new postgraduate specialist and graduate study programmes received the largest number of positive opinions.

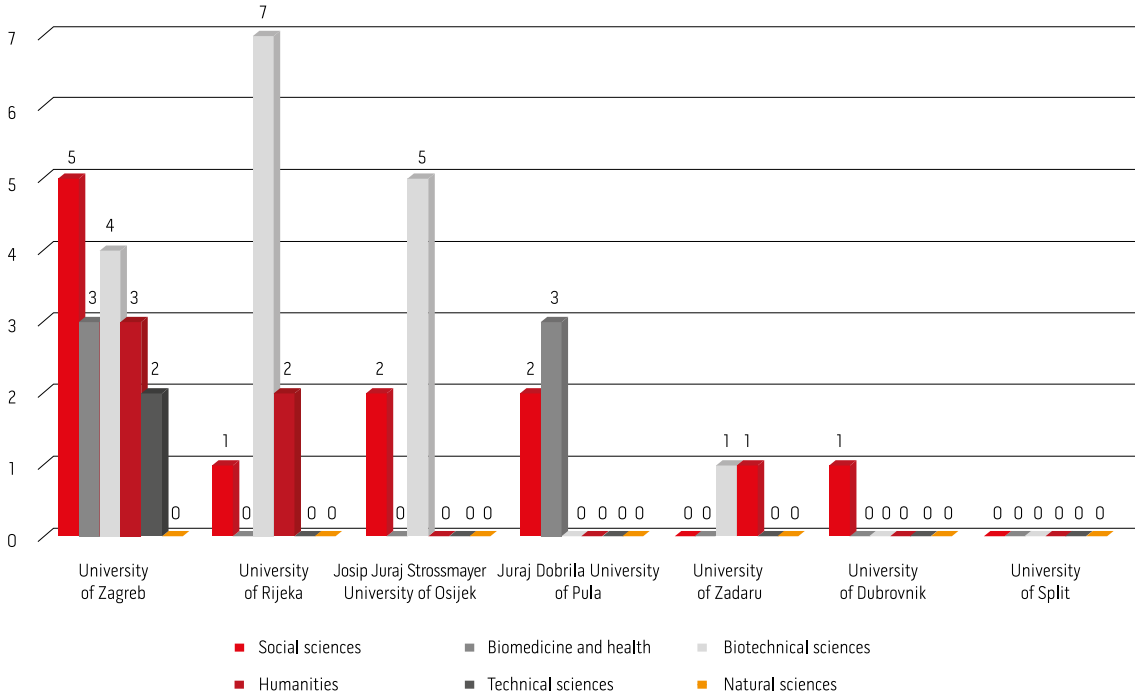


Chart 10: Justifiability of public funding by scientific area

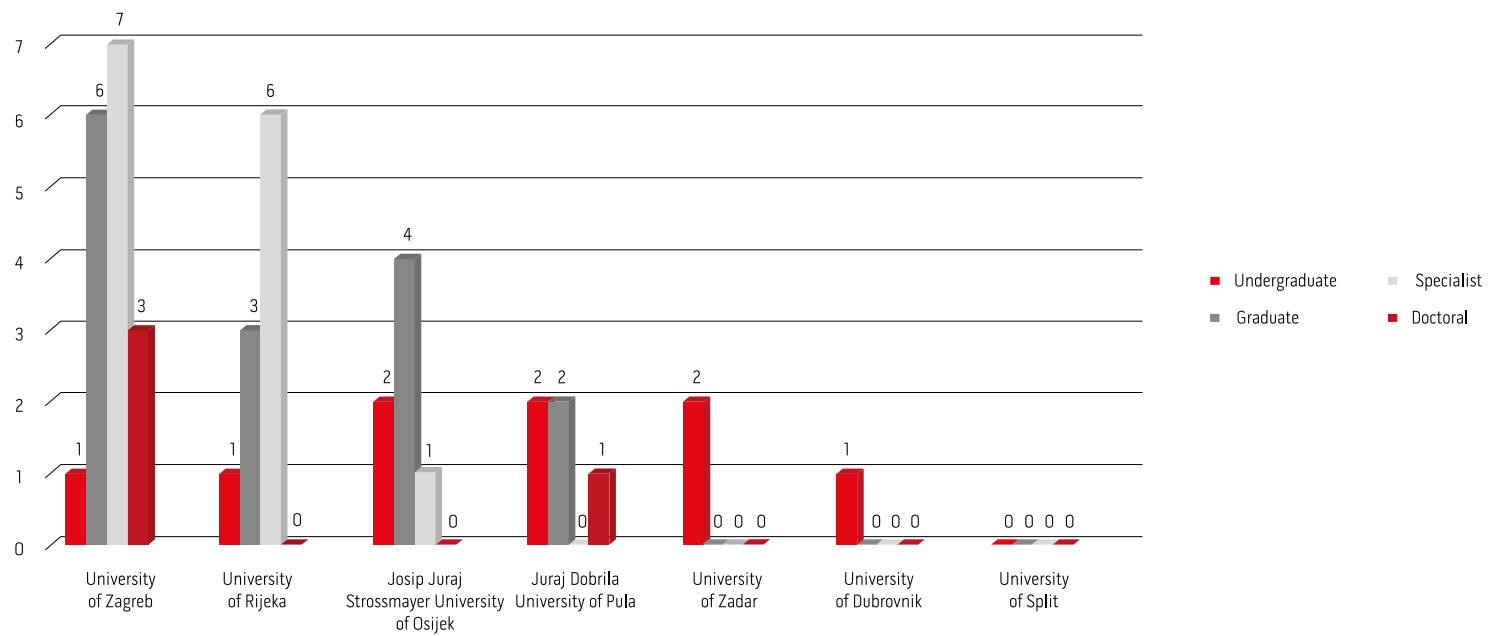


Chart 11: Justifiability of public funding by study level

SCIENTIFIC CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

In an effort to establish excellent research groups and encourage excellent research by developing potential for innovation and technology transfer, the second round of evaluation of research quality was carried out in Croatia in 2015 resulting in the establishment of six new Scientific Centres of Excellence (SCE):

Following the proposal from the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development and based on evaluation, the Minister of Science, Education and Sports established the following SCEs on 6 November 2015:

- The Centre of Excellence for Biodiversity and Molecular Plant Breeding (Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Zagreb),
- The Centre of Excellence for Marine Bioprospecting – BioProCro (Ruđer Bošković Institute),
- The Centre of Excellence for Theory of Quantum and Complex Systems and Representation Theory of Lie Algebras (Faculty of Science of the University of Zagreb),
- The Centre for Personalised Health Care (J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek),
- The Centre of Excellence in Basic, Clinical and Translational Neuroscience (Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zagreb),
- The Centre of Excellence in Data Science and Cooperative Systems (Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing of the University of Zagreb).

At the moment there are 13 scientific centres of excellence in all areas of research in Croatia, with some 300 researchers from various institutions.

The evaluation of scientific quality for the purpose of establishing Scientific Centres of Excellence

The National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development published on 24 April 2015 the Public call for proposals for establishing scientific centres of excellence (SCEs) in Croatia, following a proposal from the Minister of Science, Education and Sports.

At its 10th session held on 25 March 2015, the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development adopted an improved Procedure for the evaluation of scientific quality for the purpose of establishing SCEs in Croatia with defined deadlines, conditions for call publication, evaluation criteria and selection process.

Like in the first evaluation procedure, project proposals could be sent by the scientists working in scientific organizations in Croatia – both private and public, which are entered in the Register of Scientific

Organizations, that meet the minimum requirements prescribed by the Ordinance on Conditions for Issuing a Licence for Scientific Activity, Conditions for Re-accreditation of Scientific Organisations and Content of the Licence. Scientific organizations specifying a leader and the responsible person of the institution involved in the proposed project were also eligible candidates.

The National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development carried out the application and evaluation procedure with the support of ASHE staff, based on the documents regulating the application and evaluation procedure, the Public call for proposals and international reviews carried out in the evaluation of project proposals. To that end, at its 12th session held on 16 June 2015, the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development adopted the Decision on the appointment of an expert panel and permanent scientific committees for the evaluation of received proposals for establishing SCEs.

Evaluation of applications included a check of fulfilment of the formal requirements, an assessment of project proposals carried out by international reviewers, visits to the institutions, an assessment of a part of criteria carried out by the expert panel members and a final assessment carried out by the expert panel for evaluation. The deadline for applications was 31 May 2015 and the expert panel and scientific committees received 30 proposals.

EXTERNAL AUDIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS' QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

The first cycle of external quality assurance audit of Croatian higher education institutions is expected to be completed the end of 2016.

Bearing in mind the rationalisation of resources and number of obligations institutions higher education institutions are faced with, ASHE Accreditation Council decided that audit procedure is to be carried out primarily at the level of polytechnics and universities, additionally including those institutions that show interest and/or meet the preconditions for this evaluation procedure.

In the first evaluation cycle, ASHE conducted 39 audit procedures, assessing the effectiveness and the degree of development of quality assurance systems at HEIs, as well as their contribution to continuous improvement of the overall institutional quality.

In accordance with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education, and the principle of primary responsibility of higher education institutions for their quality, HEIs were required to establish an effective quality assurance system (QAS) and conduct a periodic evaluation thereof, i.e. internal QA audit.

Further development of higher education institutions is stimulated through a synergy of external and internal quality assurance, in accordance with HEIs' mission and strategic goals. External QA audit identifies good practice of higher education institutions, but also areas where further improvements are needed.

The procedures of external and internal quality assurance audit are complementary; they serve as a catalyst for changes, directing higher education institutions towards development of institutional quality culture, and have a direct impact on staff and students, encouraging their active participation and cooperation.

The annual Plan of external QA audits for 2014 included six higher education institutions. Considering that the duration of external QA audit is approx. 18 months, all the procedures from 2014 were completed by January 2016. The procedures were carried out without appeals, and final assessments of the evaluated QAS are presented in Table 3.

Higher education institution	ESG 1.1.	ESG 1.2.1.	ESG 1.2.2.	ESG 1.3.	ESG 1.4.	ESG 1.5.	ESG 1.6.	ESG 1.7.	Overall assessment of QA system
University of Zagreb Faculty of Metallurgy	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE
Polytechnic of Zagreb	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	-	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED/ADVANCED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE CERTIFICATE
University of Rijeka Faculty of Civil Engineering	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED/ADVANCED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	ADVANCED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE CERTIFICATE
Polytechnic "Lavoslav Ružička" in Vukovar	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	PRELIMINARY/INITIAL PHASE	-	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED/ADVANCED PHASE	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE
Polytechnic Hrvatsko Zagorje in Krapina	PRELIMINARY/INITIAL PHASE	PRELIMINARY/INITIAL PHASE	-	INITIAL PHASE	INITIAL PHASE	INITIAL PHASE	INITIAL PHASE	INITIAL PHASE	INITIAL PHASE
University of Zagreb Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	INITIAL/DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	DEVELOPED/ADVANCED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE	ADVANCED PHASE	DEVELOPED PHASE

Table 3: Final assessments of the evaluated quality assurance systems

ASHE criteria, by which the evaluated QAS needs to be in a developed phase to be awarded a five-year certificate, were met by the following HEIs: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture; University of Rijeka, Faculty of Civil Engineering; and Polytechnic of Zagreb.

The remaining three HEIs included in the 2014 Annual plan did not meet the requirements for certification, and the Accreditation Council adopted panels' recommendation for a re-audit of these institutions in a designated period of time.

The evaluated higher education institutions were provided with recommendations and guidelines for further development of their quality assurance systems, in order to meet the required criteria for certification in the next external QA audit.

Analysis of the final assessments of the evaluated quality assurance systems by individual ESG standards (Table 2) shows that ESG 1.1, policies and internal cohesion of the quality assurance system, and ESG 1.2, quality assurance of study programmes, still represent the greatest challenge for higher education institutions.

Development of external QA procedure is based on feedback that is collected from the evaluated institutions, audit panels and coordinators. At the end of audit procedure, a survey of the evaluated HEIs is administered via anonymous questionnaires, whereupon their feedback is analysed and used for improvements.

Analysis of the panel members' feedback via survey that is carried out as a form of self-evaluation and evaluation of implemented procedures, shows that the procedures were carried out in line with the adopted documents, standards and criteria. Audit panels noted the usefulness of audit training and good teamwork of their members, emphasising good cooperation between more experienced panel members and those who participated for the first time, as well as good communication between panel members and panel chairs. Motivation of all panel members for active participation in drafting of a report was identified as something that could be improved. Quality Index: 4.73.

Analysis of the feedback questionnaires submitted by HEIs (with the exception of Polytechnic Hrvatsko Zagorje in Krapina, which did not provide any feedback, and Polytechnic "Lavoslav Ružička" in Vukovar, which has only recently completed the audit procedure) shows that cooperation with ASHE staff and expert panels' professionalism and competencies were assessed with highest grades. Organisation and implementation of audit procedure were generally assessed well, however, some responses pointed out that it is difficult to adequately evaluate the procedure, bearing in mind the prolonged period between the site-visit and survey. Other comments addressed the insufficient financing of HEIs and the impact thereof on the appropriate recognition and rewarding of excellence, as well as capacity building of staff directly involved in internal QA. Quality Index: 4.1.

The annual Plan of external quality assurance audits for 2015 included the following institutions:

1. Polytechnic of Međimurje in Čakovec
2. Velika Gorica Polytechnic
3. Polytechnic of Karlovac
4. Polytechnic of Slavonski Brod
5. University of Rijeka, Academy of Applied Arts
6. Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

All the site-visits were carried out within the agreed dates, except for the Polytechnic of Međimurje in Čakovec, which asked for a postponement and requested that a site-visit is scheduled in January 2016, which was granted.

At the request of the International School for Social and Business Studies (ISSBS), Celje, Slovenia, ASHE initiated its first international external QA audit procedure in September 2014. The completion of this procedure is expected in March 2016. With it, ASHE will gain valuable feedback on the possibilities of conducting external evaluations abroad, in accordance with international standards and specific national contexts of higher education and science. ASHE continues to regularly collect data on the development of institutional quality culture at Croatian HEIs, and conducting analyses of the established quality assurance systems.

Analysis of the 2015 survey produced the following results:

- 149 quality assurance units have been established at higher education institutions
- 147 regulations on quality assurance have been adopted
- 129 quality assurance manuals have been adopted
- 98 internal quality assurance audits have been carried out.

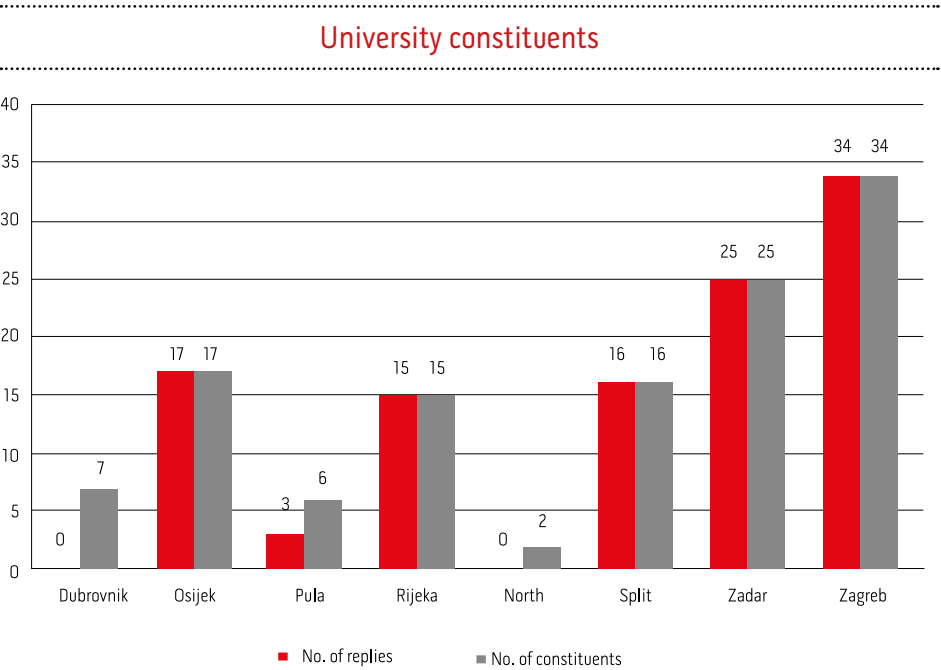
All public universities have adopted their strategies, QA regulations and QA manuals. University North is the only university that has not carried out internal quality assurance audit so far.

Name of the university	Full title of QA regulations document	Full title of QA manual	Internal QA audit carried out	Audit report
University of Dubrovnik	Regulations on System of Quality Assurance and Improvement at the University of Dubrovnik	Quality Assurance Manual	YES	YES
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance System at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek	Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek Quality Manual	YES	YES
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula	Ordinance on quality assurance and improvement	University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula Quality Manual	YES	YES
University of Rijeka	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Rijeka	University of Rijeka - Manual for Quality Studying	YES	Currently being developed*
University North	Regulations on Quality Assurance System	Quality Assurance System Manual	YES	NO
University of Split	Regulations on the Quality Assurance System at the University of Split	Quality Assurance Handbook of the University of Split	YES	YES
University of Zadar	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance and Improvement System at the University of Zadar	Manual of Quality at the University of Zadar	YES	YES
University of Zagreb	Ordinance on the Quality Assurance System at the University of Zagreb	University of Zagreb Quality Assurance Manual	YES	YES

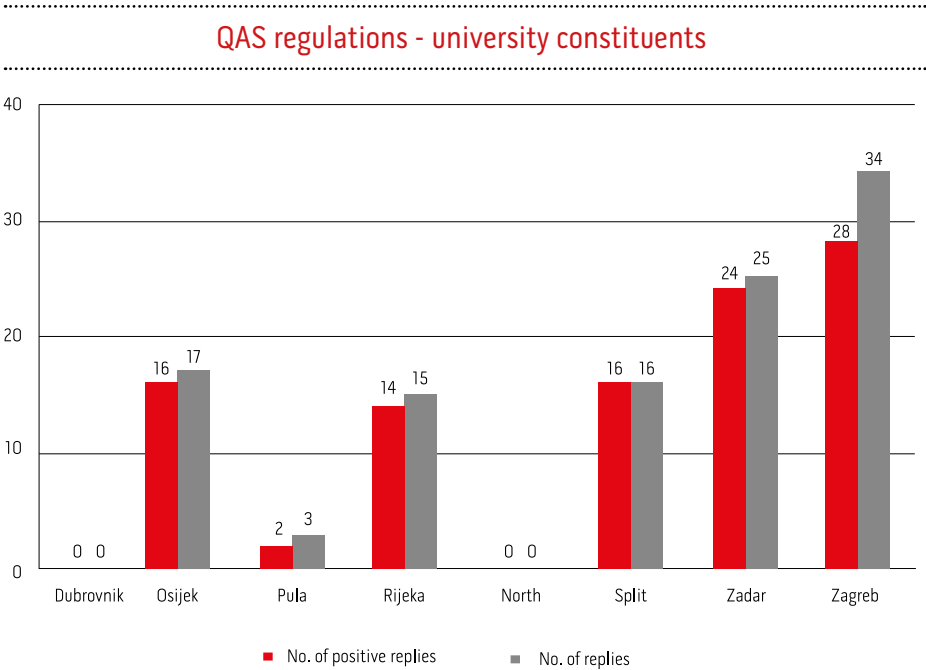
Table 4: Basic indicators of QAS at public universities, 2015

* University of Rijeka carries out internal audits in three-year cycles

Basic information on QAS at the level of university constituents, polytechnics and colleges:

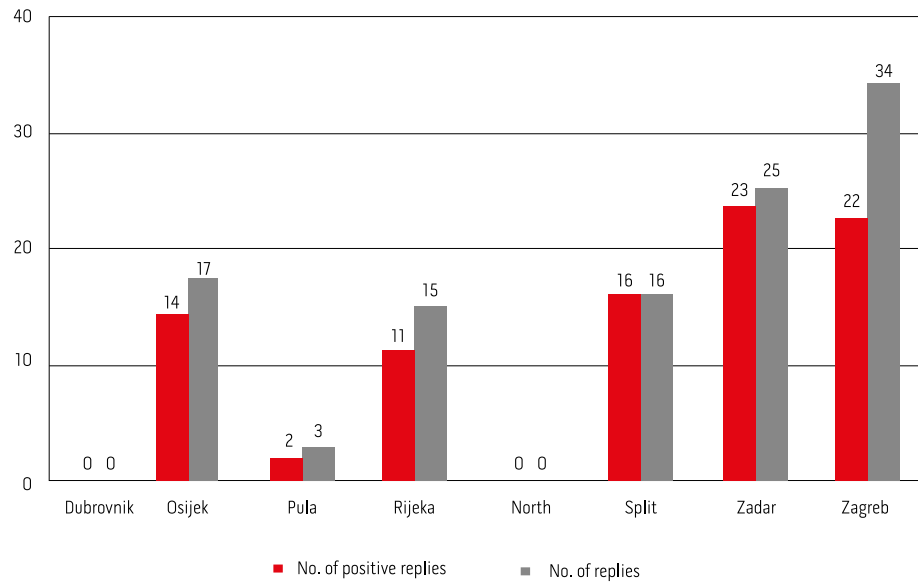


*Dubrovnik – integrated university, survey response at the level of University
*North – integrated university, survey response at the level of University
Chart 12: Number of university constituents participating in the survey, 2015



Dubrovnik – integrated university, survey response at the level of University
*North – integrated university, survey response at the level of University
Chart 13: Number of regulations on quality assurance at the level of university constituents, 2015

QAS manuals - university constituents

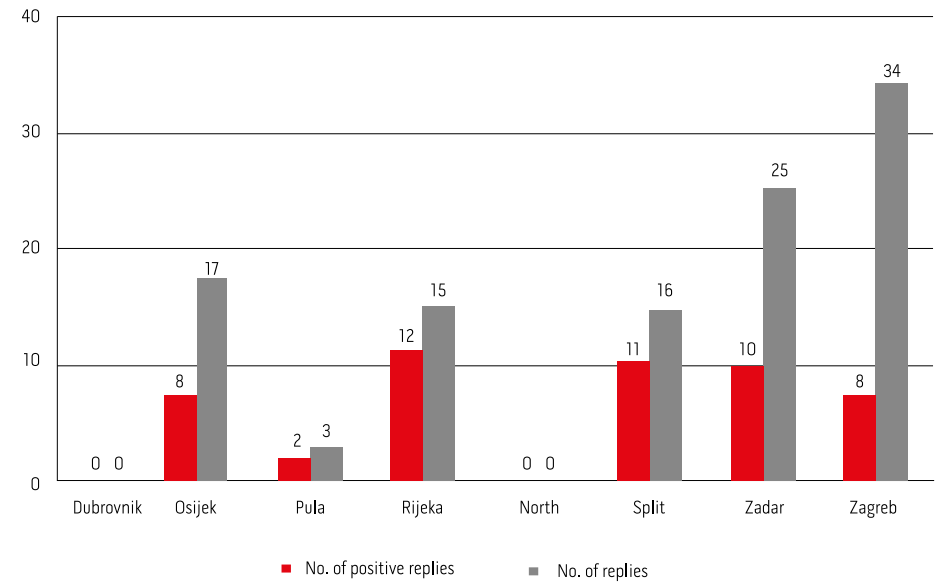


*Dubrovnik – integrated university, survey response at the level of University

*North – integrated university, survey response at the level of University

Chart 14: Number of quality assurance manuals at the level of university constituents

Internal QA audit reports - university constituents



*Dubrovnik – integrated university, survey response at the level of University

*North – integrated university, survey response at the level of University

Chart 15: Number of internal audits carried out at the level of university constituents

ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS AT POLYTECHNICS

In 2015, 14 out of 15 polytechnics participated in the survey of institutional quality assurance systems. The following information was submitted:

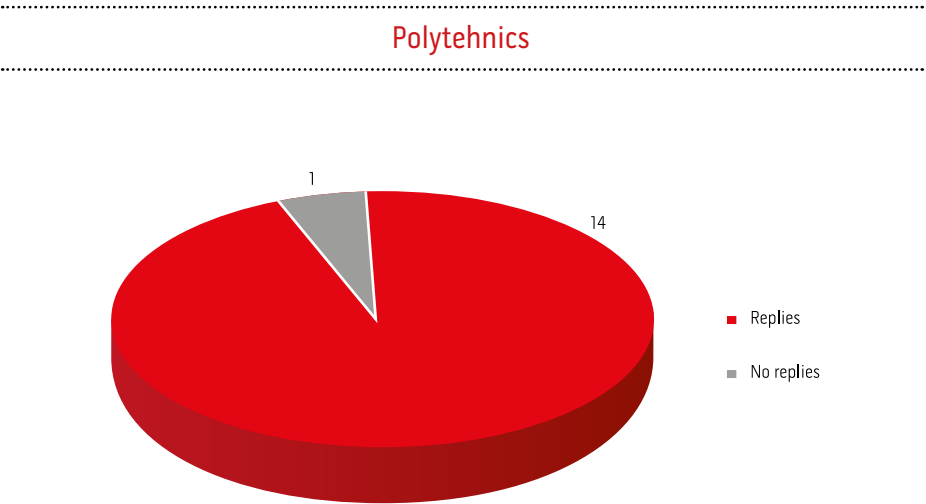


Chart 16: Number of polytechnics participating in the survey, 2015

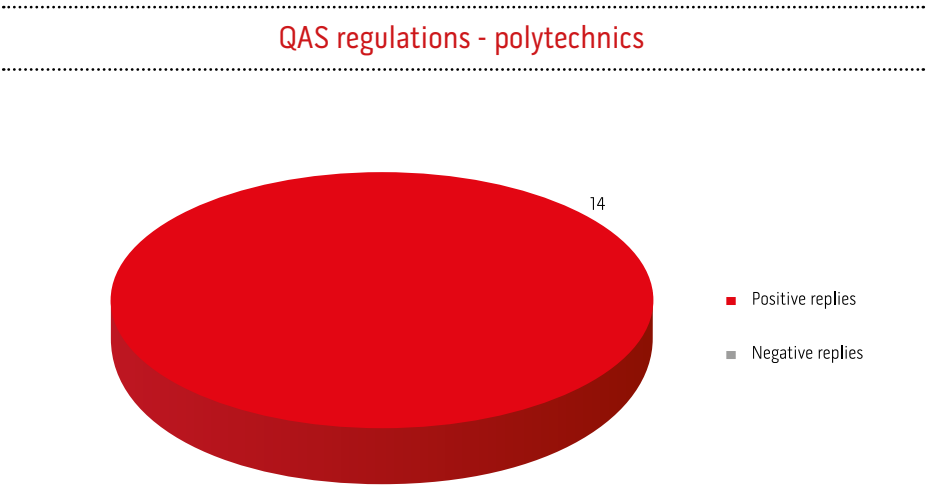


Chart 17: Number of adopted QA regulations at the level of polytechnics, 2015

NUMBER OF ADOPTED QA
MANUALS AT POLYTECHNICS

QAS manuals - polytechnics

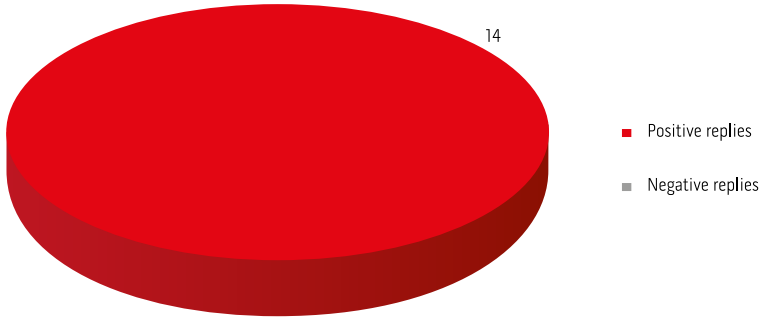


Chart 18: Number of adopted QA manuals at the level of polytechnics, 2015

Internal QA audit reports - polytechnics

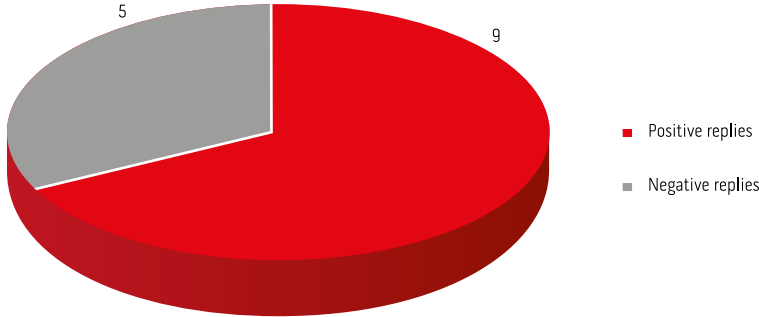


Chart 19: Number of internal QA audit reports at the level of polytechnics

ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY
OF QAS AT COLLEGES

Colleges

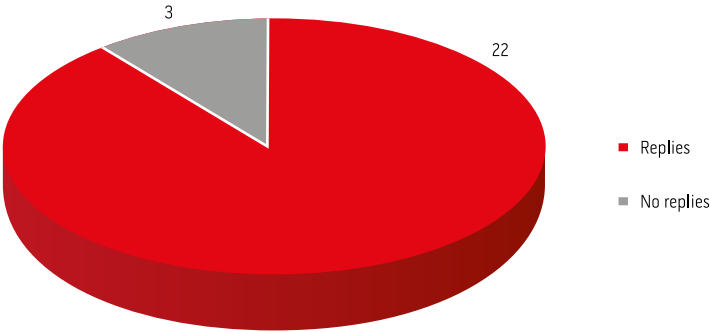


Chart 20: Number of colleges participating in the survey, 2015

QAS regulations - colleges

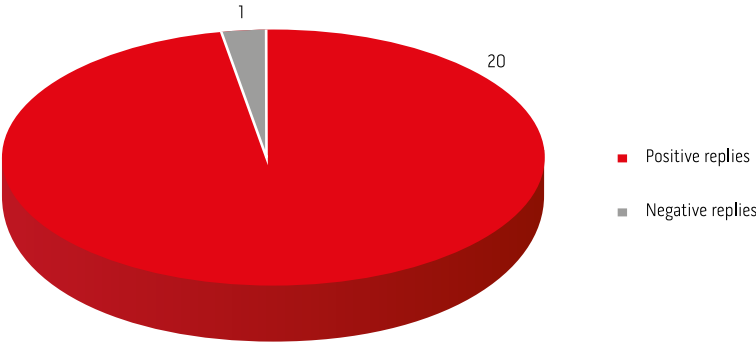


Chart 21: Number of adopted QAS regulations at the level of colleges, 2015

QAS manuals - colleges

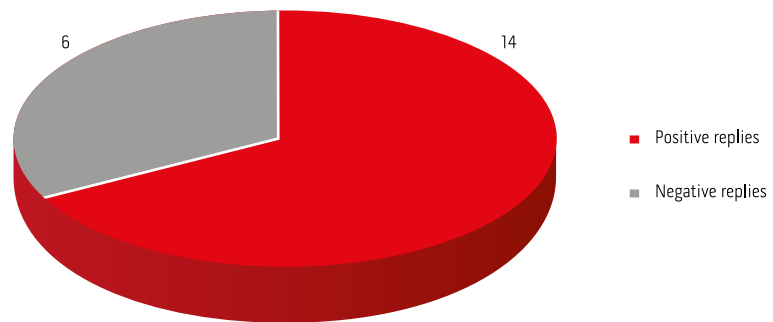


Chart 22: Number of adopted QA manuals at the level of colleges, 2015

Internal QA audit reports - colleges

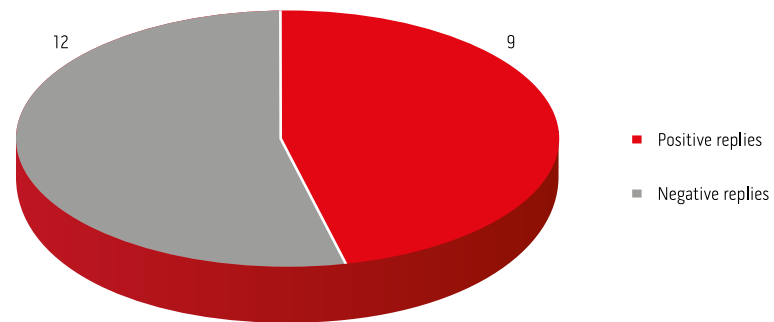


Chart 23: Number of internal QA audit reports at the level of colleges, 2015

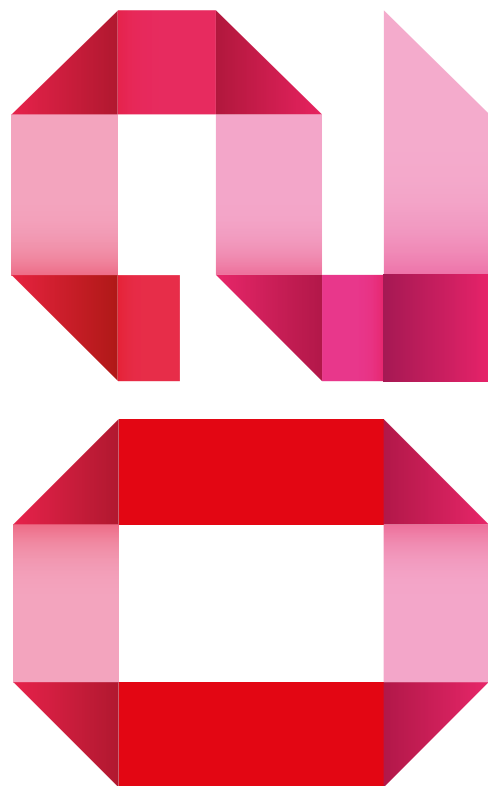
Survey shows that the majority of HEIs with established quality assurance systems has not conducted internal QA audits, i.e. any self-evaluation of the established QA systems. ASHE continuously works towards raising awareness of the importance of external evaluations and self-evaluations, but greater effort is needed on the part of HEIs to assure that all the stakeholders recognise the added value of a functional quality assurance system.

During 2015, ASHE continued to support the development and improvement of quality culture at HEIs, in cooperation with other stakeholders in higher education.

At the request of stakeholders from higher education, science and business sectors, but also in accordance with identified needs, during 2015, representatives of ASHE's QA Audit Dept. held a seminar at the Polytechnic of Applied Health Studies in Zagreb, a two-day seminar/workshop at the University of Split, and attended the thematic session of the University of Zagreb Quality Management Board, presenting the new, revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In addition, at the request of the Polytechnic of Karlovac, a seminar/workshop was organised at the institution, as part of preparations for the upcoming external QA audit.

At the educational training for teachers and associates in Military Engineering and Military Leadership and Management study programmes, which was organised by the "Petar Zrinski" Croatian Defense Academy, representatives of ASHE presented the procedures of external evaluation in higher education and science in the European and national contexts.

Credibility of external QA audit procedure is based on the training of experts who conduct procedures as members of audit panels. ASHE database of audit experts includes more than 100 auditors - national and international academics, students and representatives. In 2015, three new foreign experts were trained and included in the database.



ASHE'S SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC AND EXPERT BODIES IN THE SYSTEM OF SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

One of ASHE's tasks is to lend administrative and expert support to the activities of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development, the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, scientific field committees, scientific area councils and field

committees. All this represents an added value as it enables collecting and linking information and data related to the improvement of the quality of higher education and science in Croatia.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE, HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2015, the Agency continued to ensure the successful work of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development (NCSHETD), the most prominent professional body concerned with the development and quality of scientific activity and the system of science, higher education and technological development in the Republic of Croatia.

ASHE prepared the necessary materials and information and drafted minutes, proposals, comments, decisions, conclusions and other documents necessary for the Council's sessions.

The Council held nine sessions from January to December 2015. They discussed the following topics: work programme, the procedure for

defining proposals of SCEs in 2015; proposals from expert panels and scientific committees; Expert panel's Report on the Evaluation of the Proposal for Establishing a SCE; discussion on proposals for establishing SCEs; the proposal of the working group for the network of public institutes; Draft Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education; determining criteria for excellence; the outlook on the implementation of the Bologna Process (Yerevan Declaration). Furthermore, the Council discussed the ASHE Annual Report; Annual Report of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development; Smart specialisation strategy; discussion on requests for organising online study programmes; alignment of academic and professional titles; providing consent on the University of Zagreb's Decision on integrated study programmes;

appointing members of the Council for Funding Scientific Activity and Higher Education; drafting a new Ordinance on the Conditions of Appointment to Scientific Grades. The Council also discussed the opinions on meeting criteria for teaching excellence in the selection procedure for the conclusion of employment contracts for employees over the age of 65; providing consent for appointment to scientific grades; discussing and making opinion on the statutes of public scientific institutes; giving consent for the delivery of professional study programmes at universities; appointing and discharging members of Scientific Field Committee and solving complaints and appeals related to science within the Council's area of competence.

SCIENTIFIC AREA COUNCILS AND COUNCIL FOR ARTS

Scientific area councils are responsible for the matters within the competence of the National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development, in relation to scientific and artistic areas.

The councils' sessions were organised and coordinated by ASHE as in recent years. Of the ten sessions held in 2015, one session was held by the Scientific Area Council for Natural Sciences, the Scientific Area Council for Biomedicine and Health, the Scientific Area Council for

Biotechnical Sciences and the Scientific Area Council for the Social Sciences, respectively. The Scientific Area Council for the Humanities held six sessions in 2015.

SCIENTIFIC FIELD COMMITTEES

The Agency continued supporting the work of 23 scientific field committees (SFC) which participate in the procedures of appointment to scientific grades.

In 2015, 96 sessions were held, passing 980 positive decisions on appointment to scientific grades, or artistic and teaching grades, and 74 negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades.

The data indicate that the largest number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades was passed by the Scientific Field Committee for Biomedicine and Health – the fields of Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Medical Sciences, Public Health and Health Protection, Dentistry and Pharmacy, followed by the Scientific Field Committee for the Humanities – the field of Philology and the Scientific Field Committee for Art – the fields of Dramatic Arts (theatre and media), Film Arts (film, electronic and media art of motion pictures), Music Art, Visual Art, Applied Arts, Dance Art and Art of Movement.

Total number of appointments to scientific grades upon individual request in 2015 was 783, while those implemented on the basis of a public call amounted to 271. This means that 74.29% of appointments were done upon individual request, and 25.71% on the basis of calls. These numbers do not include the appointments made by the Committee for Arts – fields of Dramatic Arts (theatre and media), Film Arts (film, electronic and media art of motion pictures), Music

Art, Visual Art, Applied Arts, Dance Art and Art of Movement and the Committee for the Interdisciplinary Field (science; arts). Of those, 658 were into the grade of Scientific Associate, 147 into the grade of Senior Scientific Associate, and 76 into the grade of Scientific Advisor.

In 2015, Scientific Field Committees passed seven positive decisions on meeting criteria for scientific excellence in the selection procedure for the conclusion of employment contracts for employees over the age of 65.

Table 5: Number of sessions held by scientific field committees and the number of positive and negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades passed
 * Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (OG 123/03, 198/03, 105/04, 174/04, 02/07 Decision of the Constitutional Court 46/07, 45/09, 63/11, 94/13, 139/13, 101/14 and 60/15).
 * Ordinance on Criteria for Appointment to Scientific Positions (OG 84/05, 100/06, 138/06, 120/07, 71/10, 116/10 and 38/11).

Scientific Field Committees (SFC)	Number of sessions held in 2015	Number of positive decisions on appointment to scientific grades passed in 2015	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades passed in 2015	Decision on meeting criteria for scientific excellence
Biology	4	37	2	
Physics	5	22	3	
Geology	3	18	0	
Chemistry	4	36	0	
Mathematics	3	16	4	
Architecture...	4	32	8	1
Electrical Engineering...	3	48	2	
Chemical Engineering...	4	37	3	
Mechanical Engineering...	4	48	6	
Medicine...	5	153	4	
Veterinary Medicine	4	24	0	
Biotechnical Sciences	4	64	0	
Economics	5	58	3	
Information Sciences...	5	20	4	
Pedagogy...	4	31	6	1
Political Science...	4	38	0	
Law	4	34	2	
Psychology	3	22	3	
Philosophy and Theology	5	19	0	2
Philology	5	76	4	1
History...	5	48	5	
Arts	4	68	12	2
Interdisciplinary Field	5	31	3	
TOTAL	96	980	74	7

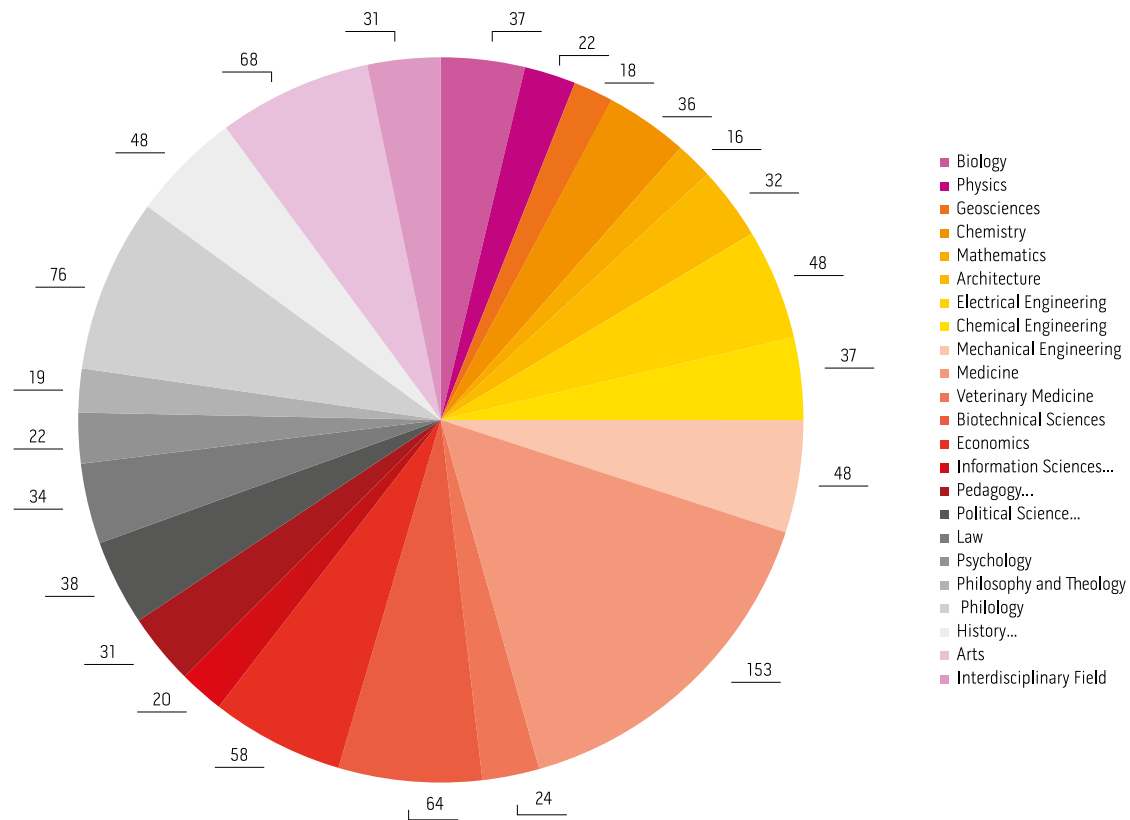


Chart 24: Number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades passed in 2015

Scientific field	Session number	Date of the session	Number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades
Biology	1 st	23 January 2015	7	2
Biology	2 nd	10 April 2015	13	
Biology	3 rd	11 September 2015	8	
Biology	4 th	11 December 2015	9	
Total			37	2
Physics and Geophysics	1 st	11 February 2015	9	
Physics and Geophysics	2 nd	24 April 2015	4	1
Physics and Geophysics	3 rd	1 July 2015	3	1
Physics and Geophysics	4 th	10 September 2015	2	
Physics and Geophysics	5 th	17 December 2015	4	1
Total			22	3
Geology	1 st	5 March 2015	5	
Geology	2 nd	9 September 2015	5	
Geology	3 rd	10 December 2015	8	
Total			18	
Chemistry	1 st	14 January 2015	2	
Chemistry	2 nd	8 April 2015	11	
Chemistry	3 rd	17 June 2015	13	
Chemistry	4 th	14 October 2015	10	
Total			36	
Mathematics	1 st	27 January 2015	4	
Mathematics	2 nd	12 May 2015	8	3
Mathematics	3 rd	15 September 2015	4	1
Total			16	4

Table 6: Sessions held by Scientific Field Committee for Natural Sciences in 2015

Scientific field	Session number	Date of the session	Number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Decision on meeting criteria for scientific excellence
Architecture and Urban Planning, Geodesy and Civil Engineering	1 st	27 March 2015	10	3	
Architecture and Urban Planning, Geodesy and Civil Engineering	2 nd	15 May 2015	7		1
Architecture and Urban Planning, Geodesy and Civil Engineering	3 rd	9 July 2015	5	1	
Architecture and Urban Planning, Geodesy and Civil Engineering	4 th	30 October 2015	10	4	
Total			32	8	1
Electrical Engineering and Computing	1 st	27 February 2015	11		
Electrical Engineering and Computing	2 nd	7 July 2015	13		
Electrical Engineering and Computing	3 rd	7 July 2015	24	2	
Total			48	2	
Chemical engineering, Mining, geology and petroleum engineering, Metallurgy, Textile technology and Printing technology	1 st	4 March 2015	4		
Chemical engineering, Mining, geology and petroleum engineering, Metallurgy, Textile technology and Printing technology	2 nd	20 May 2015	10	2	
Chemical engineering, Mining, geology and petroleum engineering, Metallurgy, Textile technology and Printing technology	3 rd	11 September 2015	15		
Chemical engineering, Mining, geology and petroleum engineering, Metallurgy, Textile technology and Printing technology	4 th	26 November 2015	8	1	
Total			37	3	
Mechanical Engineering, Naval Architecture, Traffic and transportation engineering, Aviation, rocket and space technology	1 st	21 January 2015	9	1	
Mechanical Engineering, Naval Architecture, Traffic and transportation engineering, Aviation, rocket and space technology	2 nd	15 April 2015	9	2	
Mechanical Engineering, Naval Architecture, Traffic and transportation engineering, Aviation, rocket and space technology	3 rd	8 July 2015	15	1	
Mechanical Engineering, Naval Architecture, Traffic and transportation engineering, Aviation, rocket and space technology	4 th	11 November 2015	15	2	
Total			48	6	

Table 7: Sessions held by Scientific Field Committee for Technical Sciences in 2015

Scientific field	Session number	Date of the session	Number of positive decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades
Basic medical sciences, Clinical medicine, Public health and health care, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy	1 st	13 March 2015	31	
Basic medical sciences, Clinical medicine, Public health and health care, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy	2 nd	18 May 2015	43	3
Basic medical sciences, Clinical medicine, Public health and health care, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy	3 rd	6 July 2015	17	
Basic medical sciences, Clinical medicine, Public health and health care, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy	4 th	13 October 2015	45	1
Basic medical sciences, Clinical medicine, Public health and health care, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy	5 th	25 November 2015	17	
Total			153	4
Veterinary Medicine	1 st	3 February 2015	1	
Veterinary Medicine	2 nd	11 May 2015	6	
Veterinary Medicine	3 rd	15 September 2015	5	
Veterinary Medicine	4 th	27 November 2015	12	
Total			24	

Table 8: Sessions held by Scientific Field Committee for Biomedicine and Health in 2015

Scientific field	Session number	Date of the session	Number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades
Agriculture, Forestry, Wood Technology, Biotechnology and Food technology	1 st	13 February 2015	16	
Agriculture, Forestry, Wood Technology, Biotechnology and Food technology	2 nd	15 May 2015	10	
Agriculture, Forestry, Wood Technology, Biotechnology and Food technology	3 rd	18 September 2015	16	
Agriculture, Forestry, Wood Technology, Biotechnology and Food technology	4 th	11 December 2015	22	
Total			64	

Table 9: Sessions held by Scientific Field Committee for Biotechnical Sciences in 2015

Scientific field	Session number	Date of the session	Number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Decision on meeting criteria for scientific excellence
Economics	1 st	27 February 2015	14	1	
Economics	2 nd	17 April 2015	2		
Economics	3 rd	22 May 2015	10		
Economics	4 th	16 September 2015	19	1	
Economics	5 th	12 November 2015	13	1	
Total			58	3	
Information and communication sciences	1 st	2 February 2015	2	1	
Information and communication sciences	2 nd	7 May 2015	3	1	
Information and communication sciences	3 rd	17 September 2015	8		
Information and communication sciences	4 th	7 October 2015	1		
Information and communication sciences	5 th	24 November 2015	6	2	
Total			20	4	
Pedagogy, Speech Pathology, Education and Rehabilitation Sciences and Kinesiology	1 st	9 January 2015	7	1	
Pedagogy, Speech Pathology, Education and Rehabilitation Sciences and Kinesiology	2 nd	6 March 2015	7		
Pedagogy, Speech Pathology, Education and Rehabilitation Sciences and Kinesiology	3 rd	11 June 2015	11	2	
Pedagogy, Speech Pathology, Education and Rehabilitation Sciences and Kinesiology	4 th	16 October 2015	6	3	1
Total			31	6	1
Political science, Sociology, Social Geography and Demography, Social Work and Security and Defence	1 st	11 March 2015	7		
Political science, Sociology, Social Geography and Demography, Social Work and Security and Defence	2 nd	2 June 2015	15		
Political science, Sociology, Social Geography and Demography, Social Work and Security and Defence	3 rd	14 October 2015	1		
Political science, Sociology, Social Geography and Demography, Social Work and Security and Defence	4 th	2 December 2015	15		
Total			38		
Law	1 st	24 February 2015	9	1	
Law	2 nd	16 April 2015	7		
Law	3 rd	2 July 2015	10		
Law	4 th	15 October 2015	8	1	
Total			34	2	
Psychology	1 st	10 March 2015	7		
Psychology	2 nd	5 June 2015	5	1	
Psychology	3 rd	6 October 2015	10	2	
Total			22	3	

Table 10: Sessions held by Scientific Field Committee for Social Sciences in 2015

Scientific field	Session number	Date of the session	Number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Decision on meeting criteria for scientific excellence
Philosophy and Theology	1 st	17 February 2015	6		
Philosophy and Theology	2 nd	12 June 2015	8		1
Philosophy and Theology	3 rd	14 July 2015			1
Philosophy and Theology	4 th	23 October 2015	4		
Philosophy and Theology	5 th	18 December 2015	1		
Total			19		2
Philology	1 st	28 January 2015	18		
Philology	2 nd	22 April 2015	12		
Philology	3 rd	18 June 2015	15	1	
Philology	4 th	28 September 2015	16	1	
Philology	5 th	3 December 2015	15	2	1
Total			76	4	1
History, Art History, Art sciences, Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology	1 st	29 January 2015	14		
History, Art History, Art sciences, Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology	2 nd	17 April 2015	8	1	
History, Art History, Art sciences, Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology	3 rd	3 July 2015	4	1	
History, Art History, Art sciences, Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology	4 th	21 October 2015	12	1	
History, Art History, Art sciences, Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology	5 th	16 December 2015	10	2	
Total			48	5	

Table 11: Sessions held by Scientific Field Committee for Humanities in 2015

Scientific field	Session number	Date of the session	Number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Decision on meeting criteria for scientific excellence
Dramatic Arts (theatre and media), Film Arts (film, electronic and media art of motion pictures), Music Art, Visual Art, Applied Arts, Dance Art, Movement Art	1st	4 February 2015	7	3	
Dramatic Arts (theatre and media), Film Arts (film, electronic and media art of motion pictures), Music Art, Visual Art, Applied Arts, Dance Art, Movement Art	2nd	9 April 2015	20	1	1
Dramatic Arts (theatre and media), Film Arts (film, electronic and media art of motion pictures), Music Art, Visual Art, Applied Arts, Dance Art, Movement Art	3rd	24 June 2015	28	2	1
Dramatic Arts (theatre and media), Film Arts (film, electronic and media art of motion pictures), Music Art, Visual Art, Applied Arts, Dance Art, Movement Art	4th	22 October 2015	13	6	
Total			68	12	2

Table 12: Sessions held by Scientific Field Committee for Arts in 2015

Scientific field	Session number	Date of the session	Number of decisions on appointment to scientific grades	Number of negative decisions on appointment to scientific grades
Interdisciplinary field	1st	16 January 2015	7	1
Interdisciplinary field	2nd	18 March 2015	4	
Interdisciplinary field	3rd	21 May 2015	6	1
Interdisciplinary field	4th	13 July 2015	8	
Interdisciplinary field	5th	30 October 2015	6	1
Total			31	3

Table 13: Sessions held by Scientific Field Committee for the Interdisciplinary Field in 2015

COUNCIL OF POLYTECHNICS AND COLLEGES

- **The total number of appointments to grades upon individual request:** 756 + 27 (interdisciplinary),
- **Appointments to the grade of Scientific Associate:** 531 + 20 (interdisciplinary),
- **Appointments to the grade of Senior Scientific Associate:** 130 + 1 (interdisciplinary),
- **Appointments to the grade of Scientific Advisor:** 53 + 3 (interdisciplinary),

-
- **The total number of appointments to grades on the basis of a public call:** 184 + 7 (interdisciplinary),
 - **Appointments to the grade of Scientific Associate:** 127 + 4 (interdisciplinary),
 - **Appointments to the grade of Senior Scientific Associate:** 17 + 2 (interdisciplinary),
 - **Appointments to the grade of Scientific Advisor:** 23 + 1 (interdisciplinary).

Arts field (for appointment into artistic and teaching grades):

- Assistant Professors: 29
- Associate Professors: 22
- Full Professors: 11
- Full Professors – permanent title: 6
- The total number of appointments into artistic and teaching grades (negative and positive): 80.

The Council of Polytechnics and Colleges is a body in charge of deciding on the issues of common interest for the activities and development of polytechnics and colleges. Its members are deans of all polytechnics and colleges in Croatia. A representative of the Rectors' Conference participates in the work of the Council without voting rights. The Council of Polytechnics and Colleges has 40 members, of those 15 members are polytechnics and 25 are colleges.

ASHE organised seven sessions of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges in 2015.

The Council has excellent cooperation with the Polytechnics and Colleges Sports Committee, the Council of Students of Polytechnics and Colleges, and the bodies that were established by the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges Decision which all very actively promote interests of students from the system of professional studies.

As member of EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges is a partner on two Erasmus Plus projects: BuildPHE and PROCSEE started at the end of 2015.

Furthermore, the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges was one of 11 partners in the project BuildPHE which is aimed at further capacity building in professional higher education in the European Union,

building on a very successful HAPHE project in which the Council was also partner. The PROCSEE project lasts for three years, its focus being on the strengthening of professional higher education in Eastern Europe.

At the end of last year, the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges passed new Rules of Procedure and elected new members of seven field committees who were appointed for a four-year term.

In December 2015, elections for the new president of the Council were held and Professor Vlatko Cvrtila, dean of VERN' Polytechnic, was elected as a new president of the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges for a four-year term.

FIELD COMMITTEES

Field committees pass opinions on whether applicants meet the minimum conditions in the procedure of appointment to teaching grades.

In 2015, the committees held 26 sessions which were coordinated by ASHE. They passed 288 positive opinions on the fulfilment of criteria for appointment to teaching grades.

FIELD COMMITTEE	SOCIAL SCIENCES	TECHNICAL SCIENCES	HUMANITIES	NATURAL SCIENCES	BIOTECHNICAL SCIENCES	BIOMEDICINE AND HEALTH	ARTS	TOTAL
NUMBER OF SESSIONS	5	4	3	3	5	4	2	26
NUMBER OF OPINIONS	149	53	10	23	20	29	4	288
COLLEGE PROFESSOR – PERMANENT TITLE	7	1	0	2	1	7	0	18
COLLEGE PROFESSOR – PERMANENT TITLE	18	1	1	1	1	2	0	24
SENIOR LECTURER	44	10	2	5	5	6	0	72
LECTURER	80	41	7	15	13	14	4	174

Table 14: Number of sessions held by Field Committees in 2015

Number of sessions held by Field Committees in 2015

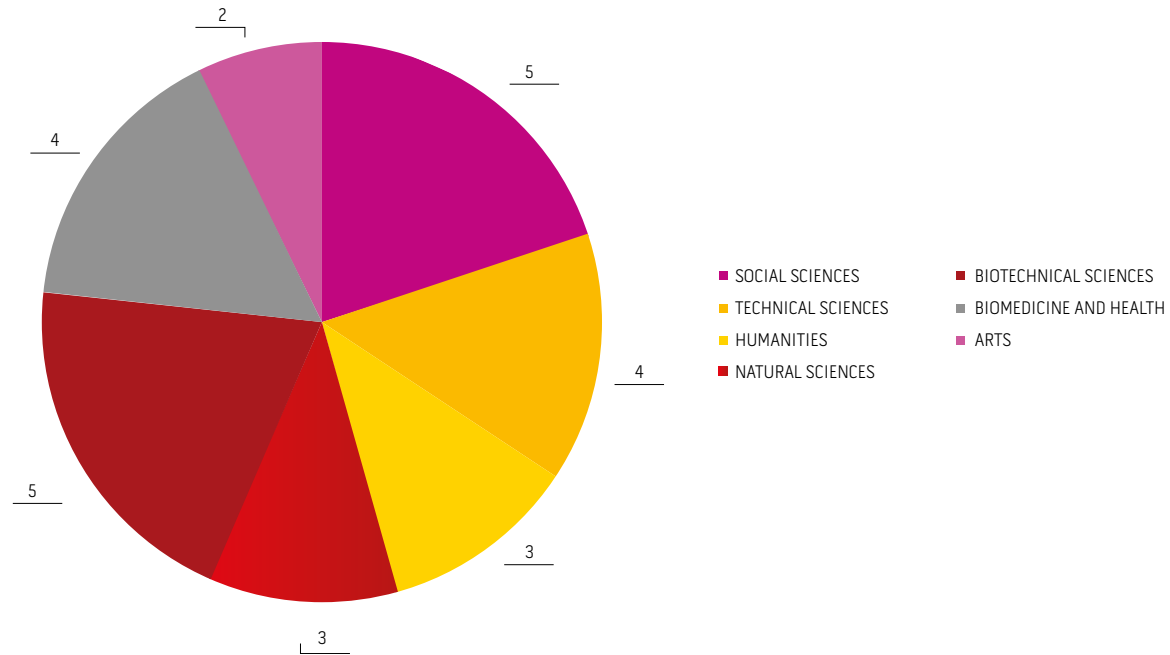
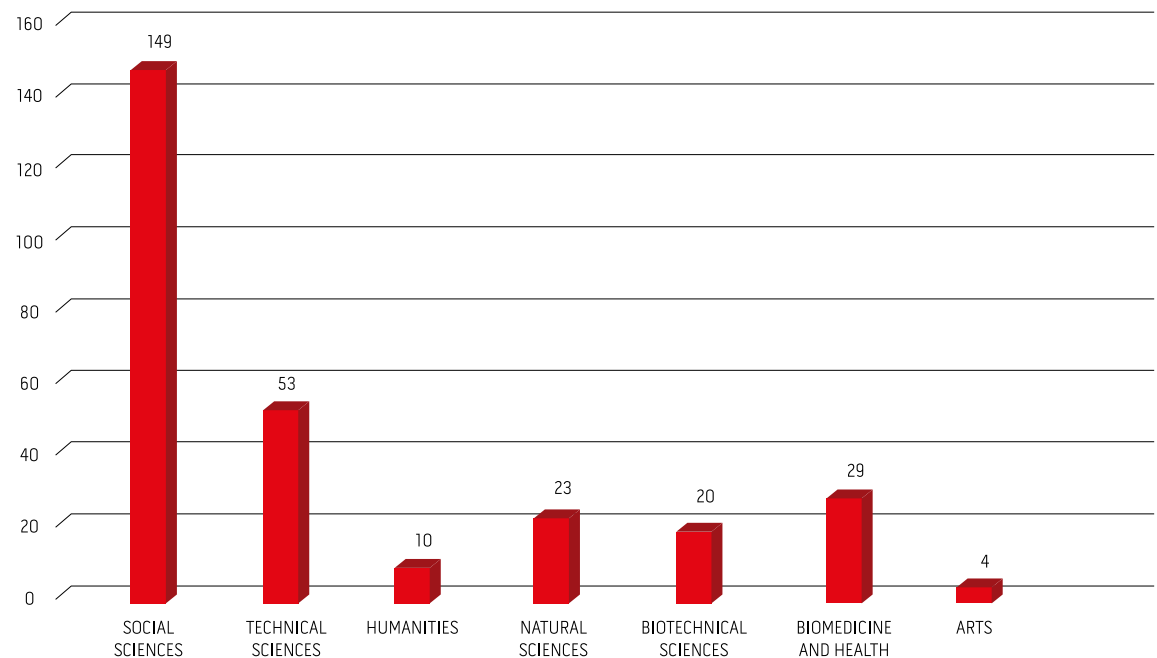


Chart 25: Sessions held by Field Committees by scientific area

Number of opinions passed at the sessions of Field Committees



Field Committees for the Humanities passed the highest number of positive decisions (149 opinions), followed by the Field Committee for the technical sciences (53 positive opinions). The highest number of positive opinions in the procedures of appointment to teaching grades (95) was passed in the field of Economics.

Chart 26: Number of opinions passed at the sessions of Field Committees

Positive opinions passed at the sessions of Field Committees by teaching grade

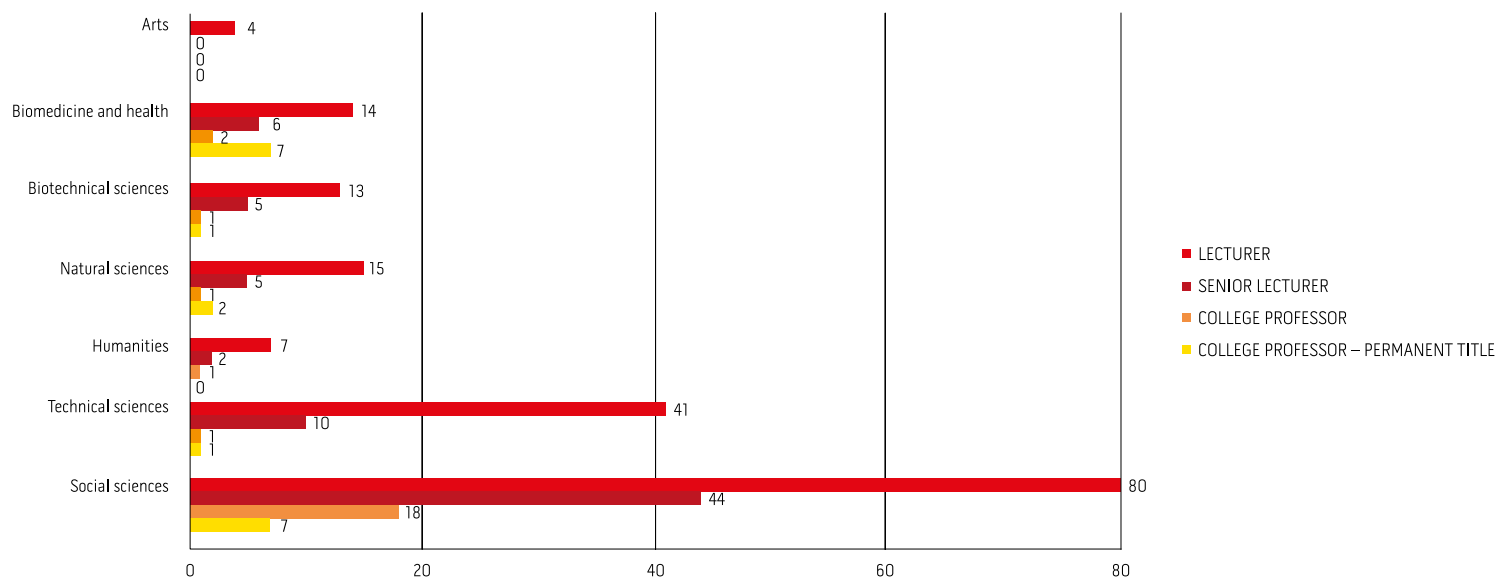


Chart 27: Positive opinions passed at the sessions of Field Committees by teaching title

In addition, the Field Committees Coordination Board held one session in 2015.

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

COMMITTEE FOR ETHICS IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The Committee for Ethics in Science and Higher Education is the most prominent advisory and professional body for the promotion of ethical principles and values in science and higher education, business, public relations, the application of modern technology, and environmental protection.

The Committee for Ethics in Science and Higher Education held nine sessions in 2015. The Committee discussed and passed opinions on the individual cases of suspected violation of ethical principles

by previously requesting comments from the ethics committees of higher education institutions in which suspected cases of violation occurred.

The Committee also addressed the problem of plagiarism and the length of the proceedings of their identification and sanctioning, by warning universities and public scientific institutes in Croatia about such situations. At one session, which was also attended by the Information Officer, they discussed the topic of data collection

and use, as well as charging the use of the data for scientific research.

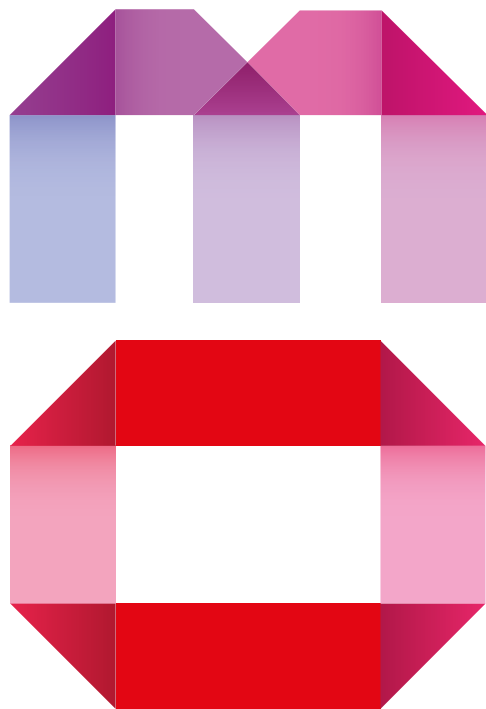
Furthermore, one of the Committee members participated in a meeting held by ENRIO (*European Network of Research Integrity Offices*). The Committee considers their membership in the organisation important as well as participating in the meetings in which experience in dealing with the ethical issues in science and research in Europe is shared.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN POTENTIAL

A representative of ASHE is a member of the National Council for the Development of Human Potential, a central strategic body for the development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) in the Republic of Croatia.

The National Council monitors and validates the impact of the CROQF and respective qualifications, activities of sectorial councils and based on their regular reports, makes recommendations on how to better link the education and labour market needs. Furthermore, the Council makes recommendations on planning and developing

human potential in line with the development strategy of the Republic of Croatia and conveys its opinion on sectorial councils' recommendations referring to admission policy, admission quotas and financing of qualifications from public sources to the minister responsible for education and science.



APPLICATIONS TO STUDY PROGRAMMES IN CROATIA

In addition to having successfully administered applications to undergraduate and integrated study programmes at higher education institutions in Croatia in 2015 through the National Information System for Applications to Higher Education Institution (NISpVU), the Central Applications Office (CAO) administered electronic applications to graduate studies through the National System of Applications to Graduate Studies (NISpDS) for the first time.

CAO responded to applicants' and coordinators' queries. During the summer and autumn enrolment period, CAO responded to a total of 27038 telephone queries, 1184 e-mail queries, and 2181 queries submitted via the form available on the website www.studij.hr in both enrolment periods.

During both enrolment periods, CAO received, verified and validated the required documentation of applicants who had finished their secondary education before 2010 or abroad, who applied solely to study programmes, without having taken the State Matura exam. During the summer and autumn enrolment period, CAO received and processed the documents submitted by 1,332 applicants and 113 substantiated requests for the advanced enrolment in higher education institutions.

Checking and verifying applicants' personal data in the central OIB system (Croatian personal identification number service) was introduced last year, so applicants who are Croatian citizens are no longer required to submit a certificate of citizenship as their personal data are compared to the data in the central OIB system and validated in the NISpVU. This improved the way of validating data authenticity and reduced the number of documents required for enrolment in higher education institutions.

For the purpose of informing applicants about the application to study programmes, CAO published all relevant information on the website www.studij.hr. The previous brochure was replaced by the menu All about applications which provides information on the application

procedure for different categories of applicants. Furthermore, the web page provides answers to frequently asked questions, and if applicants do not find answer to their questions, they can post their queries on a form below each question.

From 1 July 2015 applicants mostly accessed the NISpDS system via the website www.studij.hr, compared the study programmes via the Compare studies application and accessed the the link All about applications for information on the application to study programmes.

The Central Applications Office cooperated with higher education institutions by collecting information on admission criteria and by regularly communicating with NISpVU and NISpDS coordinators. CAO regularly responded to their inquiries and informed them about key dates and activities.

The application for coordinators developed by the CAO, containing user instructions for NISpVU and NISpDS applications, important information, a timetable of activities, as well as the rules and recommendations regarding the application process, was upgraded to include an application providing insight into applications to graduate studies. Also, the application was linked with AAI@EduHr

system last year, allowing coordinators to log into the application using AAI@EduHr user ID.

In order to improve the overall procedure, in 2015, CAO held four meetings with members of the Commission for improving the procedure of entry to higher education institutions. They discussed the existing concept of the State Matura with the aim of conducting a more systematic and coordinated analysis of the effectiveness of the admission system and presented the National Information System of Applications to Graduate Studies (NISpDS).

In 2015, the server-side and the client-side of NISpDS application were developed and linked with the Register of Study Programmes of MSES, NISpVU system, e-Citizens service, central OIB system, ISVU system, AAI@EduHR system, as well as other information systems of higher education institutions. Also, the client-side of the application has been optimized for mobile access and is available in the English language. Applicants can also view their personal information and documents they submitted, search and apply for study programmes, view their results and ranking lists and send inquiries to CAO.

CAO is committed to the improvement of the information infrastructure for providing services to applicants and higher education institutions. Thus, in order to streamline the business processes of the Office, last year CAO improved and upgraded the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) application, an application for NISpVU coordinators and the application for managing the content of the website www.studij.hr.

In order to provide information to applicants on the study programmes and labour market needs, CAO is continuously working on the improvement of their services. To this end, two new modules have been developed on the web pages Accreditation Recommendations and Analysis of labour market needs. Accreditation Recommendations provide applicants with access to summary reports of expert committees that carried out re-accreditation of higher education institutions, in order to get a clear picture of advantages and disadvantages of a HEI. Analysis of labour market needs provides applicants with access to recommendations concerning enrolment and scholarships policies drafted by the Croatian Employment Service.

APPLICATIONS TO UNDERGRADUATE AND INTEGRATED STUDY PROGRAMMES

Applications to undergraduate and integrated study programmes in the academic year 2015/2016 were administered in the summer enrolment period which lasted from 7 January to 17 July 2015, and in the autumn enrolment period which lasted from 22 July to 21 September 2015.

The data for the summer enrolment period in NISpVU system reported an increase in the number of vacancies and a reduction in the total number of applicants compared to the academic year 2014/2015. A slight increase in the number of successful applicants was reported. The data for the autumn enrolment period reported a higher number of vacancies, total number of applicants and the number of applicants who have secured the right to enrol in a study programme, compared to the academic year 2014/2015.

In the summer enrolment period, there were a total of 37,528 slots available at Croatian higher education institutions, and out of 42,739 applicants that applied, 30,331 applicants secured their right to enrol in a study programme. In the autumn enrolment period, there were a total of 8,239 slots available at all Croatian higher education institutions, and out of 8,784 applicants that applied, 3,929 applicants secured the right to enrol in a study programme.

Last year, the number of applications from foreign applicants remained at the same level as the year before. CAO recorded 155 applications from abroad in both enrolment periods.

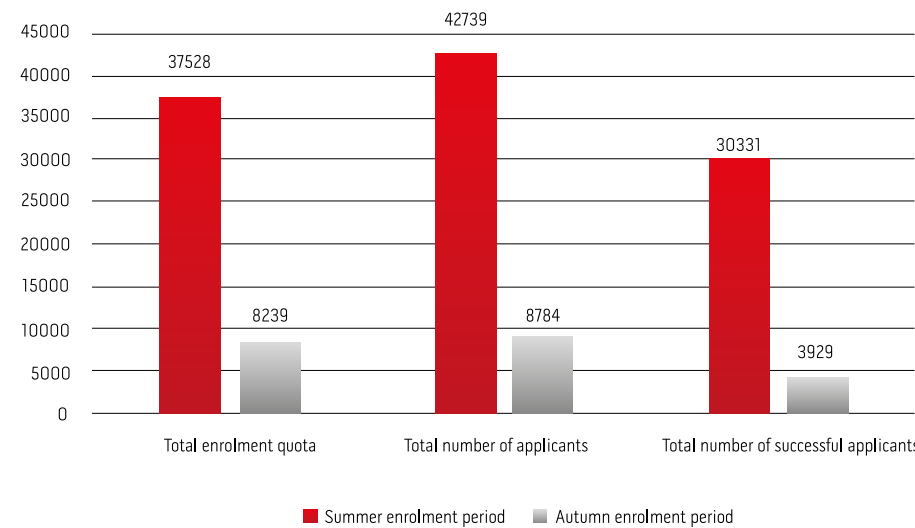


Chart 28: Number of successful applicants to undergraduate and integrated study programmes in relation to the total number of applicants and enrolment quota in the academic year 2015/2016

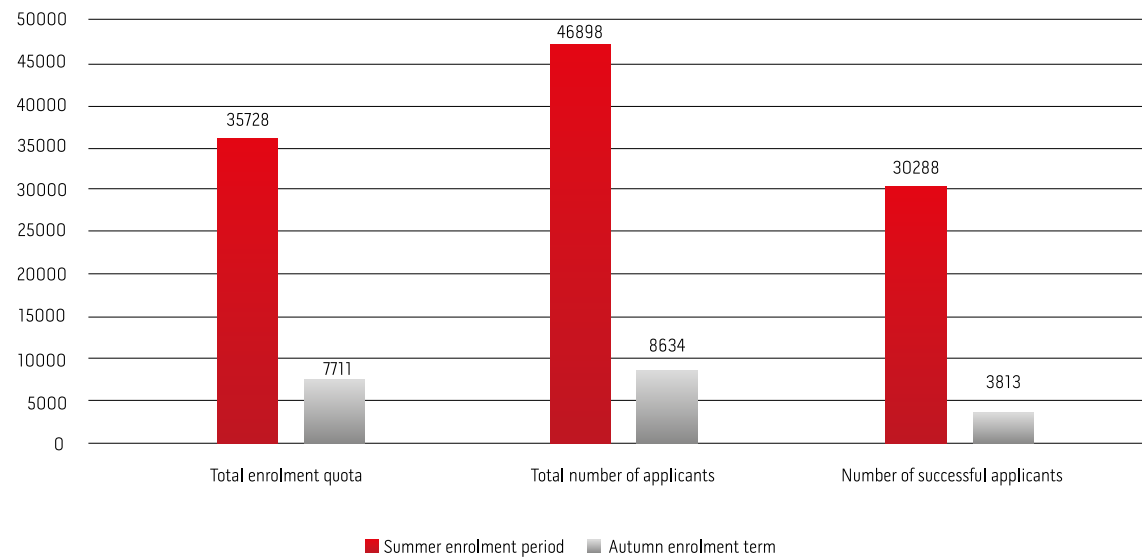


Chart 29: Number of applicants who enrolled in undergraduate and integrated study programmes compared to the total number of applicants and the enrolment quota in the academic year 2014/2015

Study programmes in the Social Sciences in the academic year 2015/2016 had the largest number of applications, but also the largest number of vacancies. The data in Table 14 show a larger number of applications to the study programmes in the field of Technical Sciences and the Humanities, while the study programmes in the artistic and interdisciplinary areas have the lowest number of applications, but also the lowest number of vacancies.

Discipline	Number of study programmes	Total enrolment quota	Number of applications	Number of successful applicants
Social Sciences	250	17022	67688	12351
Technical Sciences	179	10316	43896	8694
Humanities	112	3785	20644	3250
Biomedicine and Health	49	2377	22368	2345
Natural Sciences	38	1631	9152	1435
Biotechnical Sciences	55	2389	12828	1950
Arts	83	769	2338	478
Interdisciplinary Sciences	15	333	1503	276

Table 15: Number of applications and successful applicants by scientific field

The data in Table 15 show that the study programmes of public universities have the highest number of applications, which also have the highest number of slots available.

Name	Number of study programmes	Total enrolment quota	Number of applications	Number of successful applicants
Public universities	584	27 677	306 372	24 855
Public polytechnics	90	4111	47 354	3520
Public colleges	5	285	1494	201
Private universities	9	680	1912	237
Private polytechnics	32	1382	3931	650
Private colleges	56	3803	6470	868

Table 16: Number of applicants securing their right to enrol in a study programme by type of higher education institution

If we consider the data on the interest attracted by scientific areas, i.e., the ratio between enrolment quotas and the number of first choice applications in Table 16, the most attractive study programmes are those in the field of biomedicine and health, the artistic field, and the interdisciplinary field.

Discipline	The ratio between enrolment quota and number of first choice applications
Biomedicine and Health	2,35
Artistic Area	1,53
Interdisciplinary Sciences	1,23
Technical Sciences	1,08
Natural Sciences	1,04
Biotechnical Sciences	0,96
Social Sciences	0,94
Humanities	0,81

Table 17: Attractiveness of scientific areas

APPLICATIONS TO GRADUATE STUDY PROGRAMMES

Applications to graduate studies were administered electronically for the first time via the National Information System for Applications to Graduate Studies (NISpDS) – central information and administration service developed by ASHE. Applications to graduate study programmes of the University of Rijeka constituents

began on 1 July 2015 and lasted until 22 September 2015 in the first enrolment term, and until 30 September 2015 in the second enrolment term. There were a total of 2,301 slots available, and out of 1,500 applicants that applied 1,407 of them secured their right to enrol in a desired graduate study programme.

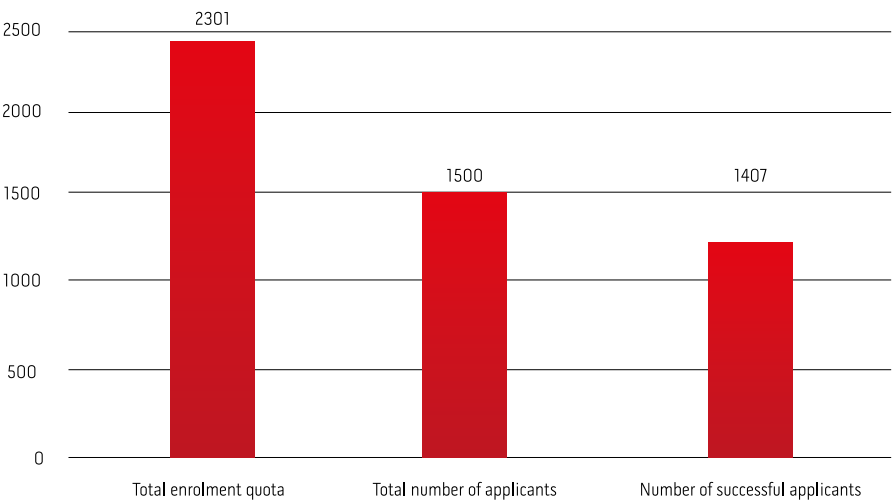


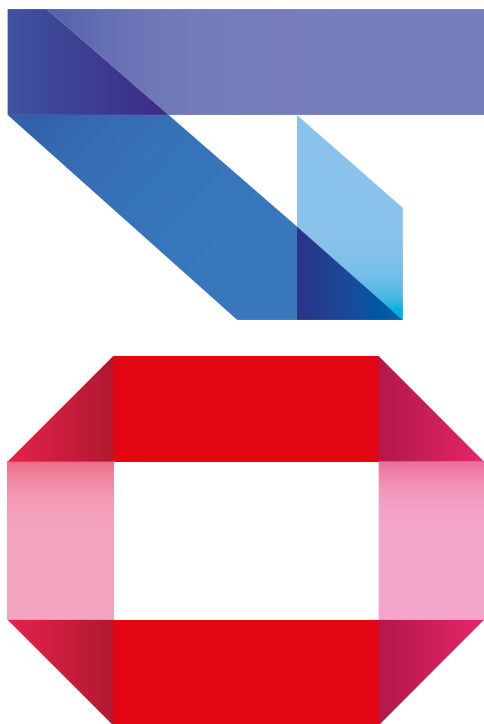
Chart 30: Number of applicants securing their right to enrol in the graduate study programmes of the University of Rijeka in relation to the total number of applicants and enrolment quota in the academic year 2015/2016.

APPLICATIONS FOR ENROLMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

CAO successfully administered enrolment in secondary schools of applicants who had finished their primary education abroad. CAO administered applications and provided applicants with the information on the application and enrolment into the first year of secondary school. CAO also received documents from applicants, registered applicants in the system, issued them user login information and entered all the necessary data from the submitted documents. In the summer and autumn enrolment periods, CAO answered 3,726 telephone inquiries and 2,939 inquiries received via e-mail. In both enrolment periods, 1,003 applicants outside Croatia's educational system were registered.

We enjoyed full support from CAO from the very beginning. Their staff quickly provided us with all the information and answers we needed. I would like to commend their professionalism and wish the team to keep up the good work!

Zvonimir Seki



RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

Recognition is a formal acknowledgment of the value of a foreign education qualification or period of study, issued by the competent authority, for the purpose of the continuation of education or employment.

ASHE, or rather its National ENIC/NARIC Office, conducts the procedure of professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications for the purpose of accessing the labour market in Croatia.

NATIONAL ENIC/NARIC OFFICE

In order to recognise a foreign higher education qualification, the higher education institution which issued it has to be accredited by a competent accrediting body of the home country, the higher education programme also has to be accredited by a competent accrediting body of the home country, and in case of a joint degree, all participating HEIs as well as the programme itself have to be accredited by competent accrediting bodies of their respective home country.

.....

"The speed with which you processed my request for the recognition of a qualification from Mostar is truly laudable. As far as I know, this is a rare occurrence in the practice of various government institutions towards the public."

Marko Križanac

.....

ASHE's National ENIC/NARIC Office is an information centre on academic mobility and recognition of foreign higher education qualifications. It is a member of European networks of national information centres on academic recognition and mobility (ENIC and NARIC), wherein it has been taking an active part for over ten years through its meetings, discussions, drafting policy documents and as a partner on a number of international projects.

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

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

In 2015, the Office implemented a number of activities aimed at supporting the strategic goals of encouraging and facilitating academic and professional mobility of students and professionals in Europe and beyond, while also contributing to the developing quality assurance platforms for all levels of education.

All Office activities, primarily the procedure of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, are based on guidelines and criteria derived from European public policies for fostering the recognition of foreign qualifications, which helps the Office greatly contribute to encouraging academic and professional mobility.

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

The National ENIC/NARIC Office provides assistance to institutions and bodies responsible for the recognition of qualifications of different levels and types of education, training and professional development, thereby supporting the education policy of lifelong learning. Furthermore, the Office offers its expertise to professionals who work on the evaluation of foreign education as well as professional qualifications, on the recognition of foreign qualification, and staff working in human resources.

In 2015, special attention was devoted to increasing the recognisability and availability of expert information which facilitates the recognition of foreign qualifications in Croatia, but also the recognisability and recognition of all levels of Croatian education qualifications and professional qualifications abroad.

For that purpose, the Office regularly issues clarifications that contain all the information on the status, origin and content of a higher education qualification in the country of origin, as well as an opinion on the comparability of a foreign educational level to the levels of education in Croatia by using relevant European mobility instruments for the evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications which increase the visibility of foreign qualifications – national qualification framework, diploma supplement, ECTS credits, external quality assurance of higher education institution and study programme, accreditation decisions etc.

In this way, the National ENIC/NARIC Office helps employers with hiring decisions and higher education institutions with the process of enrolment to a study programme, which is in line with the European best practice on the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

The Office also conducts the procedure of professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and, upon request by HEI's Offices for Academic Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications, participates in academic recognition by issuing advice for the recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad.

In addition to providing expertise in administrative procedures and by issuing advice and clarifications, the Office daily replies to questions from foreign and Croatian physical and legal persons interested in national and foreign education systems and national and foreign higher education programmes and qualifications.

In 2015, the National ENIC/NARIC Office:

- fully recognised 1767 higher education qualifications for the purpose of accessing the labour market
- responded to 166 requests for advice in academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications
- issued 159 clarifications of Croatian and foreign higher education qualifications
- replied to more than 2350 e-mail queries on professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in Croatia and abroad, as well as on foreign and Croatian higher education systems and foreign and Croatian higher education study programmes and qualifications.

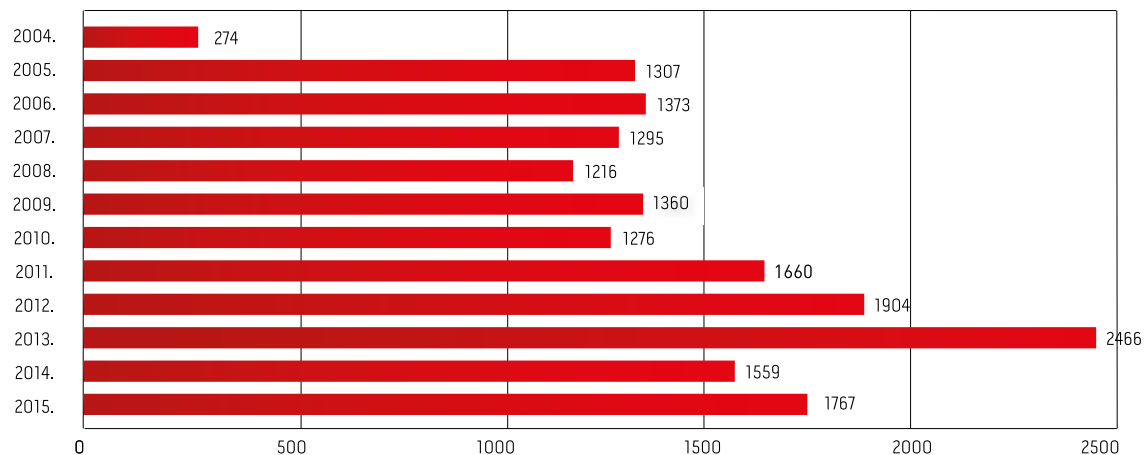


Chart 31: The number of requests for the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications (2004-2015)

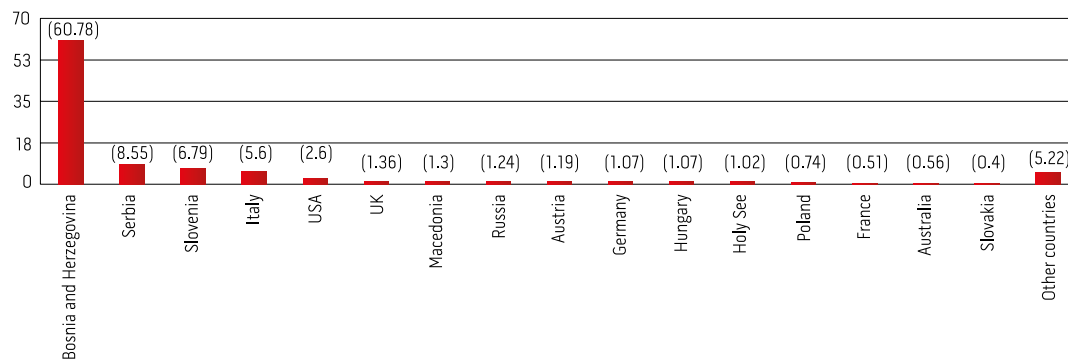


Chart 32: Percentage of foreign higher education qualifications received in 2015 by country of origin

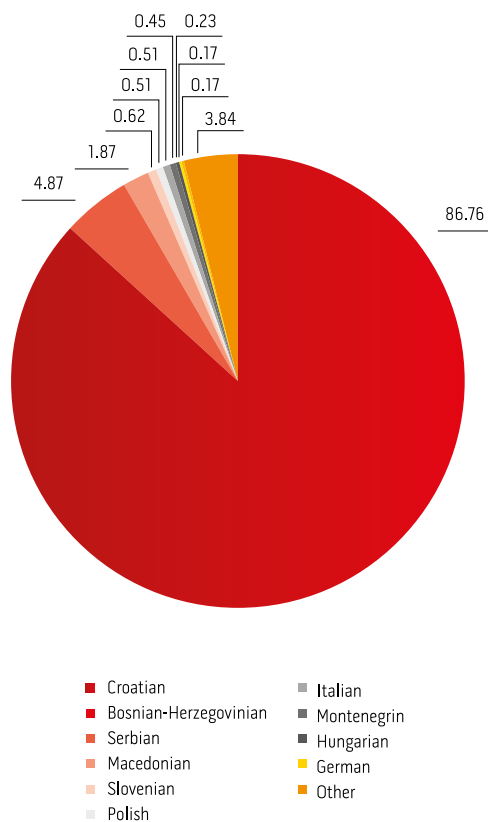


Chart 33: Percentage of foreign higher education qualifications received in 2015 by applicants' nationality

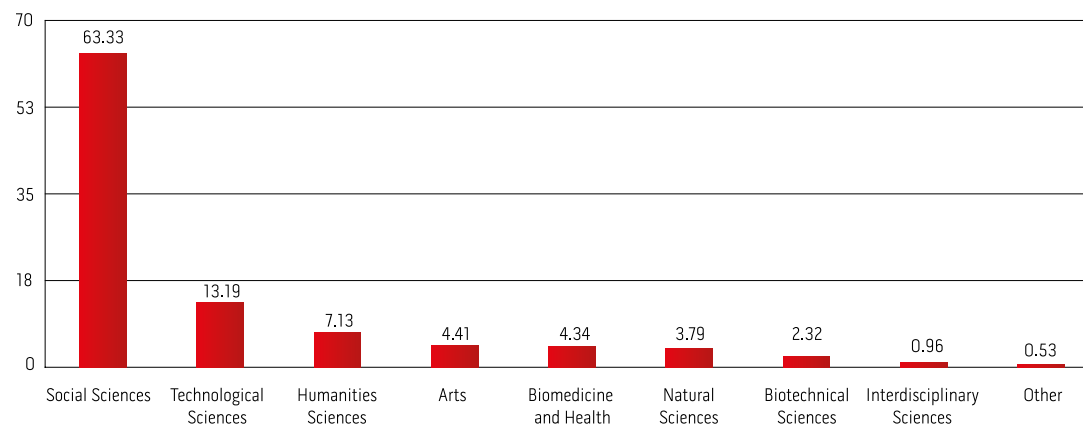
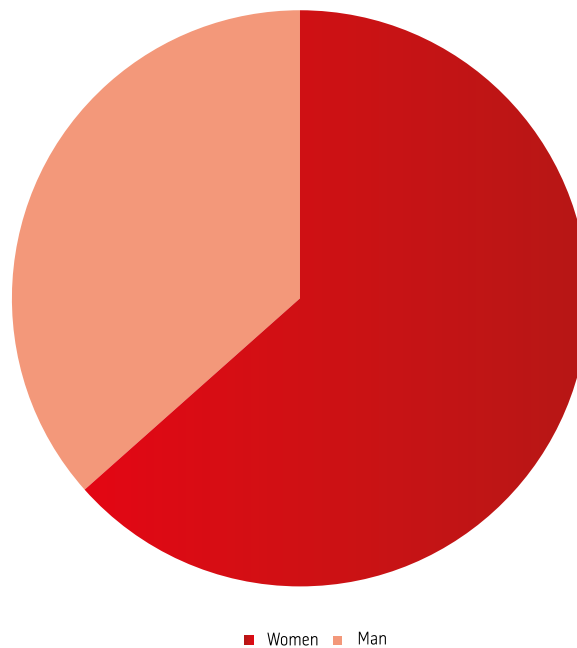


Chart 34: Percentage of foreign higher education qualifications received in 2015 by scientific area



Out of the total number of applications in 2015, around 90% were submitted by Croatian citizens, while the remaining 10% were submitted by foreign nationals, mostly citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina with some 5% of the overall number of requests.

Most of submitted foreign higher education qualifications were obtained in some of the neighbouring countries, mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina which accounts for more than 60% of the total number of applications in 2015.

Chart 35 : Percentage of foreign higher education qualifications received in 2015 by applicants' gender

IMPROVEMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

In 2015, the National ENIC/NARIC Office continued its active participation in the Working Group for Improvement of the Legislative Framework for Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications, and the Committee for Inter-Sectorial Coordination for Regulated Professions.

In working with these bodies, the Office provides systematic review of the issues of international qualification recognition, related processes, examples of best practice, and guidelines for practical implementation in the Croatian context, all based on years of experience in working with the ENIC/NARIC network and the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee.

In 2015, the National ENIC/NARIC Office continued participating in the activities of the Working Group for Improvement of the Legislative Framework for Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications, working on the new Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications.

Its work in the Committee for Inter-Sectorial Coordination for Regulated Professions resulted in the amendments to the Act on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications (Official Gazette 124/09, 45/11, 74/14 and 82/15),

which was introduced on the 24th July 2015, and came into force on the 1st October, as well as in the new Regulations for Issuing EU Certification (Official Gazette 123/15), which was introduced on the 11th November, and came into force on the 19th November 2015.

Moreover, the Office took part in devising a plan to align Croatian legislation on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications with the relevant amended *acquis communautaire*, or rather to train the administrative structure that follows the field of the recognition of foreign professional qualifications as a precondition for accessing regulated professions.

ASSISTANCE CENTRE FOR PROVIDING INFORMATION ON THE RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

With the new Act on Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications coming into force, the National ENIC/NARIC Office is no longer the National contact point for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, but has been renamed as the Assistance centre for providing information on the recognition of professional qualifications. The new title is accompanied by additional activities and obligations of the Office.

The Office has been continuously working on developing its role as the Assistance centre for providing information on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications which, according to the Act on Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications, it had since 2009, but which was activated upon Croatia's entry into the EU.

In 2015, in accordance with the Act on Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications and Directive 2005/36/EC, the Assistance centre for providing information on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications provided citizens and assistance centres of other European Economic Area (EEA) Contracting States with:

- necessary information on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in the Republic of Croatia – information about national legislation which governs the access to and pursuit of regulated professions, including social legislations and, if necessary, ethical rules;

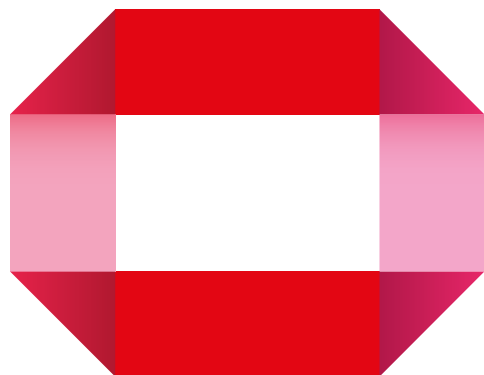
- assistance in achieving rights arising from the Act on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications;
- information on regulated professions and how to access them in other EEA Contracting States;
- necessary information on the Database of Regulated Professions and the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in the Republic of Croatia.

Competent authority in Croatia	Number of applications for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications (2015)
Croatian Nursing Council	84
Croatian Chamber of Physiotherapists	25
Croatian Chamber of Civil Engineers	21
Croatian Medical Chamber	9
Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts	6
Croatian Chamber of Mechanical Engineers	2
Total	147

Table 18 : The number of requests for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications in 2015*



ANALYTICS AND STATISTICS IN SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION



In performing its task of collecting and processing data on the system of higher education and science in Croatia, ASHE relies on two pillars; the first one is MOZVAG (ASHE evaluation module) and the related Directory of Study Programmes which - based on information from MOZVAG - provides statistical data on accredited study programmes.

MOZVAG information system is regularly updated and maintained by ASHE, and contains 1359⁵ active accredited study programmes (more than 1820 programmes in total). As part of the re-accreditation

procedure, all higher education institutions in Croatia have an obligation to provide data on their study programmes, conditions for performing study programmes, courses and teachers. During the evaluation procedures conducted in 2015, ASHE employees received and processed 104 requests from HEIs for the revision of conditions for performing study programmes entered in the MOZVAG system. For the purpose of assisting ASHE's Accreditation Council and reaching re-accreditation decisions, MOZVAG system was used to make some hundred analytics for 43 HEIs covered by the 2014/2015 Re-accreditation Plan, with the aim of monitoring indicators of

⁵ According to information from February 2016

compliance with the minimum criteria prescribed 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.

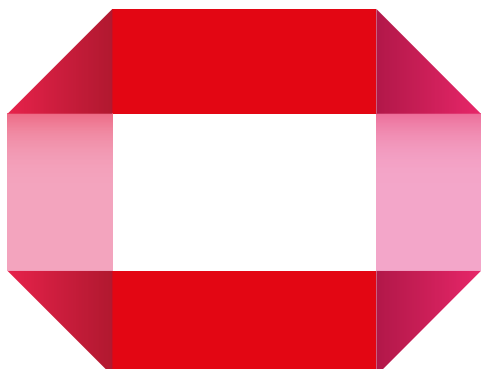
Based on MOZVAG data, Directory of Study Programmes is maintained and updated on the Agency website in both Croatian and the English language. The Directory provides basic information on study programmes to national and international public: names of issuing institution and programmes provider, scientific area and field, number of ECTS credits, programme duration and location, and a link to the website of the relevant institution or study programme.

ASHE website also features the Directory of Higher Education Institutions in Croatia. In addition to listing 132 accredited higher education institutions, this Directory enables users to search according to the category and type of institution, institution location, issuing institution, and scientific area and field, and provides some basic information on the higher education institution. The Directory gives a brief overview of the Croatian higher education system. Data from the Directory is annually provided to the Institute for the Development of Education, to be published on their portal *Study in Croatia*, but also to numerous other public and private institutions and organisations, individual researchers, students and other members of the academic community. ASHE website is regularly updated with new statistical data, such as an overview of the number of students over the last five years.

The other pillar for collecting and processing data is information gathered from other sources, such as MSES (on the number of students) or through the development and maintenance of internal databases that support ASHE business processes. ASHE is currently working on an analysis of the complete five-year cycle of HEI re-accreditation conducted between 2010 and 2015. This analysis is mostly based on processing data from HEIs' written self-evaluation reports, and will provide an overview of the field of higher education according to several basic parameters (which were ascertained during the re-accreditation in accordance with the Criteria for the assessment of quality of higher education institutions within universities and the Criteria for the assessment of quality of polytechnics and colleges).



ASHE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES



The year 2015 was also marked by a string of activities which gave ASHE a chance to apply its expertise outside of Croatia's borders. These activities included different types of cooperation achieved through direct contact with similar institutions abroad, HEIs, and various global associations interested in fostering quality culture in higher education and science; they also included a number of international projects in which ASHE was involved as a partner and which were primarily funded by EU funds, and professional and scientific conferences and seminars where ASHE representatives gave lectures or presented their papers on quality assurance in higher education and science as well as the development of the science and higher education system.

In 2015, ASHE continued to actively work on increasing the recognisability of Croatian science and higher education in the world, and to share its knowledge and experience in the implementation of different procedures of external quality assurance in science and higher education. Since it is a long-term member of several international associations and networks that deal with higher education QA, fostering academic and professional mobility, recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, internationalisation of higher education, and other topics connected with higher education and science, the year 2015 was also filled with commitments that ASHE has as a member of those associations – seminars, drawing up strategic documents, implementing project activities, etc.

In April 2015, ASHE was accepted as a full member of an international association of institutions interested in the topic of academic ranking and excellence in higher education and science – *IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence*. The purpose of this international non-profit association is to strengthen public awareness and understanding of a range of issues related to university rankings and academic excellence. Because of its orientation on the promotion of quality in higher education and science, ASHE will make a significant contribution to the work of this Association, said the president of IREG Observatory, Dr. Jan Sadlak.

MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

ASHE is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), an international association of institutions interested in the topic of academic ranking and excellence in higher education and science – IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence, and is included on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). ASHE is also a member of the International Quality Group of the US Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), an observer member of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), and a *member* of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Institutional Management in Higher Education (OECD IMHE) Forum. ASHE is a long-term member of European networks of national information centres on academic mobility and recognition – ENIC (European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres). ASHE is also a member of IAAO-a (International Association of Admissions Organisations).

NEW DOCUMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

At a conference held on May 14th and 15th in Yerevan, Armenia, the ministers of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) adopted a number of documents important for quality assurance of higher education in member states, one of which is Croatia. The most important of these documents is the revised version of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), which will serve as the basis for the new evaluation cycle conducted by ASHE, but also for the forthcoming external review of the Agency itself. The Croatian translation of the new version of ESG is available on ASHE website.

Another document adopted at the conference defines and significantly simplifies quality assurance of joint studies (it is available on EQAR webpage). This document is one of the starting points for making amendments to the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education in the part that relates to the evaluation of joint studies or cross-border cooperation. Guidelines that will serve as a specific foundation for legal amendments in this area are being drafted within the framework of a project entitled *Removing Obstacles for Cross-Border Cooperation* (ROCCO), funded from the Erasmus+ programme and coordinated by MSES in cooperation with ASHE and representatives of the academic community.

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

During 2015, ASHE hosted prominent international experts in the field of higher education and science with the aim of establishing or continuing cooperation and exchanging experience and good practice.

On the 24th March 2015, ASHE received a visit from the Consul, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of the State of Israel in Croatia, Mrs. Irit Shneor, and the Attaché for Economical and Commercial Affairs, Mrs. Maja Vučinić. With the Agency Director, prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek, they discussed the possibilities for cooperation with the Embassy of the State of Israel. The idea is to organise workshops and lectures for Croatian public, primarily targeting the academia and the business sector, which would introduce them to successful examples of technology transfers from academia to businesses in Israel. The conclusion of the meeting was that sharing the Israeli experience first-hand, providing advice as well as networking and cooperation opportunities, could serve as a good basis for developing a technology transfer system in Croatia.

This visit was a continuation of a successful cooperation with the Embassy of Israel in Croatia that began in 2013 with an academic seminar entitled Excellence in Education: A Motor for Research and Innovations. One of the prominent lectures in that seminar was held by Professor Dan Schechtman of the Israel Institute of Technology, the 2011 Nobel laureate in chemistry.



Prof. Jasmina Havranek, Ph.D., Consul of the Embassy of the State of Israel in Croatia Mrs. Irit Shneor, Economic Attaché Mrs. Maja Vučinić, and dr. sc. Josip Hrgović.

On invitation by the World Bank, the Director of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek, held a lecture during a workshop on quality assurance in higher education organised in Turkey (in May). The World Bank organised the workshop to introduce Turkish higher education stakeholders to international experiences in quality assurance. ASHE was recognized as one of the examples of good practice in establishing a quality assurance system and implementing the evaluation procedures, and thus invited to share the Croatian experience. Other lecturers included representatives of international associations and higher education institutions as well as quality assurance organisations, with the participation of the World Bank President for Turkey, Martin Raiser, and other esteemed guests.

At ASHE's invitation, a meeting of regional bodies – agencies for external higher education quality assurance, was held on 13th November 2015 in Zagreb. This meeting was organised with the aim of exchanging regional experiences in external quality assurance in higher education, disseminating information on activities and plans of those agencies, and strengthening regional cooperation in this area. The meeting raised certain issues, especially focusing on the recognition of accreditation decisions or higher education qualifications. Along with ASHE Director, Professor Jasmina Havranek, Ph.D., and other ASHE representatives, the meeting was attended by Professor Damir Boras, Ph.D., Rector of the University of Zagreb,

and Professor Ivana Čuković-Bagić, Ph.D., Vice-rector for Students, Study Programmes and Quality Management. Representatives of five regional agencies also attended the meeting: Professor Dhurata Bozo and Mrs. Majlinda Demireli from the Albanian Public Agency for Accreditation of Higher Education and Dr. Husein Nanić, Mr. Velimir Jukić and Mrs. Marina Cicović from the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency was represented by Dr.

Matjaž Štuhec, while the Serbian Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance was represented by Professor Ćemal Dolićanin, Professor Biljana Predić, Ph.D., Mrs. Sofija Pekić Quarrie, Mrs. Andrijana Tot and Mirko Savić, Ph.D. Higher Education Accreditation Agency of Republika Srpska was represented by Miroslav Bobrek, Ph.D and Mrs. Duška Radmanović. The institutions presented their plans and activities and held a round table on the challenges in higher education quality assurance in Europe and the region.



Meeting of regional QA agencies in ASHE

ASHE Director, prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek, gave a lecture in the Russian city of Omsk at the invitation of a higher education institution. Professor Havranek presented ASHE's activities and the context it operates in, its method of implementing the ESG, and its future plans and challenges. She also held a seminar for representatives of higher education institutions from Moscow and Saint Petersburg. One of the goals of the visit was to establish cooperation between Russian and Croatian higher education institutions (University of Zagreb).

In June of last year, ASHE Director, prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek, participated in a symposium entitled *25 Years of Transformation Process in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern European Countries* at the University of Hohenheim in Germany. The aim of the symposium was to open discussion on the experiences, results and future directions in the field of research and teaching among stakeholders from Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. On this occasion, the discussion revolved around reforms from the area of higher

education in the region in the last 25 years, and the challenges in the field of teaching and research in future. At the organiser's invitation, prof. dr. sc. Havranek gave a presentation on quality assurance in Croatia with an emphasis on the results of re-accreditation as an incentive for changes in the system of higher education and science.

Furthermore, at the invitation of the organiser, prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek gave a lecture entitled *Future of QA: Global Perspective - View of the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education* at a QA conference held in June 2015 in Cairo (Egypt). The conference was organised by UNESCO, DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and ANQAHE network (Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), under the patronage of the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education. The main goal of this conference was to assemble stakeholders from the field of higher education quality assurance from the region and beyond in order to discuss a joint vision and further development of quality assurance, accompanied by an exchange of experience and good international practice. There was also talk of development, trends and challenges in higher education QA, of internationalisation and mobility, national and regional qualifications frameworks, internal QA, further development and perspectives in the field of quality assurance, which was also the topic of prof. dr. sc. Havranek's presentation. Prof. Havranek presented ASHE's perspective on quality assurance as well as its experiences in implementing external evaluation procedures in Croatia.



Prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek with colleagues from Omsk

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS IN 2015

Project title	Partners	Coordinating institution	Duration	EU programme / source of funding
Competitive Croatian Higher Education for better Employment	University of Split and University College for Applied Computer Engineering	ASHE	Aug 2013 - Feb 2015	IPA
E-Quality – Linking Quality and Social Inclusion in Higher Education in Croatia	University of Rijeka, University of Zadar, The University of Applied Sciences “Marko Marulić” in Knin, Institute for Social Research, and Association for Development of Higher Education “Universitas”.	Institute for the Development of Education	Aug 2013 - Feb 2015	IPA
Development of the National Qualification Standard for Teachers as a Basis for the Implementation of a Teacher Licensing System	Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Teacher Faculty University of Zagreb, Primary School Pučišća on the Island of Brač, School of Agriculture in Zagreb. ASHE employees were also involved in the activities of the expert group within this project.	National Center for the External Evaluation of Education	Aug 2013 - Feb 2015	IPA
The Changing Role of NARICs II: Stakeholder Perspective	NARIC centres	UK Naric	May 2014 - Sept 2015	Erasmus +
Samples & Copies of Academic National DIPLOMAS – SCAN-DIPLOMAS	NARIC centres	Naric Italia - CIMEA	May 2014 - Sept 2015	Erasmus +
Enhancing the Use of Mobility Tools for Recognition	Higher education institutions, public administration and business partners from Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands and France.	Centre international d'études pédagogiques – CIEP	May 2014 – May 2016	Erasmus +
FAIR - Focus on Automatic Institutional Recognition	ENIC/NARIC centres, ministries of education, and higher education institutions from 6 European countries- Croatia, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Germany and Netherlands	NUFFIC, the Netherlands organisation for international cooperation in higher education	Dec 2014 – April 2017	Erasmus +
HEISEE - The Higher Education Initiative for Southeastern Europe	Institute for Social Research, Institute for the Development of Education, US Embassy in Zagreb	Institute of Higher Education University of Georgia	End of 2012-	US Embassy Zagreb
Removing Obstacles for Cross-Border Cooperation (ROCCO)	University of Zadar, Faculty of Food Technology and Biotechnology of the University of Zagreb	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	Nov 2014 – April 2016	Erasmus +
ALIGN (Achieving and Checking the Alignment between Academic Programmes and Qualification Framework)	Representatives of international agencies and universities	Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences	Dec 2013 – Nov 2016	TEMPUS

Table 19: European Union projects and other programmes

IPA PROGRAMME

Competitive Croatian Higher Education for Better Employment

ASHE took part in the IPA call for Further Development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework as the coordinator of the project entitled *Competitive Croatian Higher Education for Better Employment*. Our partners were the University of Split and the University College for Applied Computer Engineering "Algebra". The project was launched at the end of August 2013 and lasted for 18 months. The overall project objective was to contribute to the implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) and the reform of the Croatian higher education by developing new qualifications standards and study programmes in ICT and Physics. Specific objectives were to develop six qualifications standards and study programmes, which included the development of learning outcomes and assessment criteria and procedures, and to introduce Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as an integral part of the CROQF. The first part of the project was dedicated to developing the framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which included a study of stakeholders' attitudes towards this method of obtaining qualifications and the best European and global practices. This was accompanied by a publication, organisation of workshops and study visits on this topic. The second part of the project focused on the application of developed procedures to qualifications from the field of Physics and ICT, along with the development of qualification standards which included round tables and other types of consultation with stakeholders, as well as a pilot programme of

awarding the developed qualifications.

Project partners, the University of Split and the University College for Applied Computer Engineering "Algebra", successfully completed the most important project activity - the development of six qualification standards and study programmes in the field of Physics and ICT. These qualifications are innovative, both because of their content which represents recently emerged professions, as well as the fact that they are partial qualifications, which is a new development introduced by the CROQF. Also innovative is the method of obtaining these qualifications: instead of a traditional (short, because these are partial qualifications) study programme, they are acquired through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) of non-formal and informal learning. In other words, the candidates do not have to attend lectures, etc. at a higher education institutions, but are expected to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills either informally (independent work, on a job, etc.) or non-formally (through various courses and educational programmes which are not accredited as part of higher education). 'Study programmes' thus actually represent the description of the evaluation that candidates have to go through in order to obtain a qualification, while the service they get from HEIs is guidance and support in preparing for the evaluation and self-evaluation. As part of the pilot project, this process was applied to 50 candidates in order to test the evaluation of informal and non-formal learning which will become part of processes within the CROQF.



Final IPA RPL project conference

While evaluation programmes are based on general insights into the way that the process of validation and recognition of formal and informal learning works in Europe and the world, and in which it should work in Croatia, standards of occupations and qualifications are based on the detailed analysis of labour market needs, but also on European and global trends which are yet to be introduced to Croatia. The developed standards of occupations and qualifications as well as study programmes are available on ASHE website, but these are draft versions that must be approved in order to be included in the CROQF Register.

Final project conference was held on February 6th 2015 in Zagreb. The conference presented project results, including the publication of the Guidelines and Procedures for RPL, a survey of labour market needs, the development and validation of learning outcomes in higher education as well as the basis for the implementation of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in Croatia. In addition to presentations by local experts, participants had the opportunity to hear the experiences of international experts Ms. Margaret Cameron (Scotland) and Mr. Eduard Staudecker (Austria).

The conference also presented a short promotional film entitled Recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which is available via YouTube video channel of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, and a short brochure for students.



IPA RPL project publication

The final conference was attended by representatives of Croatian HEIs, MSES, and the labour market.

Within the same project, on the 3rd February 2015, mr. sc. Mislav Balković from the University College "Algebra" held a webinar to present the Guidelines and Procedures for RPL in higher education within CROQF, and a method of developing standards of occupations and qualifications necessary for developing formal higher education programmes within the framework of CROQF as a prerequisite for the validation and recognition of all learning outcomes, including the ones acquired in an informal and non-formal way.

External evaluation of the IPA project was conducted between January and March 2015. According to key findings, the project managed to achieve most of its planned results. Members of target groups emphasised the quality and importance of two key results, the publication of the study on non-formal and informal learning (RPL) in the EU and global context, and the guidelines and procedures for the recognition and validation of non-formal learning. The effects of the project are the strongest when they include decision makers in the sector of higher education because the project has provided them with new instruments for policy development. Higher education institutions in Croatia were given a number of tools for RPL, but legal prerequisites necessary for their implementation (some of which will require additional capacity building) still have not been achieved.

E-QUALITY - LINKING QUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN CROATIA

Within the framework of the IPA tender for grant applications - Integration of disadvantaged groups in the regular education system - the Agency for Science and Higher Education participated as a partner in the project *E-quality: Linking Quality and Social Inclusion in Higher Education in Croatia* implemented by the Institute for the Development of Education. The project involved the University of Rijeka and the University of Zadar, Polytechnic "Marko Marulić" in Knin, the Institute for Social Research and the Association for the Development of Higher Education "Universitas". Project objectives were to study the needs of disadvantaged groups of students, develop quality assurance processes that would check the fulfilment of their needs and develop a quality label in this area.

The project was concluded with a final conference entitled *How to Foster Equity and Social Inclusion at Higher Education Institutions?*. The conference was held at the University of Rijeka on Wednesday, 21st January 2015, and included more than 50 participants from all partner institutions. In addition to the project team, the seminar was attended by representatives of QA boards, teachers, administrative staff and students from all three partner HEIs. The conference presented the recommendations, tools and innovations that can help foster equity and thus contribute to the development of overall HEI quality.



Presenting the E-quality edition

Presentation of the E-quality edition, a series of six publications that take an innovative approach to the issue of equity and quality in higher education (two key policies within the Bologna process), was held in Zagreb on the 22nd April 2015 as part of the project. The edition, which was also presented at the University of Rijeka on the 16th April, includes the results of the survey that discovered institutional obstacles and incentives to study success of students from vulnerable groups (students with lower socio-economic backgrounds, students older than 25, students who study outside of their place of residence, students who work, students with health problems and student parents). The edition also contained proposals for overcoming obstacles faced by vulnerable students and ensuring equal opportunities during study. This publication series also formulated a unique proposal to develop a quality label with the aim of rewarding and motivating institutions that achieve valuable results in strengthening equity and quality.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATION STANDARD FOR TEACHERS AS THE BASIS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHER LICENSING SYSTEM

ASHE employees participated in the project entitled *Development of the National Qualification Standard for Teachers as the Basis for the Implementation of Teacher Licensing System*, funded from the IPA call Further Development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework, and coordinated by the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education. Partners in this project were: the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Teacher Faculty of the University of Zagreb, Primary School Pučišća on the Island of Brač, and the School of Agriculture in Zagreb. The final conference of this project was held in the Congress Centre Forum in Zagreb on the 17th February 2015. The conference was attended by over 70 participants, including the Minister of Science, Education and Sports and his associates, as well as representatives of the most important educational institutions in Croatia. The conference presented the proposal of the qualification standards for teachers, the methodology used in its drafting, and the role of standards in teacher licensing, and highlighted the project's contribution to the development of CROQF-a.

THE EUROPEAN UNION LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMMES (LLP)

CeQuInt

Certificate for the Quality of Internationalisation – CeQuInt is an 18-month project which started in September 2012. The project is coordinated by European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) with the aim of developing a methodology for evaluating the internationalisation of higher education and developing a quality stamp for institutions which managed to develop international exchange and cooperation for the benefit of their students, staff and local community. The project included 12 European QA agencies - from Austria, Germany, Slovenia, France, Poland, Spain and Finland – and organisations that specialise in the internationalisation of higher education - ACA and DAAD.

Representatives of partner institutions met at ASHE on the 13th January 2015. ASHE representatives also took part in awarding the certificate for internationalisation to the integrated English language study of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zagreb, which was held as part of the final CEQuInt conference on the 26th and 27th February in Paris.

The certificate for successful internationalisation was awarded to the University of Zagreb Medical study programme in English based on the result of international evaluation. The panel visited this HEI and,

by talking with all stakeholders, reviewed the programme quality with the focus on learning outcomes connected to intercultural competencies. This is a new type of evaluation that tries to view internationalisation as a specific component of educating students in order to live and work in a globalised society.

In the future, this kind of certification will become part of regular processes of partner agencies. Until then, HEIs that wish to improve their internationalisation can take advantage of the developed evaluation documents and find inspiration in the database of good practice.



Final CeQuInt project conference

ERASMUS + PROGRAMMES

The Changing Role of NARICs II: Stakeholder Perspective

As a continuation of the project Changing Role of NARICs I, The Changing Role of NARICs II: Stakeholder Perspective proposes to build upon the findings of the previous project as well as the experience of NARIC centres and key stakeholders in the recognition of qualifications. The aim of this project is to develop new international guidelines for the recognition of qualifications, acknowledging examples of best practice and the experience of expert practitioners in recognition with particular emphasis on transnational education, non-formal / informal learning, the role of learning outcomes and the use of emerging qualifications frameworks in the process of recognition. Another goal of this project is to enhance awareness of EU initiatives amongst stakeholders whilst acknowledging the complex and varying roles of each ENIC/NARIC centre and the added value they can provide to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Project holder is UK NARIC, and ASHE's ENIC/NARIC Office is one of the partners.

Samples & Copies of Academic National DIPLOMAS – SCAN-DIPLOMAS

National ENIC/NARIC Office of the Agency for Science and Higher Education was a partner in the Samples & Copies of Academic National DIPLOMAS – SCAN-DIPLOMAS project, which was coordinated by NARIC Italia – CIMEA.

The project SCAN-DIPLOMAS aimed to collect samples of national degree certificates from participating ENIC-NARIC network members. The electronic database established as part of the project contains over 2200 samples of national diplomas from HEIs in 15 participating countries: Belarus, Belgium – Flemish Community, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. The database can only be accessed by authorised ENIC-NARIC personnel from 55 countries, and has security features that protect the confidentiality and integrity of data.

The database is a useful instrument for improving the recognition of qualification as:

- instrument of control for diminishing fraud or misunderstandings during the recognition process
- source of information for all ENIC and NARIC centres on the national academic qualifications from other countries, which will increase coherence and make processes more transparent.

SCAN-D project was funded by the European Commission within the Erasmus + programme (Action 3, Support for Policy Reform). The project began in July 2014, and ended in September 2015.

Enhancing the Use of Mobility Tools for Recognition

In line with the Europe 2020 strategy and the European Higher Education Area, the main objective of the *Enhancing the Use of Mobility Tools for Recognition* project is to promote the existing European recognition tools, and facilitate academic and professional mobility of students and workers. The use of mobility and recognition tools will increase transparency of foreign qualifications and facilitate a fairer recognition, thus enhancing the chances to improve employability across Europe. Project activities include seminars for HEIs, public administration bodies and employers in the participating countries: Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands and France. National trainings (theoretical and practical modules) and seminars will be aimed at promoting and sharing good practices related to the use of the existing mobility and recognition tools, such as the European qualifications framework, national qualification frameworks, Europass, Diploma Supplement, ECTS credits and the EAR-HEI manual. ASHE National ENIC/NARIC Office is one of the partners in this project, which is coordinated by the French CIEP. The duration of the project is two years.

As part of the project, ASHE organised a conference in Zagreb entitled *Enhancing the Use of Mobility Tools for Recognition of Qualifications*. Furthermore, an international seminar was held in May 2015, in Sèvres, France. This seminar was also one of project activities which included representatives of HEIs, public administration bodies and employers and which, as a form of training, was aimed at promoting and exchanging good practices of using the existing mobility and recognition tools (such as the European Qualifications Framework, national qualification frameworks, Europass, Diploma Supplement, ECTS credits and the EAR-HEI manual), but also at fostering synergy and exchange of good practice between different stakeholders on the national and European level. This international seminar was attended by representatives of ASHE, Croatian HEIs, and Croatian chambers and other professional associations.

The project is scheduled to end in mid-2016.

Focus on Automatic Institutional Recognition

The objective of the *Focus on Automatic Institutional Recognition project* (FAIR) is to improve European recognition as practiced by higher education institutions by implementing elements of automatic recognition. Automatic recognition is a fairly new concept that was explored on the European level by the Pathfinder group on automatic recognition in preparation of the Bologna Ministerial Conference in Yerevan 2015.

The measure to be tested is the introduction of automatic recognition in institutional recognition procedures. FAIR wants to find the best way for implementing recommendations in institutional recognition practices, making use of the collected good practice of the European Area of Recognition (EAR) manuals. Automatic recognition should simplify institutional recognition decisions by standardising substantial part of the recognition procedure. The experience and recommendations on how to do this at national level will be made available by the FAIR project team for all EHEA countries, which will lead to faster and smoother recognition decisions. ASHE's National ENIC/NARIC office is one of the partners in this project that is coordinated by the Dutch NUFFIC. The duration of the project is 28 months.

ROCCO

The ROCCO project (*Removing Obstacles for Cross-Border Cooperation*) was initiated by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports as part of a special tender within the Erasmus + programme, and is implemented in cooperation with ASHE. The aim of the project, which lasts from October 2014 to April 2016, is to adapt the legal framework of Croatian science and higher education to cross-border cooperation of HEIs – primarily in order to increase the number of joint studies, but also to facilitate and regulate other forms of cross-border cooperation and transnational higher education. After training and consultation with all interested stakeholders, the project should result in legislative changes as well as practical instructions for higher education institutions that will help them become involved in a large number of existing forms of cross-border cooperation.

One of project activities was a seminar, held on the 14th January 2015 on the topic of cross-border cooperation and joint studies. The participants discussed further steps in developing regulations and other documents in the area of quality assurance of joint studies and other forms of cross-border cooperation. In addition to representatives of MSES and ASHE, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, and Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, the seminar was also attended by the representative of the Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency from Hannover, Dagmar Ridder, who presented an example of German cross-border cooperation and joint studies.

The project included the establishment of a working group for drafting regulations on joint studies and cross-border cooperation in higher education. During 2015, this group held seven meetings on the proposal for a model of initial accreditation and re-accreditation of joint studies, and draft amendments to the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education in the part that relates to joint studies and cross-border cooperation of HEIs. The working group also discussed the structure of guidelines for the development, accreditation and implementation of joint studies. Members of the working group analysed the guidelines for the development, accreditation and implementation of joint studies from different angles, and emphasised the potential challenges, advantages and obstacles which HEIs could face during their implementation.

Members of the working group participated in a study visit to Graz and Vienna from the 12th - 14th May 2015. The purpose of the study visit was to get information on the Austrian experience in developing joint studies and cross-border cooperation, and exchange experiences and practices. During the study visit, the working group met with prof. dr. Horst Bischof, Vice Rector for Research at Graz University of Technology, mag. phil. Sabine Prem, Director of the Office for International Relations and Mobility Programmes at Graz University of Technology, dr. Achim Hopbach, Managing Director of the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, dr. Hannes Diem, representative of the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy in Austria, and mag. Monika Kindl, Deputy Head of the International Office of the University of Vienna. Experience gained

during the study visit will help with drafting national regulations and guidelines for the development of joint studies.

Furthermore, the working group took part in the *Peer learning Event on the Assessment and Demonstration of Achieved Learning Outcomes*, organised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in the Hague, Netherlands, on the 29th and 30th October 2015. The event was hosted by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), which is tasked with assuring the quality of Dutch higher education. At the event, international experts from the Netherlands, UK, Sweden and Austria discussed their experiences in using learning outcomes, creating study programmes, improving the process of learning and teaching at HEIs, and conducting re-accreditation cycles, and noted that learning outcomes should be considered as the basic element of the Bologna reform.

The 10th *Quality Assurance Forum* was held in London from 19th to 21st November 2015, and gathered higher education stakeholders working in quality assurance (HEIs, agencies, public administration bodies, student representatives). The conference was accompanied by plenary lectures, parallel plenary lectures, workshops and presentations on different topics. Many workshops and presentations dealt with questions of assuring quality of cross-border cooperation in higher education, which gave members of the working group a chance to exchange experiences in cross-border cooperation and the development of joint studies, and to gain insight into examples of good practice in the EHEA countries.

OTHER PROGRAMMES

HEISEE

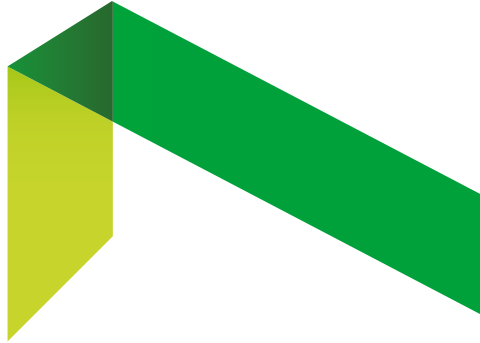
The implementation of activities launched at the end of 2012 within the *Initiative for Higher Education in South-Eastern Europe* (HEISEE) continued in 2015. HEISEE is a developmental project initiated by the Institute of Higher Education of the University of Georgia, USA, whose initial phase is carried out jointly by the Zagreb Institute for Social Research, Institute for Development of Education (NGO), ASHE and the United States of America Embassy in Zagreb. The initiative's long-term goal is to expand this collaborative model throughout the region by utilizing carefully constituted partnerships with other countries in South-Eastern Europe and the appropriate institutes,

agencies, and NGOs within these countries, which might logically fit its mission. In so doing, HEISEE strives to build capacity within the academic community throughout the region by effectively bringing together resident experts as well as those from the international community. A new project - *Implementing Trial Module from the Study Program in Higher Education Management and Governance* – has been developed within HEISEE in September 2014. The new study programme for university leaders (management structures), administrative and academic staff which will be offered at the University of Rijeka has also been developed within this project. The first workshop within this pilot programme, on the topic of strategic management of HEIs, was held from 10th -13th February 2015 at the University of Rijeka, and was attended by representatives of all Croatian HEIs as well as some rectors and vice-rectors.

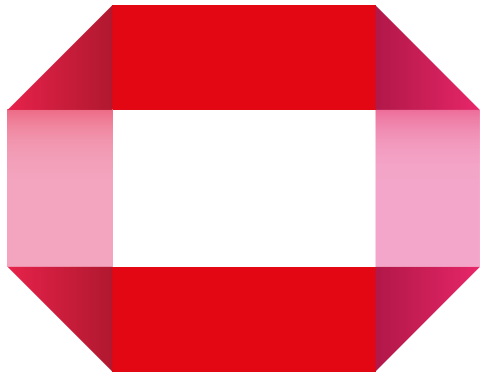
CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS IN 2015

- Upon invitation by the organiser, Director of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek, held a presentation entitled *Establishment of European QA Agency – Case of Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education* in May 2015 in Ankara, Turkey.
- Upon invitation by the organiser, ASHE Director, prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek, held a presentation entitled *Future of QA: Global Perspective - View of the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education* at the conference on quality assurance in the Arab region which took place on the 7th and 8th June 2015 in Cairo (Egypt).
- ASHE Director, prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek, gave a lecture in the Russian city of Omsk in October. Invited by a higher education institution, she introduced the work of the Croatian Agency and its context, the method of implementing the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), and future plans and challenges (*Implementation of ESG in National Context – ASHE Perspective*).
- During the scientific symposium *Implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework in the Field of Law and Social Work*, held in September 2015 at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb, ASHE presented a paper *Evaluation of Study Programmes in Light of Croatian Qualifications Framework* by prof. dr. sc. Jasmina Havranek, mr. sc. Sandra Bezjak and mr. sc. Emita Blagdan. Participants had a chance to hear about the experience in external evaluation procedures conducted by ASHE, the related implementation and evaluation of achieved learning outcomes at Croatian HEIs, plans for improving the procedure of external evaluation with a stronger emphasis on learning outcomes, and examples of good international practices.
- At the first regional conference of evaluators of Western Balkans, held in November 2015, mr. sc. Sandra Bezjak, ASHE's Assistant Director, gave a lecture entitled *External Evaluations in the System of Science and HE of the Republic of Croatia*.
- ASHE participated in the annual EUNIS (*European University Information Systems organisation*) conference, which took place in June 2015 in Dundee, Scotland, with a paper entitled *Rich Internet Applications in Higher Education Admissions Systems* by Mirko Stanić and Igor Drvodelić. The paper was presented within the Information & Communications Technology (Systems) thematic unit, and gave an overview and possibilities of using new technologies for developing a higher education application system.
- ASHE participated in the 15th Croatian Conference on Quality and the 6th symposium of the Croatian Society for Quality, held in Primošten on the 7th – 9th May 2015. Dr. sc. Vesna Dodiković-Jurković gave a presentation on *Quality Assurance in Higher Education System in Croatia*.
- As part of the Higher Education Institutions Conference HEIC 2015, *Quality & Governance in Higher Education: Leadership in the Global Context*, which is traditionally organised by the Zagreb School of Economics and Management in Dubrovnik every May, dr. sc. Vesna Dodiković-Jurković gave a presentation *Quality Assurance as Catalyst for Change during the PLENARY III: Quality in the Global Context*.
- During the workshop for training teachers at Military Engineering and Military Leadership and Management studies, organised in Kovčanj on Mali Lošinj island from 10th – 12th September 2015, dr. sc. Vesna Dodiković-Jurković and mr. sc. Sandra Bezjak gave a presentation *External Quality Assurance in Higher Education – European and National Context*.
- As an active member of the umbrella European quality assurance organisation, ENQA, the Agency took part in their conferences and meetings in 2015. Thus ASHE representatives participated in the ENQA workshop on QA and e-learning seminar, held in Barcelona on the 10th and 11th December 2015, as well as in ENQA members' forums in Spain's Cordoba (16th and 17th April) and London (19th – 21st November). We should also mention that the 6th ENQA General Assembly took place on the 23rd October 2015 in Dublin, which also marked the 15th anniversary of ENQA's existence.

- As a member of the *International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education* (INQAAHE), ASHE participated in INQAAHE conference *Changing Landscape of Higher Education: New Demands on Quality Assurance*, held in Chicago in April 2015.
- ASHE representative participated in the 25th EURASHE conference entitled *Challenges for the Future*, from 15th - 17th April 2015 in Lisbon, Portugal, and in the *Innovative PHE: New Trends for the Future* seminar, held on the 14th and 15th October 2015 in Warsaw, Poland.
- Representatives of the ENIC/NARIC Office attended the 22nd Annual Joint Meeting of the *ENIC and NARIC Networks* held in Bergenz, Austria, from the 7th - 9th June 2015, and organised by the European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO, and ENIC-NARIC Austria in collaboration with the Region *Vorarlberg*.
- As part of the ERASMUS + project *Enhancing the Use of Mobility Tools for Recognition*, representatives of the ENIC/NARIC Office participated in an international seminar organised by the Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques (CIEP) on the 8th May 2015 in Sèvres, France.
- ASHE representative participated in the round table discussion of the *New Economic Policy of Kazakhstan "Nurly Zhol"*, the Path to the Future, organised by the College of International Relations and Diplomacy Dag Hammarskjöld in Zagreb on the 8th April 2015.
- ASHE representative attended the *Evaluation of Science and Innovation Policies* at the University of Manchester, Manchester Institute of Innovation Research from the 31st May to 6th June 2015.
- ASHE representative participated in the 2nd MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum *Towards Transformative Higher Education in the MENA Region: The Role of Innovation in the 21st Century Digital and Knowledge based Society*, organised by the Center for Learning Innovations and Customized Knowledge Solutions (CLICKS) in Abu Dhabi from the 9th to 11th November 2015.
- On the 3rd December in Den Haag, Netherlands, the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) organised a seminar on the national implementation of the European QA approach to joint studies, which was also attended by ASHE representatives.



INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE



During 2015, important new developments have taken place in the area of quality assurance. Ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area have in May of 2015 accepted the new Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). All the stakeholders in higher education are expected to fully implement the new ESG and align their activities accordingly. In 2015, a new edition of ISO 9001 was also published, introducing a number of changes. Organisations that have a certified quality management system in line with ISO 9001 are expected to implement these changes in the following period.

Since ASHE has an integrated quality assurance system, made in accordance with both ESG and ISO 9001:2008, harmonisation with new versions of both standards has begun in 2015. Annual internal audit of quality assurance system was carried out, and functionality of various internal quality assurance mechanisms evaluated. Special attention was given to employee satisfaction survey analysis. A new questionnaire was developed and implemented, revised to include additional items for measuring employee satisfaction, in line with the work of ENQA's Working Group III on Staff Development, in which ASHE actively participates.

In addition, the following activities were carried out during 2015: implementation analysis of the ASHE annual operational plan, efficiency analysis of the implemented external evaluation procedures, analysis of the panel members' survey, and assessment of the level of implementation of anti-corruption measures and to what extent are organisational activities in line with set ethical principles (which included ASHE employees, members of the Accreditation Council and members of the expert panels). Analysis of the implemented improvements and their contribution to the overall development of ASHE activities was also carried out.

In 2015, new Quality Policy was adopted, implementation of risk management initiated, and new Strategy for the period 2016-2020

adopted and published on ASHE website. ASHE also monitored the implementation of the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology.

External certification body Det Norske Veritas GL (DNV) carried out an external evaluation and recertification of ASHE in September of 2015, in accordance with the requirements of ISO 9001: 2008.

The established quality assurance system was assessed as effective and fit for purpose, and ASHE was awarded with a certificate for a period of three years. ASHE started with preparations and drafting of a self-evaluation for the external evaluation by ENQA, with the aim of renewing its full membership in ENQA and EQAR, in accordance with new ESG.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

As a responsible public administration body, ASHE has the obligation to regularly inform on its conducted activities and plans, and to give all interested parties (especially representatives of the media) access to information from its jurisdiction.

With the aim of improving communication with the academic community, citizens, the media, other public administration bodies and the interested public, ASHE website <https://www.azvo.hr/en/> has been rearranged for easier reference and to make important documents more accessible.

In 2015, ASHE continued to regularly and proactively publish news on its evaluation procedures, international projects, applications to higher education study programmes, participation in conferences, workshops, etc. ASHE also published news from higher education institutions, as well as from higher education and science in Croatia and the world.

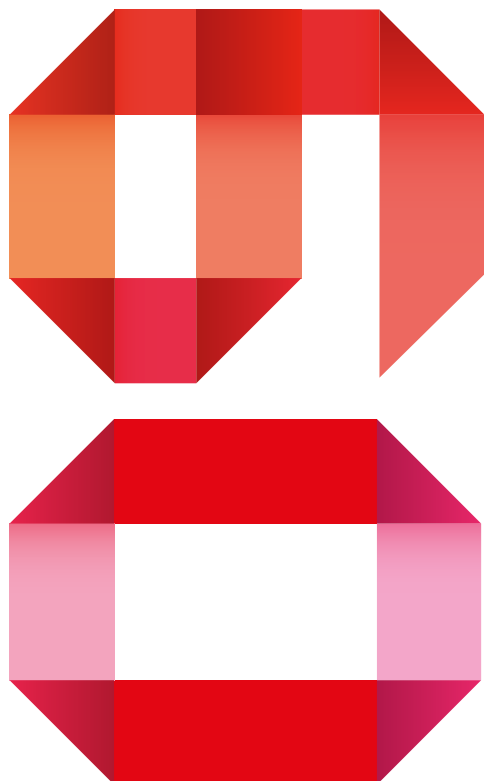
This news is also shared on social networks – ASHE Facebook and Twitter pages. Being present on social networks is important for improving communication, especially with current and future students who increasingly use these channels to direct their questions to ASHE.

ASHE website also contains information on the Agency, its structure, procedures, and projects, final reports of expert panels and other information.

Furthermore, ASHE published its *2014 Annual Report and the 2015 Activities Plan*, in printed and electronic form and in both Croatian and the English language. In order to inform on its conducted activities, ASHE sent this report to all relevant stakeholders – higher education institutions, scientific organisations, Croatian government and Parliament, competent Ministry and others.

In accordance with the Activities plan, ASHE published two editions of an electronic bulletin in the Croatian and English language whose purpose is to provide current information and announce future plans. Considering its membership in European QA associations, ASHE also published its news in electronic bulletins of ENQA, CEENQA and INQAAHE, which are delivered to all their members and partners.

Transparent information dissemination on its work will continue to be one of ASHE's priorities, together with further improvement of communication activities on all levels.



FINANCIAL REPORT

ASHE is funded by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

Its revenue in 2015 was comprised of 12 accounts:

- A621155 – Administration and general transactions
- A621179 – National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development
- A621182 – Council of Polytechnics and Colleges
- A621186 – Evaluation of scientific institutions
- A621187 – Evaluation of higher education institutions
- A621190 – External audit of higher education institutions and scientific organisations
- A621191 – Monitoring employment of graduates
- A621192 – Central Applications Office
- A867004 – Committee for Ethics in Science and Higher Education
- K621178 – Equipment and maintenance
- K621194 – National Information System for Applications to Higher Education Institutions
- T867003 – IPA project: Competitive Croatian Higher Education for Better Employability

Based on financial reports, total revenue in 2015 amounted to 22,429,891 kn.

It consisted of:

- own source revenue – 652,835 kn
- smaller projects funded by the European Commission and other revenue – 739,871 kn
- IPA project funded by the EU 1,719,402 kn
- state budget resources for 2015 – 19,317,782 kn

In 2015, ASHE paid 5,290,490.00 kn into to state budget for taxes, surtaxes and contributions paid on salaries, temporary service contracts and author's contracts (27% of state budget resources for 2015).

ASHE expenditure in 2015 amounted to 22,167,045 kn, and consisted of 20,374,307 kn of business expenditure (from that, expenditure for the IPA project amounted to 726,392 kn) and 1,792,738 kn of expenditure for acquisition of non-financial assets (out of which 1,070,303 kn went for the acquisition of non-financial assets for the IPA project).

	EXPENSES	kn
A	Business expenditure (1+2+3+4)	20.374.307
1.	<i>Staff expenditure</i>	8.497.514
1.1.	Salaries (gross)	7.197.857
1.2.	Salary contributions	1.230.664
1.3.	Other staff costs	68.993
2.	<i>Material costs</i>	11.368.109
2.1.	Travel costs and other remunerations	2.671.282
2.2.	Material and energy expenditure	328.968
2.3.	Service costs	7.685.752
2.4.	Other costs	682.107
3.	<i>Financial expenditure</i>	35.919
4.	<i>Other costs (IPA project)</i>	472.765
B	Acquisition of non-financial assets	1.792.738
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE (A+B)	22.167.045

Table 20: ASHE 2015 expenditure

A. Business expenditure

Item 1. Staff expenditure includes:

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

Item 2. Material costs include:

- 2.1. Travel costs and other remunerations
- 2.2. Material and energy expenditure
- 2.3. Service costs
- 2.4. Other costs.

Item 2.1. Travel costs and other remunerations include:

- travel costs and remunerations for members of expert panels and professional bodies (as listed in item 2.3.),remunerations for employees' transport costs
- costs of professional trainings, seminars and other educational programmes.

Item 2.2. Material and energy expenditure:

- office material, energy, material for current and investment maintenance.

Item 2.3. Service costs:

- contracts for maintenance and upgrading of the NISpVU system (National Information System for Applications to Study

Programmes in Croatia) and the National Information System of Application and Enrolment into Secondary Schools (NISAESS), maintenance and upgrading of the information system MOZVAG, information equipment maintenance costs and archiving;

- maintenance of other information systems - Centrix system for administration and data management, IP telephone centre and contact centre, software for financial administration, and other programmes;
- rent (offices, spaces for seminars, workshops, training courses and sessions of committees, working groups and other bodies working with the Agency);
- intellectual services:
 - temporary work contracts with Croatian and foreign members of expert panels working on external quality assurance procedures implemented by the Agency (initial accreditation, re-accreditation, thematic evaluation of higher education institutions and research organisation, scientific centres of excellence, and external audits);
 - temporary work contracts with members of professional and administrative bodies working with the Agency (members of the Accreditation Council, NCSHETD, Committee for Ethics in Science and Higher Education, Scientific Field Committees, Scientific Area Councils, CPC, and other committees established in accordance with the work plan and as required);
- student work for Central Applications Office (manning the help-desk during applications to study programmes), for Scientific Field Committees (preparing information on elected scientists

and conducted procedures of election to scientific grades in the period between 2010 and 2014, as well as providing the same for NCSHETD), for the Department of Higher Education (entering data from self-evaluation reports into the information system in order to better process the data and perform an analysis of the five-year re-accreditation cycle), translation and editing, etc.;

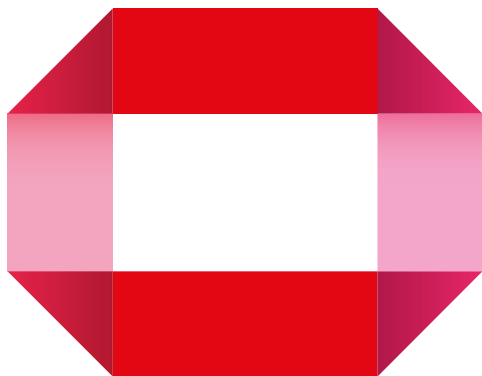
- telephone, postage (Scientific Field Committees, ENIC/NARIC, SPU) and transport costs;
- promotion and information services (annual report, leaflets and materials for conferences, and other Agency events);
- communal services;
- design and printing costs, other services.

Item 2.4. Other costs:

- costs of the Agency's Management Board
- insurance premium
- membership fees-domestic and foreign.

B. Acquisition of non-financial assets:

- software licences
- investment for computer programmes
- office, computer and communication equipment, equipment for the maintenance of heating and ventilation system, etc.
- furniture, etc.



ACTIVITY PLAN FOR 2016

- conducting initial accreditation for performing higher education activity upon request
- finalising the re-accreditation of four higher education institutions in accordance with the 2015 Activity Plan
- conducting external evaluations outside Croatia
- conducting thematic evaluation upon request



- finalising the external audit procedures of HEIs in accordance with the Activity Plan for 2015 and 2016
- conducting activities from the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology
- supporting Croatian HEIs in the implementation of CROQF and the new ESG
- doing a complete analysis of the first cycle of external evaluations
- developing an improved, sustainable model of external evaluations for the next cycle
- creating and adopting a new re-accreditation model in cooperation with other stakeholders in the system of higher education and science
- reconstructing the MOZVAG system
- performing an analysis of the existing system of higher education with recommendations for further improvement
- developing the procedure of external evaluation for entering study programmes in the CROQF Register
- conducting the re-accreditation of postgraduate university (doctoral) studies
- monitoring graduate employability
- monitoring student satisfaction with study programmes on the national level
- providing expert and administrative support to the work of strategic and expert bodies in the system of science and higher education (NCSHETD, Committee for Ethics in Science and Higher Education, Council of Polytechnics and Colleges, Field Committees for Appointment to Scientific-Teaching and Teaching Grades at Polytechnics and Colleges, Scientific Field Committees for Appointment to Scientific Grades, Scientific and Artistic Area Councils, and the Science and Higher Education Funding Council)
- participating in ongoing international projects and applying for new ones
- developing human potentials – LLL (educating ASHE employees)
- educational activities – the education of expert panels which conduct procedures of external evaluation and thematic education of HEIs and scientific organisations, organising conferences, seminars and workshops
- complete analysis of trainings conducted during the first cycle of external evaluations
- establishing a national network of QA units at higher education institutions
- establishing a single ASHE database with the most important information from the system of higher education and science
- improving the integrated internal system of quality assurance in accordance with the new ESG and the ISO 9001, as well as with new models of external evaluations
- external evaluation of ASHE and renewing the membership in ENQA and EQAR
- improving NISpVU
- introducing a centralised system of application to graduate study programmes
- developing a ranking system of candidates for enrolment to study programmes
- collecting and analysing data of secondary schools candidates who are not covered by existing national information systems

- cooperating with members of the Committee for Improving the Enrolment Procedure at Higher Education Institutions
- conducting the procedure of application to undergraduate, graduate and integrated study programmes at Croatian HEIs
- informing candidates about enrolment to HEIs in Croatia
- studij.hr webpage is being expanded to include a module called *Attractiveness of study programmes by area*, which will provide a clear overview of the strain on particular study programme areas and a detailed overview by parameters such as: the number of studies, total enrolment quota, the number of applications, the number of first choices, etc.
- Developing a studij.hr mobile application that candidates will be able to download to their smart phones in order to keep better track of information important for applying to study programmes
- Preparing and organising the 6th meeting of IAAO members (International Association of Admissions Organisations) which will take place in Croatia in May 2016
- recognition of foreign higher education qualifications
- providing information on the national education system, foreign education systems and the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications
- providing information on the recognition of foreign professional qualifications
- processing data and producing statistics and analytics on the level of the system
- active cooperation with external stakeholders (MSES, The Education, Science and Culture Committee of the Croatian Parliament, Croatian Rectors' Conference, CPC, State Archives, Croatian Employment Service, Ministry of Public Administration, etc.)
- cooperating with institutions from the public and private sector as well as with non-governmental and non-profit organisations
- providing IT support to ASHE business processes
- presentations at expert conferences
- promotional activities.

GLOSSARY

ACCREDITATION COUNCIL – ASHE's expert body, composed of representatives of the system of higher education and science, business community and non-governmental organisations.

ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION – ASHE's independent expert opinion adopted on the basis of conducted evaluation and sent to the Ministry in charge of science and higher education that decides on the outcome of the evaluation procedure.

ACCREDITED STUDY PROGRAMMES – study programmes which, after the conducted re-accreditation procedure, receive MSES' licence that confirms the compliance with prescribed conditions.

CENTRAL APPLICATIONS OFFICE (CAO) – national information centre for applications to study programmes at higher education institutions in Croatia. CAO combines activities related to applications to study programmes and those related to compliance with the requirements for enrolment at higher education institutions. CAO also handles applications of candidates coming from outside the regular Croatian educational system for enrolment into the first grade of the secondary school.

CROATIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (CQF) – instrument which defines the entire system of qualifications on all educational levels in Croatia through standards of qualifications that are based on learning outcomes and harmonised with the needs of the labour market, individuals and the society.

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION (ENQA) – umbrella European association for quality assurance in higher education whose primary task is taking care of the quality of higher education in the entire European Higher Education Area.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION – the process whereby a specialized agency collects data, information, and evidence about an institution, a particular unit of a given institution, or a core activity of an institution, in order to make a statement about its quality. External evaluation is carried out by a team of external experts, i. e. representatives of the academic community or experts in a particular area from other socio-economic branches.

FIELD COMMITTEES FOR APPOINTMENT TO SCIENTIFIC-TEACHING AND TEACHING GRADES AT POLYTECHNICS AND COLLEGES – issue opinion on whether applicants meet the minimal conditions for appointment into teaching grades.

FINAL REPORT OF THE EXPERT PANEL – written by the expert panel following the site-visit to the institution under evaluation. The report contains quality grade of the evaluated institution, which is based on materials submitted by the HEI and insights from the site-visit. Quality grade is given by each member of the expert committee on a separate template, which serve to calculate the average grade. The report should also mention recommendations for improvement. The panel's final report and the optional comment of the higher education institution are sent to the Accreditation Council.

FOLLOW-UP – in cases where the outcome of the re-accreditation is a letter of expectation, the Accreditation Council determines the period for the follow-up. After the end of that period, higher education institution sends a report about the measures taken to ASHE. On the basis of this report, the Accreditation Council analyses to what extent has the higher education institution implemented recommendations for improvement, and publishes its report.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – higher education institutions in Croatia are universities (with their constituent units – faculties and art academies), polytechnics and colleges. University is an institution that organizes and delivers university studies, and can also organise and deliver professional studies. Polytechnics and colleges are institutions that organise and deliver professional studies.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS' RE-ACCREDITATION PLAN – re-accreditation is carried out in accordance with the annual plan determined by ASHE's Accreditation Council and published on the website www.azvo.hr.

INITIAL ACCREDITATION – procedure of external quality evaluation of new institutions and/or new study programmes whose aim is to determine whether they meet the necessary requirements and standards. The outcome of this procedure is the accreditation recommendation for the purpose of issuance of license to higher education institutions for performing higher education activity and/or delivering study programmes, and the issuance of licence to scientific organisations for performing scientific activity.

INTERNAL EVALUATION – procedure of systematic gathering of administrative data and students' opinions, followed by moderated interviews with lecturers and students, which results in a self-evaluation report. Basically, self-evaluation represents collective institutional reflection and an opportunity for quality enhancement.

LEARNING OUTCOMES – competencies that a person acquires through learning and proves after the learning procedure; learning outcomes describe what a student should know, understand and be able to do on successful completion of the learning process.

LICENCE – administrative document issued by MSES on the basis of conducted evaluation which has determined that the evaluated institution meets the conditions for performing activity and/or delivering study programmes.

MOZVAG – information system which supports ASHE's external quality assurance procedures. In addition to ASHE, other users of the Mozvag system are Croatian higher education institutions, NCSHETD, and numerous domestic and foreign reviewers, reporters and auditors.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE, HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT (NCSHETD) – the highest expert body which takes care of the development and quality of all scientific activities and the system of science, higher education and technological development in Croatia.

NATIONAL ENIC/NARIC OFFICE – ASHE's information centre on academic mobility and the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM OF APPLICATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (NISpVU) – system which handles the entire process of application to study programmes, or rather higher education institutions in Croatia. The system contains information on secondary school grades, State Matura exam results, categorisation of athletes, results of national and international academic competitions and other special achievements of all candidates, regardless of where and when they finished secondary school. This data forms the basis for the development of rankings used by higher education institutions to enrol students.

NETWORK OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES – strategic document that contains guidelines and criteria for the establishment of higher education institutions and study programmes, adopted by the Croatian Parliament at the proposal of the then National Council for Higher Education.

QUALITY (in higher education) – a multidimensional concept which pertains to contextual settings of an educational model, institution's mission and goals, and specific standards of a given system, education institution, study programme or scientific area.

QUALITY ASSURANCE – continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institution or programme. Many systems differentiate between internal quality assurance (e.g. intra-institutional practice with the purpose of monitoring and improving the quality of higher education) and external quality assurance (e.g. within or above the institutional scheme of quality assurance of higher education institutions and study programmes).

QUALITY GRADE – awarded by the expert panel on the basis of standards set in the documents Criteria for the Assessment of Quality of Higher Education Institutions within Universities or the Criteria for the Assessment of Quality of Polytechnics and Colleges.

RE-ACCREDITATION CYCLE – all public and private higher education institutions, as well as all research organisation listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations, are subject to re-accreditation which is conducted in five-year cycles. First re-accreditation cycle began in the academic year 2010/2011 and is expected to finish in the academic year 2015/2016, when a new cycle will begin.

RE-ACCREDITATION MODEL – Croatia has a combined model of re-accreditation which investigates two elements: compliance with the minimal academic quality threshold and the quality grade. The procedure assesses whether institutions have processes and mechanisms for self-evaluation and continuous improvement of programmes as well as all other institutional segments.

RE-ACCREDITATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – external evaluation procedure that assesses compliance with minimal requirements (academic threshold) and gives a quality grade. The goal of the re-accreditation is to determine whether the evaluated higher education institution meets the minimum criteria prescribed 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.

Re-accreditation outcomes:

- issuing confirmation on compliance with conditions for continued activity or part of activity,
- denial of license for activity or part of activity,
- issuing a letter of expectation with the deadline for resolving deficiencies of up to 3 years.

RE-ACCREDITATION OF SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATIONS – the procedure of re-accreditation of scientific organisations listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations.

RE-ACCREDITATION OF SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATIONS OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE – scientific organisations listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations that are not universities or their constituents, higher education institutions or public research

institutes are subject to period re-accreditation every 5 years. These are scientific organisations founded by the Republic of Croatia, private scientific organisations and other legal entities listed in the Register of Scientific Organisations. The goal of the re-accreditation is to determine the compliance with conditions for continued scientific activity, which is a prerequisite for future funding from the state budget.

REGISTER OF SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATIONS – maintained by MSES; entry is based on the Licence for Performing Scientific Activity.

REGULATED PROFESSION – professional activity or group of professional activities, access to which or the pursuit of which is subject to the possession of specific professional qualifications, as well as professional activity or group of professional activities pursued by members of professional organisations with a professional title.

SCIENTIFIC CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (SCE) – scientific organisation, its constituent unit or a group of scientists whose originality, importance and relevance of research results puts them among the best organisations or groups in the world within their scientific discipline.

SCIENTIFIC FIELD COMMITTEES – take part in the appointment to scientific grades in accordance with the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education and accompanying regulation.

SELF-EVALUATION – document produced by the institution under evaluation in line with the Instructions for Self-Evaluation of Higher Education Institution. The prepared self-evaluation is sent to all members of the expert panel, who are obliged to study it and prepare comments on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the institution under evaluation.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG) – an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance in higher education that are used in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

SYNTHESIS – on the basis of expert panels' reports, ASHE prepares syntheses whose purpose is to highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of a particular scientific area, and come up with recommendations for the improvement of quality of the entire system.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASHE – Agency for Science and Higher Education

CAO – Central Applications Office

CEENQA – Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

CPC – Council of Polytechnics and Colleges

CROQF – Croatian Qualifications Framework

ECA – European Consortium for Accreditation

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

ENIC – European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility

ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

EQAR – European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

ESG – Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

MSES – Ministry of Science, Education and Sports

NARIC – National Academic Recognition Information Centres

NCHS – National Council for Higher Education

NCS – National Council for Science

NCSHETD – National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development

NISpVU – National Information System of Application to Higher Education Institutions

QAS – Quality Assurance System

SAC – Scientific Area Council

SCE – Scientific Centres of Excellence

SFC – Scientific Field Committee

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