

AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Agency for Science and Higher Education is an independent institution of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. Its goal is to protect public interest in the preservation of the quality of higher education qualifications and to support constant improvement of the quality of scientific activity and higher education.

Together with academic community and state institutions, *Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE)* is committed to promoting quality culture in higher education and science based on standards of transparency, dialogue, truth and association, in accordance with the best European practice.

In the existing legislation Agency tasks are also defined as part of professional and administrative tasks in the procedure of evaluation of scientific organisations and higher education institutions, accreditation of study programmes at HE institutions, evaluation of quality assurance systems at HE institutions, recognition of foreign HE qualifications, accession of Croatian systems of science and higher education into international system, linking with European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and creation and maintenance of national databases about the system of scientific activity. One of the Agency's tasks is carrying out all activities related to successful functioning of the National Council for Science and the National Council for Higher Education.

Considering Croatia's size and structural links between systems of science and higher education, it has been become necessary to unify evaluation of the two systems. Transformation towards *Bologna* study system which took place in 2005 with the accreditation of over 800 study programmes adapted for two-cycle system (undergraduate and graduate studies) has lately placed an accent of the *Agency* work on the area of higher education.

Adaptation of the higher education system towards European and international standards and its dynamisation in order to transform Croatian society into *knowledge-based society* presents a high degree of cooperation among all stakeholders offering and using higher education. It is not only an internal matter of academic community, although it is to a large extent depending upon new vision and establishment of internal quality culture. Such understanding must include responsibility as well as drive towards constant and guided improvement.

We are persistent in our intentions to assume the role of the leading institution working on sensitizing academic community about culture quality in Croatian higher education. Understanding of quality as basis of all processes in higher education and its improvement may only be achieved on the basis of informed efforts of HE institutions and in assuming their place in ever more competitive environment of European and international higher education.

As an EU candidate country, Croatia wants to contribute to the joint European goal of establishing the most competitive educational system which will strengthen Croatian economy as well as contribute to the world's. Establishment of *knowledge society* is one of the key elements on the road, and Agency for Science and Higher Education has an important role in Croatian efforts to achieve that goal.

In that way, together with the National Council for Higher Education and the National Council for Science, the Agency is controlling accountability of higher education programmes and the road towards recognisability of quality, in order to satisfy expectations of Croatian society and international community.

prof. Jasmina Havranek, PhD
director of the Agency for Science and Higher Education

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MISSION

The Department of Higher Education, taking care of the functioning of **National Council for Higher Education**, supports development and improvement in the quality of higher education in Croatia.

In order to fulfil its mission, Department is cooperating with the National Council for Higher Education, National Council for Science, Board for Financing Scientific Activity and Higher Education, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and other state institutions as well as higher education institutions, trying to create a partner relationship through direct communication and indirectly via cooperation with the Rector's Conference and the Council of Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education.

Department is especially striving to achieve an active cooperation with similar institutions and organisations in the EU countries in order to implement guidelines of the Bologna Declaration and establish common European Higher Education Area.

SCOPE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Core department activity consists of participating in:

- approval of new study programmes at the existing HE institutions,
- licensing new HE institutions,
- evaluation of existing HE institutions and their study programmes.

Since the establishment of the Agency, Department of Higher Education organised 48 sessions of the National Council for Higher Education which included organising sessions and preparing necessary material and documents, formulating instructions, decisions and conclusions as well as writing minutes and reports. Department of Higher Education, in cooperation with other Agency departments, has also organised 5 joint sessions of the two national councils and 16 sessions of the Board for Financing Scientific Activity and Higher Education.

During that period, the Department participated in evaluation procedures for almost 950 new university undergraduate and graduate study programmes and programmes of professional and specialist graduate professional studies at polytechnics and schools of professional higher education. The Department also participated in the evaluation of 250 postgraduate specialist and doctoral study programmes designed in line with Bologna principles as well as in the evaluation of 30 new HEIs prior to their licensing.

Main tasks of Department in evaluation process are checking whether delivered elaborates are complete, aiding HEIs in entering necessary data into MOZVAG system, helping council members in nomination of adequate referees, delivering necessary documentation to referees and reporters, aiding referees and reporters, checking delivered documentation about teachers and preparing analysis of teaching staff in order to ascertain fulfilment of legal provisions, organising on-site visit to the evaluated HEI for members of the panel of experts, etc.

During evaluation of study programmes we have tried to involve foreign referees. A significant number of proposed programmes was sent back to the HEIs in order to improve them in accordance with referees' suggestions. All programme descriptions, reviews, reports as well as final recommendations of the National Council for Higher Education were made available via specially designed electronic database MOZVAG. Everything mentioned is also recommended in the document *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), adopted in Bergen in 2005, and is in accordance with the good European practice.

It is important to emphasize that the Board for Financing Scientific Activity and Higher Education has been introduced into discussion concerning new proposals for establishment of higher education institutions and new study programmes since the last year. The Board is providing opinion on their financial viability. Employees of the Department of Higher Education provide significant support in that task. The Board also initiated, and the Agency contracted, projects for proposals of a better models of financing higher education and improvement of student standard.

Following harmonisation of all undergraduate and graduate study programmes with Bologna principles (duration of study, ECTS, etc.), Croatia established new postgraduate studies which resulted in the introduction of a system based on three main study cycles. The Agency for Science and Higher Education provided a significant contribution to implementation of an obligation which had been assumed by our country as a signatory of the Bologna declaration.

PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Participating in current procedure of accreditation of study programmes, employees of the Department of Higher Education gained important experience in that area, and the main activity of the department which should start in the next period is institutional evaluation of the existing HEIs as a constant activity carried out in accordance with the *Law on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, Ordinance on measures and criteria for the evaluation of quality and efficiency of higher education institutions and study programmes, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education*, in accordance with the plan and documents adopted by the National Council for Higher Education.

One of the difficulties in the work of Department of Higher Education, emphasized in the report of the National Council for 2006, is an extremely large number of proposals for new undergraduate, graduate and professional study programmes as well as torrential proposals for establishment of new HEIs. Exclusive orientation of the Department towards new proposals doesn't contribute to improvement of the quality of higher education in the extent it would be possible by evaluating quality and efficiency of the existing HEIs and study programmes.

Therefore, it is important to start institutional evaluation. However, it is vital to allocate and train additional staff in order to satisfy the three-year schedule of the National Council for Higher Education, which will pose a very demanding task both for the Department and the whole Agency. Also, implementation of a comprehensive institutional evaluation will depend upon the available financial resources for the next period in the budget of the Agency and the National Council for Higher Education. Discerning and resolving difficulties arising from the need to upgrade existing MOZVAG system as well as those related to payment of referee fees will contribute to a more successful completion of tasks planned for the next period.

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION OF EMPLOYEES, ADDITIONAL FINANCES AND ADEQUATE IT SUPPORT ARE ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL EVALUATION OF ALL CROATIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DURING THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

Special attention is given to education and training of employees. Especially worth mentioning is participation at seminars and workshops organised by ENQA with the most frequent subject *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, participation in the institutional accreditation by German agency ZeVA and Hungarian Accreditation Council as observers, visit to the Finnish Evaluation Council FINHEEC as well as participation at the meetings and seminars held in Croatia as part of TEMPUS and CARDS 2004 projects.

By gaining new experience and knowledge, the Department of Higher Education will continue to provide strong support to the work of the National Council for Higher Education, with the possibility of taking over new responsibilities in accordance with its capacity and coordination with the Council. Department's efforts are also oriented towards monitoring of the current issues and subjects in the area of higher education, with the aim of always better and more efficient running of current activities as set by the law.

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT MISSION

Mission of the Department of Science is to aid Croatian scientific institutions with their improvement. The Department has to become a recognisable subject in science, involved in all science-related activities on a national, regional and international level. It carries out centralised and coordinated activities of all institutions that are creating scientific policy of the Republic of Croatia (National Council for Science, scientific area councils, scientific field committees, working groups and expert panels established by the National Council for Science, etc.) Therefore, information flow among the above mentioned institutions is faster and more accurate, and their work is better and more efficient.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Department of Science is responsible for the good functioning of the **National Council for Science**. Accordingly, the Department is supporting activities of the National Council for Science by preparing materials and information related to Council sessions, writing minutes, proposals, decisions, conclusions of the National Council for Science related to evaluation of scientific programmes and projects, authorisation for conducting the procedure of appointment into scientific grades, criteria for appointment into scientific grades, appointment into scientific grades in interdisciplinary scientific areas, fulfilling conditions for enrolment into the Register of scientific organisations, evaluation of scientific organisations, adoption of Statute, resolving subjects and appeals in the domain of science, creation of a yearly report of the National Council for Science and proposal of the financial plan of the National Council for Science for the current fiscal year.

The Department is supporting activities work of the **six scientific area councils**

*SCIENTIFIC AREA COUNCIL FOR NATURAL SCIENCES,
SCIENTIFIC AREA COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL SCIENCES,
SCIENTIFIC AREA COUNCIL FOR BIOMEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH,
SCIENTIFIC AREA COUNCIL FOR BIOTECHNICAL SCIENCES,
SCIENTIFIC AREA COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES, AND
SCIENTIFIC AREA COUNCIL FOR HUMANITIES.*

Task of scientific area councils is to discuss matters related to specific scientific and artistic areas that are within the authority of the National Council for Science. The Department prepares materials for sessions, writes and sends invitations, calls and holds sessions, writes minutes, conclusions, opinions, answers etc. adopted at the sessions of individual scientific area councils.

The Department is managing efficient functioning of **22 committees for specific fields**

*COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF BIOLOGY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF PHYSICS,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF GEOSCIENCES,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF CHEMISTRY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF MATHEMATICS,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF CHEMICAL ENGINEERING, MINING, OIL AND GEOLOGICAL ENGINEERING, METALLURGY, TEXTILE TECHNOLOGY AND GRAPHIC TECHNOLOGY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING, NAVAL ARCHITECTURE, TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY, AVIATION, ROCKETRY AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING AND COMPUTING,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM, GEODESY AND CONSTRUCTION,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF BASIC MEDICAL SCIENCES, CLINICAL MEDICAL SCIENCES, PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PROTECTION, , STOMATOLOGY AND PHARMACY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF VETERINARY MEDICINE,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, FORESTRY, WOOD TECHNOLOGY, BIOTECHNOLOGY AND FOOD TECHNOLOGY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF ECONOMY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF INFORMATION SCIENCES,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF POLITICAL SCIENCES, SOCIOLOGY, SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHICS, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND SECURITY AND DEFENCE SCIENCES,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF LAW,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELD OF PHILOLOGY,
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF HISTORY, HISTORY OF ARTS, ARTS SCIENCE, ARCHAEOLOGY, ETHNOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY AND
COMMITTEE FOR THE FIELDS OF VISUAL ARTS, MUSIC ARTS, THEATRE ARTS, FILM AND ELECTRONIC ARTS.*

Field committees participate in the grade appointment procedure and make the final decision on the appointment into scientific grades.

The Department is also managing activities of **working groups and expert panels** established by the National Council for Science for its purposes. It participates in design of computer database, a register of referees of research projects created to facilitate selection of referees of technological and research projects by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, projects financed by the National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development as well as for review of papers published in scientific and professional magazines.

Department of Science is also involved in creation of proposal for cooperation between the National Council for Science and National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development. The cooperation is based on financing best research projects, establishing the fund for financing young scientists' projects and creating a database of referees.

We also organise **joint sessions of the National Council for Higher Education and the National Council for Science** in cooperation with Department of Higher Education. Together with other departments, Department of Science is involved in the activities of **the Board for Financing Scientific Activity and Higher Education**.

Department of Science is establishing contacts between the National Council for Science and other institutions (universities, Committee of Education, Science and Culture of Croatian Parliament, National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia, Croatian Institute of Technology, Publishing Commission, Croatian Chamber of Economy and other prominent institutions representing economy).

Department of Science is carrying out the complete evaluation of quality and efficiency of scientific and professional activities of scientific organisations according to the yearly schedule set by the National Council for Science, by special directive of the National Council for Science or upon request by a scientific organisation. In 2007 there have been evaluations started for 10 scientific organisations (Agricultural institute Osijek; Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Osijek; Institute of Physics, Zagreb; Institute of Economics, Zagreb; Institute for International Relations, Zagreb; Forest Research Institute, Jastrebarsko; General Hospital in Zadar; Faculty of Sciences – Division of biology, Zagreb; Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, Zagreb; and Juraj Dobrila University – Department of Humanities, Pula). In 2008 we are planning evaluation of quality and efficiency of scientific and professional activity in 20 research institutes and all HEIs scheduled in evaluation plan designed by the National Council for Higher Education.

Department is carrying out professional and administrative tasks in the course of evaluation of scientific projects and collaborative scientific programmes financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, scientific projects submitted to tenders of other ministries and other state budget users as well as evaluation of scientific project financed by other sources, upon that sources' request.

Department is actively involved in many professional lectures and seminars in Croatia and abroad, as well as in other events related to science and higher education.

PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Since the establishment of the Agency, Department of Science has been expanding its activities and tasks. At the beginning of 2007 it started evaluating quality and efficiency of scientific and professional activities of scientific organisations. In 2007 the Department also took over the administration of field committees and scientific area councils.

During the next four-year period, Department of Science plans to assume authority over the whole process of application, evaluation and approval of scientific programmes and projects.

Strategy of the Department of Science is based on establishment of unique system of organising work between the National Council for Science, National Council for Higher Education, Board for

Financing Scientific Activity and Higher Education, scientific area council, field committees, working groups and expert panels established by the National Council for Science from a central place within Agency for Science and Higher Education as well as on cooperation with other bodies of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, primarily Quality Assurance Department.

QUALITY ASSURANCE DEPARTMENT

MISSION

In order to successfully integrate Croatian HE institutions into European Higher Education Area, Quality Assurance Department has defined as its basic role strengthening cooperation with QA offices at HEIs in order to improve quality assurance system and raise awareness about the need to develop quality culture in Croatian academic community.

Plan of the QA Department is to become the leader in designing and improving system of quality assurance in higher education and science on the national, regional, European and international level.

Department strategy is oriented towards development of independent external evaluation of the QA system designed in cooperation with the CARDS 2003 project and towards raising the profile of QA Department and Agency as a whole as one of the key stakeholders in the Croatian higher education area. In order to achieve international recognition of the Department and the Agency, we are placing a special emphasis on the importance of fulfilling criteria for enrolment of the Agency into European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR) and into European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). At the same time, QA Department continues improving successful cooperation with International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE Network).

In order to achieve its strategic goals, the Department is actively involved in the following activities:

- Enrolment into European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA),
- Enrolment of the Agency into European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR),
- Creating environment for efficient work of QA offices at HE institutions,
- Training of experts for evaluation of QA system at HEIs via seminars, workshops and other types of education,
- Encouraging cooperation and education of students, representatives of the labour market, administrative and teaching staff in the area of quality assurance system at HE institutions,
- Offering counselling to the HE institutions and scientific organisations when establishing and implementing mechanisms of internal evaluation of QA system,
- Encouraging HEIs and scientific organisations to cooperate with foreign experts in the field of independent external evaluation of QA system,
- Cooperation with HEIs at the point of selection, organisation of site visits and counselling of foreign QA experts,
- Ascertaining level of development of QA system in higher education and science in the Republic of Croatia and its further improvement,
- Improving quality of education by raising the level of academic standards,
- Further development of cooperation with INQAAHE and CEE networks,
- Providing information related to implementation of European Standards and Guidelines (ESG),
- Developing consciousness about individual and collective responsibility for development of the quality culture "which is constantly striving towards constructive changes and improvement of own activities"¹,
- Establishment of the national network for quality assurance in higher education/science,
- Involvement of Croatian area of higher education/science in international system and further work on their recognisability and improvement of international credibility.

¹ Bezinović, P. (2007). *Priručnik za samovrednovanje škola (Handbook for Self-Analysis of Schools)*. Institute for Social Research, Zagreb.

SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

An ISO 9001-compliant system for quality management (SQM) was introduced at the Agency level in November 2006. Due to the need for constant improvement of the system, Department initiated an internal SQM audit during 2007. Following the audit, Det Norske Veritas (DNV) carried out a regular external audit. All Department employees underwent training for internal auditors at DNV. Within the Agency there were five ISO 9001-related seminars scheduled to improve implementation of the ISO and SQM. On the basis of internal audits and conclusions from the management's evaluation, five additional Agency employees successfully finished training for internal auditors in 2007.

Cooperation with the CARDS 2003 project "Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) in its Quality Assurance role and the development of a supporting Information System" is done via consultations about the development of external quality assurance system and via joint activities on organisation of the seminars for the representatives of academic community and other stakeholders in the system of higher education.

There have been the following seminars during 2007:

- Internal quality assurance of higher education institutions (Zagreb, 17 - 19 April 2007)

Subjects:

- Role of quality assurance units at higher education institutions
- Internal evaluation of quality assurance systems in Croatia

- External quality assurance of higher education institutions (Zagreb, 29 - 31 May 2007)

Subject:

- Activities to be done before evaluation of higher education institutions

- Seminar for external auditors of quality assurance system at higher education institutions (Zagreb, 22 - 23 October 2007)

Subjects:

- The process of periodic external evaluations (lecture and workshop)
- Guidelines for internal evaluation of the quality assurance system at higher education institutions

institutions

- Seminar for external auditors of quality assurance system at higher education institutions, in cooperation with project TAIEX "Capacity Building for Croatian Quality Assurance System Development" (Zagreb, 21 - 22 November 2007)

Subject:

- Evaluation of quality assurance system in Great Britain

Education of employees of the Quality Assurance department via CARDS 2003 project:

- From 21 – 23 February 2007 two employees participated at the seminar Evaluation of Quality Assurance System held in organisation of British Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) at Warwick University. The employees were given presentation of the evaluation of quality assurance system as carried out in Great Britain.
- From 22 – 25 April 2007 an employee participated at institutional evaluation of a Budapest business college (at the Faculty of International Business and Management) as observer, together with other colleagues from the Agency. She also visited Hungarian Accreditation Council (HAC), Council for Higher Education and Research, Education Office and Rectors' Conference. The Agency employees were given presentation of the Hungarian system of higher education.

Department participated at the roundtable "Accreditation in Higher Education in South-Eastern Europe" held on 28th and 29th June 2007 at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture in Zagreb. A department employee had a presentation entitled "Report from the CEE Network Workshop held in St. Petersburg".

As part of the TAIEX project "Capacity Building for Croatian Quality Assurance System Development" envisioned by the Quality Assurance Department and approved by the European Commission, Mr. Alan Hunt, guest lecturer from Great Britain, held a series of presentations from 19–23 November 2007 for Agency employees, external auditors of quality assurance system and students. Subjects of his lectures were basic principles and concrete activities during the evaluation of quality assurance system, accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes and example of good practice from Great Britain.

In accordance with the "Plan of development of Educational System in Croatia 2005-2010" made by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), QA Department created a model for independent external periodic evaluation of quality assurance system at HE institutions. During the elaboration of this model we produced a manual for independent external periodic evaluation of quality assurance system at HE institutions with the relevant procedures.

We started creation of a database of experts who will implement independent external evaluation of quality assurance system at higher education institutions with the list of candidates from all Croatian universities, representatives of the labour market (cooperation with the Croatian Chamber of Economy) and representatives of student organisations.

The Department created a glossary of basic terms and definitions in the area of quality assurance in HE and published it on the Agency website. The glossary is based on the translation of UNESCO-CEPES document "Quality Assurance and Accreditation: A Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions" and on the document introducing TEMPUS-SOCRATES project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe".

We have an established cooperation with QA units at higher education institution in the area of establishment of internal evaluation of quality assurance system, exchange of information and offering good practice examples.

From 15th October to 31st October 2007, a Department employee participated as an Agency representative at the TEMPUS project " Quality Assurance in University teaching" which produced the following three documents:

1. The Code of Good Practice in Teaching and Assessment
2. National Strategy for the Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness 2007 – 2011
3. Action Research Programme for Enhancing the Quality of Teaching (a staff development scheme)

Department implemented self-analysis of the Agency with the purpose of Agency's accession to the following international organisations:

- INQAAHE – ASHE became associate member in November 2006
- CEE Network – ASHE became member in February 2007
- ENQA – ASHE became associate member in December 2007

In order to present examples of good practice and to report on various international meetings, we held several presentations to the Agency employees:

- 1st European Quality Assurance Forum: "Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education" that was held in Munich 23 – 25 November 2006
- 8th Biannual INQAAHE Conference that was held in Toronto 2 - 5 April 2007
- The CEEN Workshop and Steering Committee Meeting: "The European Standards and Guidelines in the Eastern European Context: After London" that was held in St. Petersburg on 25 - 28 May 2007

PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES

- Continued training of future experts in independent external evaluation of the quality assurance system.

- Preparation of the pilot project "Independent External Evaluation of the Quality Assurance System at Three Higher Education Institutions" to be realised in cooperation with the CARDS 2003 project. The Agency signed contracts on external evaluation of the quality assurance system with the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Osijek, Faculty of Organisation and Informatics at the University of Zagreb and the Faculty of Engineering in Rijeka.
- Further development of the model of independent external evaluation of the quality assurance system in regard to the results of the pilot project and continued monitoring of the models' efficiency.
- Active and equal participation of Department employees in all segments and phases of activities made by the panel of experts who are carrying out evaluation and pass judgement on level and efficiency of quality assurance system at HEIs/scientific organisations.
- Active participation of Department employees in adjustment of the relevant legal framework and other regulatory documents with the most recent, both Croatian and foreign, knowledge and achievements in the area of evaluation and improvement of quality at HEIs/scientific organisations.
- Establishment of the information system for monitoring independent external evaluation of the quality assurance system.
- Participation in projects dealing with quality assurance in higher education.
- Raising quality culture in higher education and science.
- Creating conditions for enrolment into ENQA and European register of quality assurance agencies.
- Constant training of Department employees in quality assurance and transfer of good practice examples to Agency employees as well as to academic community as a whole.

IT IS NECESSARY TO PRECISELY DEFINE THE ROLE OF THE AGENCY AS A WHOLE AS WELL AS THE ROLE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE DEPARTMENT IN THE PROCESS OF EXTERNAL INDEPENDENT PERIODIC EVALUATION, WHICH ALSO REQUIRES CHANGES AND ADDITIONS TO THE ACT ON SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT FOR ANALYTICS AND STATISTICS

MISSION

Agency for Science and Higher Education established **Department for Analytics and Statistics** in order to raise the quality of its professional contribution to all tasks stemming from the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education as well as Directive on Establishment.

The mentioned legal documents² directly state that the Agency performs "...the making and maintenance of national databases in relation to the system of scientific activity and higher education ..." that is "...**collects and processes at the national level** data related to the system of scientific activity and higher education".

Data collection and processing is basis for quality and objective evaluation of all segments of higher education and science. Mission of **Department for Analytics and Statistics** is to use analytical insight and statistical indicators about the whole and clearly defined parts of the system of higher education and science in order to offer practical, comparable, realistic and complete data on which strategic development decision will be based.

All institutions making strategic decisions at the national level with the goal of creating "knowledge society", starting from the National Council for Higher Education and the National Council for Science to Croatian Parliament, would thus have objective and complete insight into all resources in higher education and science, their potential and current capacities at the level of Croatia, and would better know the level of achievements, especially in relation to the implementation of Bologna Process and increased responsibility for the quality.

SCOPE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Tasks involving improvement of the quality of higher education and science, quality assurance systems or evaluation procedures at all levels require **relevant objective indicators and analyses**. Statistical overviews and analyses are also vital starting points for more elaborate research in numerous projects dealing with situation in Croatian higher education and science, also a basis for important evaluations and measures.

Department for Analytics and Statistics at the Agency for Science and Higher Education has a **pioneer role** in data collection and processing, because it is well-known that Croatian system of higher education and science chronically lacks information on own situation and resources.

Department for Analytics and Statistics was created from the core which **designed system for support to the accreditation of new study programmes created in accordance with Bologna principles – MOZVAG**.

Already at the beginning of its formal establishment Department used information from MOZVAG, Central Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Science and EURSYDICE – European education database – to make a series of analyses and indicators about higher education in Croatia as an addition to the **Report of the National Council for Higher Education for 2005**, presented to Croatian parliament in 2006. We also included comparison of some structural indicators in higher education between Croatia and Finland as a special insert. (Finland was chosen due to similarities in demographics and developed "knowledge society"). One might objectively say that the **indicators presented in the Report**, except for the extreme attention they received in the Parliament, **spurred authorities into re-thinking about measures necessary for changing some structural discrepancies in Croatian higher education**.

² Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (art. 15) and Directive on the Establishment of the Agency (art. 2)

PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Project for development of national information system of higher education and science

In cooperation with CARDS 2003 consultants, **Department prepares project documentation** for the reconstruction of the MOZVAG system as **the first phase in the establishment of complete national information system of higher education.**

Basic tasks of such system are:

1. Providing information support to all evaluation procedures carried out by the national councils and the Agency
2. Creating databases capable of generating statistical overviews and analyses for the users passing measures and decision on development of the network of higher education institutions and improvement of the higher education and science

On the basis of entered data, analyses should be able to show:

- a) Resources of higher education institutions and their suitability for adequate teaching results
 - b) Price of study per student according to types of study programmes – areas, fields, etc.
 - c) Analysis of necessary resources and investment in order to improve learning outcomes
 - d) Analysis of intensity of work with students and conditions of students' work
 - e) Overview and analysis of student advancement monitoring
 - f) Analysis of obstacles– apart from resources and teaching configuration, we will also analyse impact of previous education of students, their social environment and motivation influenced by the labour market.
3. Both functions will be encompassed by a single multi-functional national information system of which MOZVAG is an embryo.
 4. Considering complexity of so envisioned system and project, Department, supported by the National Council for Higher Educations, deems a priority to be establishment of the register of all teachers with their workload.

In order for the project to be successfully realised, it is necessary to provide finances from the state budget as well as coordinate and regulate relations among Ministry, Agency, HEIs and implementer of the IT solution in order to clearly define responsibilities, flow and authority over information about HEIs.

Other ongoing projects

At this moment, based on collected data on the current network and structure of secondary and higher education as well as demographic information, Department is **carrying out analyses necessary for making decisions on criteria for development of the network of HEIs and higher education programmes.**

We are also creating and updating **a database of potential members of expert panels for evaluation of higher education institutions.**

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

MISSION

To create internationally recognisable and authentic system of science and higher education in the Republic of Croatia.

Our responsibility lies in monitoring and reporting on international trends and encouraging each individual involved in the system of higher education to think and contribute to internationally competitive, comparable but at the same time unique Croatian system of science and higher education based on quality.

We are responsible for recognisability and acceptance of Agency activities in international organisations and institutions as well as for knowledge of international system of higher education, providing aid and information about international projects and possibilities for international cooperation.

Through our knowledge and expertise, opinions and recommendations, we want to build trust and partner cooperation with the whole community.

SCOPE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

COOPERATION WITH ENQA (*European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*) -

After several months of intensive work on preparation of forms, in May 2007 the Agency applied for full membership in ENQA, international organisation of the European quality assurance agencies. Unfortunately, due to discrepancies in Croatian regulations, roles and responsibilities of various institutions and bodies related to quality assurance in higher education and science and insufficient independence of the Agency, we haven't yet been granted full membership in ENQA. However, aware of the fact that cooperation, monitoring and participation in ENQA activities is extremely important in reaching our goals, Department for international cooperation focused also on removing obstacles standing in the way of full membership status. As first step we prepared application for associate status in ENQA in order to formalise our relations. In December 2007 Agency was granted associate status in ENQA.

IN ORDER FOR THE AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION TO BECOME A FULL ENQA MEMBER, IT IS NECESSARY TO ADJUST EXISTING ACT ON SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION WITH ORDINANCE OF CROATIAN GOVERNMENT REGARDING ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AGENCY AND PRECISELY DEFINE ROLE OF THE AGENCY AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE.

BENCHMARKING – Department is orienting and comparing its activities with international trends. In September there was organised study visit to Finland with the goal of learning about Finnish model of quality assurance. The host was Finnish agency FINHEEC. The study visit was also used as an occasion to visit ENQA headquarters. The result of the visit was Agency's application for associate status in ENQA, and Finnish model of quality assurance was presented in a detailed report as an example of good practice which can be followed in some segments.

Learning outcomes rank among top subjects being discussed in European Higher Education Area. Therefore, our department also tackled this issue and participated at a conference which was jointly organised by OAQ and ECA (European Consortium for Accreditation). Department representatives also participated at numerous other seminars, workshops and conferences with the goal of learning and exchanging knowledge for the benefit of higher education and science in Croatia as well as for building recognisability and international contacts.

COOPERATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL – At a regional level, we try to assume the leading role.

Among else, we have presented our experience and practice at the regional roundtable held in June 2007 in Zagreb. We were hosts together with the Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Sports, and the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE), presenting capabilities of the Agency and our activities and strategic goals, especially in the area of IT system of quality assurance.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS – CARDS 2002 project "Higher Education Mobility: Diploma Recognition Policy and Legislation" was the first international project which provided the Agency with first experience in international projects. It was the project of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports with the Agency getting involved right upon its establishment, in 2005.

Soon after mentioned project finished, an new, CARDS 2003 project "Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) in its Quality Assurance role and the development of a supporting Information System" started with the deadline of February 2008.

Within the CARDS 2003 project, Department assumed the role of the project implementation unit (PIU) and is participating, monitoring and reporting to the authorised institutions about the project implementation.

Also, the Agency – Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office – participates in MATRA MPAP programme "Strengthening the Role of Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office".

The Agency is also a strategic partner in several Tempus projects where Department representatives represent the Agency – they advise, propose, promote, monitor and direct project activities in accordance with the Agency's mission. Concretely, these projects relate to creation of platform for Croatian involvement in Erasmus programme and development of the network of *EU liaisons officers* at universities in the Republic of Croatia.

Via international projects Agency will continue actively participating in improvement of higher education and science in Croatia.

PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES

- Considering ENQA criteria for the status of full member, the Agency will continue pointing out at weaknesses in Croatian legislation and proposing possible solutions to relevant bodies and lawmakers;
- Systematically follow international trends and participate at important conferences, seminars, workshops and trainings dealing with Agency activities, and report about them to academic community along with guidelines for further work;
- Listen to the needs of higher education and science, direct and propose international projects – with the emphasis on TEMPUS IV and IPA programme;
- Get involved in projects of strategic interest for the Agency and systems of science and higher education as a whole, with the emphasis on quality assurance;
- Organise lectures by foreign experts, seminars, workshops and various focused trainings;
- Establish IT system for monitoring international cooperation – a database of all international contacts, monitoring of employees' stay abroad as well as visits of foreign guests to the Agency and international projects;
- Develop and encourage regional cooperation through regional projects.

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION – BRIEF OVERVIEW

MATRA BENEFICIARY

- | ▪ *Strengthening the Role of Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office*

PARTNER IN 2 TEMPUS PROJECTS

- | ▪ *Enhancing the Mobility of the Croatian Academic Community (MOBIL)*
- | ▪ *Training for EU-liaison officers in Croatian Universities: pursuing Bologna and EU integration aims (TRIUMPH)*

DEPARTMENT AS CARDS 2003 IMPLEMENTING UNIT

- | ▪ *Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) in its Quality Assurance role and the development of a supporting Information System*

CO-ORGANISER OF ERI –SEE ROUNDTABLE

- | ▪ *Regional Round Table: "Accreditation in Higher Education in South Eastern Europe"*

PARTICIPATION AT INTERNATIONAL AND CROATIAN CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS

TAIEX BENEFICIARY

CARDS 2002 BENEFICIARY:

- | ▪ *Higher Education Mobility: Diploma Recognition Policy and Legislation*

I. CROATIAN ENIC/NARIC OFFICE

MISSION

Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office, as an information centre on academic mobility and recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, encourages mobility via professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications as well as by offering information on Croatian and foreign educational systems. ENIC/NARIC Office also works on harmonising existing regulations for recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in the Republic of Croatia with European standards.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications
- providing information about foreign educational systems
- providing information about Croatian educational system
- activities within European network of Information Centres on academic mobility and recognition

Agency for Science and Higher Education – its Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office – is carrying out the procedure of professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications on the basis of Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications (Official Gazette, no. 158/2003, 198/2003 and 138/2006) which is in force since July 2004 and is based on the principles of the Convention on Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications in Europe (Official Gazette – International Contracts, no. 9/02 and 15/02) which, among else, emphasises equal approach of evaluation to all parties on the basis of achieved knowledge and skills, validity of foreign higher education qualifications *per se*, except in cases of significant differences in knowledge, skills and competences which were gained abroad. Recognition of foreign higher education qualifications on the basis of Lisbon Convention doesn't create any statutory rights nor does it award academic and professional titles, which may be regulated by special laws.

Until Agency for Science and Higher Education started its activities in March 2005, its tasks were carried out by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, which established Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office. From September 2004 to April 2006 Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office had available professional aid of consultants which were part of CARDS 20002 project – *Mobility in Higher Education*. During that period, Office entered European network of ENIC/NARIC centres and its representatives embarked on study visits to the European ENIC/NARIC centres and participated at yearly ENIC and NARIC meetings in order to better organise their activities.

Due to the need of additional adjustment of the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications with the principles of Lisbon Convention, an expert Commission for creation of Draft Law on Additions and Changes to the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications was established. Employees of Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office also participated in its activities.

Additions and changes to the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications (Official Gazette, 138/2006) came into force on 28th December 2006 which facilitated and improved the system of recognition of foreign educational qualifications.

Among else, amended Act separated professional from academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and placed professional recognition under the authority of the Agency for Science and Higher Education. Academic recognition and recognition of the study period (ECTS) is carried out by a higher education institution in the Republic of Croatia where a person wants to continue higher education. Also, on the basis of changed Act all citizens have the same rights, i.e. conditions for access to recognition of qualifications in the Republic of Croatia.

Agency for Science and Higher Education – Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office – is carrying out the procedure of professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications based on the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications (Official Gazette, no. 158/2003 and 198/2003 and 138/2006) which came into force in July 2004 and is based on the principles of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Lisbon 11 April 1997 and Law on

ascertaining of The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Official Gazette, International Contracts, 9/2002 and 15/2002).

Among else, the Act is emphasizing equal approach to evaluation for all parties on the basis of acquired knowledge and skills; validity of higher educational qualifications *per se*, except in cases of significant differences in knowledge, skills and competences acquired at a study abroad.

Recognition of foreign higher education qualification on the basis of the Lisbon Convention doesn't provide one with any statutory rights nor does it award academic and professional titles or academic degree, which may be regulated with special laws.

Until Agency for Science and Higher Education became operational in March 2005, tasks from the Agency's jurisdiction were carried out by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports which established Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office. From September 2004 to April 2006 Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office had at its disposal professional support of the consultants of the CARDS 2002 project – *Mobility in Higher Education*. During this period Office got involved into European network of ENIC/NARIC centres so that Office representatives, in order to better organise their activities, started going on study visits to European ENIC/NARIC centres and participating at the yearly ENIC and NARIC meetings.

On 18th October 2005 Rectors' Conference accepted proposal of the Agency for Science and Higher Education – Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office – for the establishment of a network for the academic recognition of foreign higher education qualifications at the level of universities, faculties, polytechnics and schools of professional higher education. Following that decision, the Council for the Assessment of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications at the Agency for Science and Higher Education as well as Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office carried out education at the university workshops in 2006. The goal was to inform all network constituents – offices for academic recognition established at universities and their professional bodies as set by specific statutes – about the recognition procedure and evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications up to changes of the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications.

In 2007 Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office started implementation of MATRA MPAP project *Strengthening the Role of Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office*. The project is being implemented in cooperation with partners – Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship as well as Dutch government institutions – and will last until the end of 2008.

Project objectives are orientation of professional recognition for regulated professions towards authorised chambers, professional organisations and similar institutions as well as dissemination of information on professional and academic recognition in order to bring existing Croatian recognition-related legislation into line with the European directive 2005/36/EC and to create administrative and institutional conditions for the best possible practice.

During implementation of the MATRA project it was proposed that Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office should become national contact point that would provide information on national legislation on regulated professions, including social legislation and ethic rules where necessary. The contact point would also aid citizens in exercising their rights according to the Directive, where appropriate, in cooperation with other contact persons and authorities of the host member state.

Throughout the project there were many educational seminars and meetings which fostered cooperation with representatives of professional organisations and ministries aimed at defining their role in recognition of professional qualifications. During MATRA project, ENIC/NARIC Office in Croatia also started preparatory activities for creation of the national database for recognition of professional qualifications for regulated professions.

Together with members of the Negotiating Team for the Accession to the EU, Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office proposed to the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports to establish inter-ministerial working group composed of experts who will work on adjusting Croatian legislation and on defining institutions that will carry the role of decision makers in recognition of foreign vocational qualifications for regulated professions in Croatia. That working group would make a complete list of regulated professions in the Republic of Croatia and then appoint a body in charge of making decisions on the recognition of foreign

professional qualifications for the work in regulated professions in Croatia. The working group will also appoint national contact point and national coordinator in accordance with the European directive.

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS – STATISTICS (October, 2007)

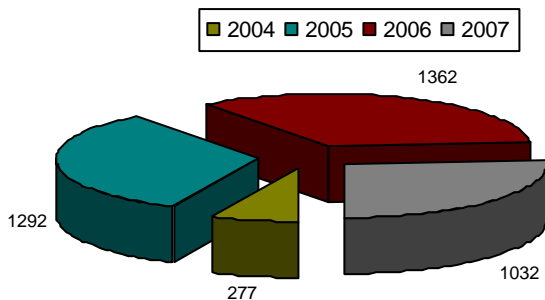
Nationality of applicants:

- 90 % Croatian citizens
- 10% foreign citizens

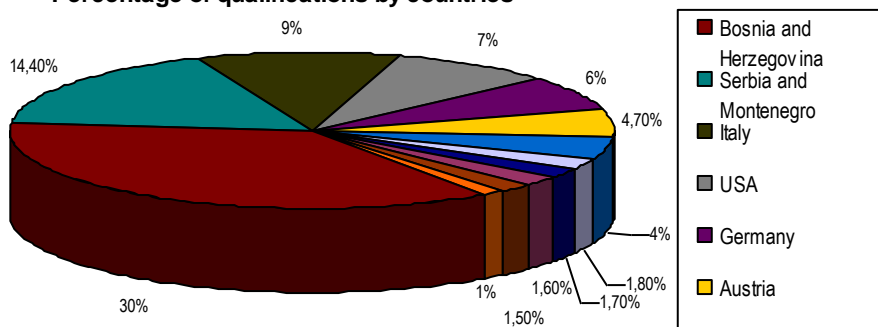
Appeals:

- received appeals: 153
- resolved appeals: 137 (positive decision (appeal accepted)- 33; negative -104)

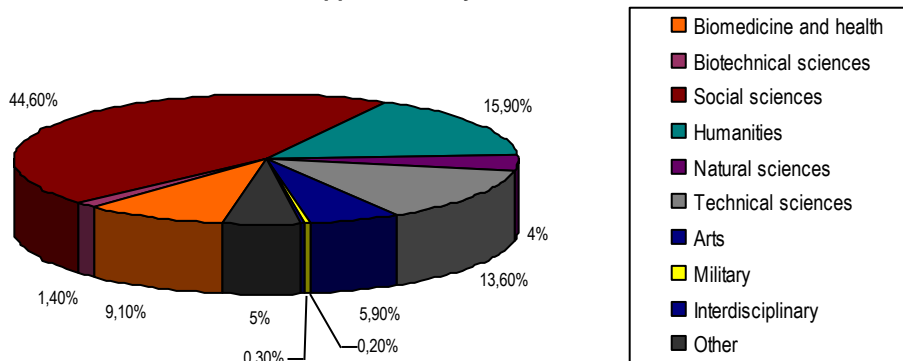
Number of applicants by year (total 3965)



Percentage of qualifications by countries



Applications by fields



PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office will continue working on professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, both through processing of recognition requests (research into foreign higher education system from which the Agency receives foreign higher education qualifications to be recognised, writing instructions, etc.) and through administration of recognition requests and organisations of the sessions of the Council for Evaluation of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications.

Through the practice of evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications during the past three years, there has been spotted a need for more precise and detailed criteria for evaluation. Therefore, Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office prepares new evaluation criteria, in accordance with the Act on Amendments to the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications (Official Gazette, no. 138/2006). New criteria will make evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications more transparent and in accordance with good European practice.

Also, Office will continue working on in linking Croatian system of higher education with international system and on building connections with the European network of information centres on higher education (everyday contacts, exchange of documentation/knowledge, etc.) as well as on constant provision of information on recognition of foreign higher education qualifications in Croatia, foreign educational systems, Croatian educational system – via official website of Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office, directly answering clients' enquiries, etc.

In accordance with the goals of MATRA project *Strengthening the Role of Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office*, we will continue cooperation with representatives of vocational organisations and relevant ministries via meetings, seminars, workshops and study visits to Dutch institutions in order to define their role in recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and to prepare administrative structure for professional recognition for the purpose of employment in regulated professions. It is necessary to adjust Croatian laws with *acquis communautaire* of the European Union in this area.

Key role in this undertaking will be have the planned intra-ministerial workgroup headed by Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, with participation from representatives of the Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office.

II. NATIONAL TEMPUS OFFICE

MISSION

National Tempus office is providing support to the European Commission in its implementation of the Tempus programme in the Republic of Croatia. Tempus programme represents EU aid to the reform of higher education in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Declaration. In the new, fourth phase of the programme Tempus office will implement activities related to promotion of the programme as well as support and coverage of various categories of the Tempus projects. It will also have an active role in promotion of Bologna process, thus further contributing to the promotion of reform and modernisation of higher education in the Republic of Croatia.

SCOPE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Tempus office is reaching its goals in accordance with the activities set forth in the Contract between the European Commission and Tempus office (Agency for Science and Higher Education). Last contract was signed for the period of 1st July 2005 – 30th June 2007 with a one-year extension (until 30th June 2008).

Work plan of the Tempus office prescribes activities to be implemented during a certain period and the workload of individual employees. Work plan and budget of Tempus office are designed in accordance to guidelines of the European Commission and are integral part of the Contract. Activities of Tempus office are financed by the European Commission in accordance to the planned budget adjusted with planned activities and Commission regulations.

Use of donations of the European Commission for the reform of Croatian higher education depends upon quality work of Tempus office. There were 68 Joint European projects and 19 Structural and complementary measures co-financed in Croatia via Tempus III programme (2000-2006), with the funds coming from EU donations (CARDS and Phare). Tempus programme greatly contributed to the implementation of the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, especially in the area concerning restructuring of the existing and introduction of new study programmes.

The role of Tempus office is not to participate in the projects directly, but to carry out all activities related to administration and promotion of the programme, and provide support to the applicants of the future projects and institutions involved in ongoing projects.

In accordance with planned and approved work plan, with the approved and allocated finances, the office carried out the following categories of activities:

- Activities related to evaluation of project proposals
- Activities related to project monitoring
- Informational and promotional activities
- Activities related to writing of project proposals
- Cooperation with the European Commission
- Cooperation with the Ministry of European Integration, Delegation of the European Commission to Croatia, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, etc.
- Administrative activities of the office

PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES

In the new, fourth phase of the programme Tempus office will continue administering the programme, carrying out its promotion to academic community and other potential stakeholders, carry out activities related to project proposals and approved projects, strengthen cooperation with other Tempus offices in the region and National Contact Points in the EU countries and improve its role as promoter of reform and modernisation of higher education in Croatia.

One of the activities of the Tempus office during the next period will be creation of the National Strategic Plan for the implementation of the Bologna process in Croatia, with funding already approved by the European Commission.

DEPARTMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

MISSION

Department for professional and administrative issues is providing professional and administrative support to other departments in their activities within the Agency and is cooperating with other subjects outside Agency such as ministries, faculties and other public institutions,.

Department is made out of four sections:

- Section for general, legal and personnel affairs
- Section for financial and accounting affairs
- Section for information affairs
- Section for procurement, supporting and technical issues

SECTION FOR GENERAL, LEGAL AND PERSONNEL AFFAIRS

Agency employees have an important and vital role in independent and autonomous carrying out of the Agency tasks as set forth in the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education.

Agency was established by the Directive of Croatian government (Official Gazette, 101/04 and 08/07) and officially started its work on 8th March 2005. In the first phase there were only 9 persons headed by prof. Jasmina Havranek, acting director. Through their knowledge, expertise and joint efforts they put Agency onto stable feet.

Agency headed by director is currently organised in the following units, in accordance with the Rule of Internal Order:

- Director's Office
- Department of Higher Education
- Department of Science with professional service of the field committees
- Quality Assurance Department
- Department for International Cooperation with Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office and Tempus Office
- Department of Analytics and Statistics
- Department for professional and administrative issues with the following sections:
 - Section for general, legal and personnel affairs
 - Section for financial and accounting affairs
 - Section for information affairs
 - Section for procurement, supporting and technical issues

At this time, Agency has 40 employees, most of them with higher education qualifications. The Agency is further employing necessary in accordance with the increase in the scope of Agency's activities. The Agency is offering professional and administrative support to a large number of highest professional state bodies such as:

- National Council for Science,
- National Council for Higher Education,
- Board for Financing Scientific Activity and Higher Education,
- Scientific and artistic area councils and field committees,
- Committee for Ethics in Science and Higher Education.

The Agency is closely cooperating with the Rectors' Conference, Council of Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education and all HE institutions and scientific organisations.

In order to achieve all goals in achieving quality in higher education and science, Agency emphasizes professionalism as an important standard – achievement of high professional standards and their

efficient implementation in the Agency.

Agency employees and their team work contribute to development and prosperity of Croatian society on the national and regional level.

SECTION FOR FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING AFFAIRS

Section for financial and accounting affairs is working within the framework of legislation and is monitoring their application in the segment of its scope. Activities are related to constant monitoring of the deadlines for the delivery of numerous reports sent to Tax Administration, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Ministry of Finance as well as to FINA and Regos.

Department activities also concern organisation of bookkeeping activities related to the Agency tasks – design of periodical and yearly report, wage calculation, analytical control of plans, budgeting and control of bookkeeping documents, documentation and statistical reports related to financial accounting in accordance with the laws and regulations. There is also monitoring, analyses and evaluation of finances related to the Agency, monitoring of operational profitability including income and expenses.

Specific activity of the section for financial and accounting affairs is that Agency has the authority of payment of monthly fees to members of the national councils, scientific field committees, Board for Financing, Ethics Committee as well as fees for Croatian and foreign referees, with a total of 600 persons.

SECTION FOR INFORMATION AFFAIRS

Employees of the Section for information affairs worked on launching azvo.hr website and completed training for use of corresponding CMS tools. Web pages and intranet are updated on a daily basis so all visitors to the website can see the most recent news about the Agency.

After the Agency changed its visual identity and logo, it was necessary to re-design our website. It is now completely redesigned along with the new and improved functionality of the CMS.

We are in the process of designing website for the National Council for Higher Education. At the same time, we are working on the forum on quality in higher education, with the working title of QA forum – KVO, financed by the CARDS 2003 project.

We are also administering website of the National Council for Science, nvz.hr.

After some Agency employees moved into new premises, it was important to secure all networking and telecommunication installations, including connection between Agency work environments. All offices are connected into a network in line with the new standards and completely equipped with IT devices, with special attention given to connection between our two floors. They are linked with optic fibre which enabled workers at the penultimate floor of Zagrepcanka building all functions available to our employees on the 8th floor.

Server room is completely equipped with all security and other equipment enabling Agency continuous work of all computers in the local network as well as web pages. We also acquired a new data storage device.

Very soon we plan to establish document management programme, as all preparatory actions are already complete. Its functionality will be especially important for the ISO-related documentation.

Forum, website of the National Council for Higher Education and document management programme are based on open source solutions. We are participating in the CARDS 2003 project "Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) in its Quality Assurance role and the development of a supporting Information System" and are aiding design of new database for ENIC/NARIC Office.

Employees at the section for information affairs are constantly trained via courses, seminars and conferences.

SECTION FOR PROCUREMENT, SUPPORTING AND TECHNICAL ISSUES

The Agency for Science and Higher Education uses the state budget and is therefore obliged to carry out public procurement procedures in accordance with the law on public procurement.

Section for procurement, supporting and technical issues creates a yearly procurement plan and monitors its implementation.

The section also implements public procurement procedures aimed to select best providers.

Since 1st January 2008 there is a new law on public procurement which is based on the need to establish and adjust Croatian system of public procurement with the legislation and standards of the European community and general principles of public procurement which should provide total deregulation of public procurement market. There is a need for complete adjustment of law regulating procurement in Croatia in accordance with article 72 of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, ongoing negotiations regarding Croatian accession to the EU and opening of the Chapter 5 – Procurement.

The new law on public procurement introduced important changes which require professional training of the employees, so that public procurement procedures in the Agency would be efficient and in compliance with the law.

OVERVIEW OF PLAN FOR FURTHER AGENCY ACTIVITIES

Main Agency activity during the following period is **institutional evaluation** of the existing **higher education institutions** as constant activity that would be carried out in accordance with *Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, Ordinance on Measures and Criteria for the Evaluation of Quality and Efficiency of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*; in accordance with the three-year schedule and documents adopted by the National Council for Higher Education.

Institutional evaluation will represent a very demanding task for the whole Agency. It is necessary to provide and train additional staff, which will depend upon available budgets of the Agency and the National Council for Higher Education.

At the beginning of 2007 Agency started **evaluation of quality and efficiency of scientific and professional activities of scientific organisation** carried out by Department of Science and National Council for Science. During the next four year Agency plans to take over authority over the whole process of application, evaluation and approval of scientific programmes and projects.

There are plans for further development of **models of independent external evaluation of quality assurance system** taking into account results of the pilot project ("Independent external evaluation of quality assurance system at three higher education institutions" which will be realised in cooperation with the CARDS 2003 project). We will constantly monitor efficiency of that model and continue training future experts in independent external evaluation of quality assurance system.

Department of analytics and statistics, in cooperation with the consultants of the CARDS 2003 project "Furtherance of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) in its Quality Assurance role and the development of a supporting Information System", is preparing documentation for the reconstruction of the MOZVAG system as first phase of the **establishment of a complete national IT system of higher education**. In order for the project to be successfully realised, it is necessary to provide finances from the state budget as well as coordinate and regulate relations among Ministry, Agency, HEIs and implementer of the IT solution in order to clearly define responsibilities, flow and authority over information about HEIs.

In accordance with ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) criteria for full membership status, we plan to further point out inadequacies in Croatian legislation and propose possible solutions to authorises institutions and lawmakers so that we could create conditions for accession into the ENQA and European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies. We will systematically follow all international trends and participate at important conferences, seminars, workshops and training dealing with Agency activities, and report about them to academic community.

Agency will further participate in international projects answering the needs of higher education and science.

Through the practice of evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications during the past three years, there has been spotted a need for more precise and detailed criteria for evaluation. Therefore, Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office prepares new evaluation criteria, in accordance with the Act on Amendments to the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications (Official Gazette, no. 138/2006). New criteria will make evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications more transparent and in accordance with good European practice which will further improve the whole procedure of the professional recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

In accordance with the goals of MATRA project *Strengthening the Role of Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office*, we will continue cooperation with representatives of professional organisations and relevant ministries via meetings, seminars, workshops and study visits to Dutch institutions in order to define their role in recognition of foreign higher education qualifications and to prepare administrative structure for professional recognition for the purpose of employment in regulated professions. It is necessary to adjust Croatian laws with *acquis communautaire* of the European Union in this area.

Key role in this undertaking will be have the planned intra-ministerial workgroup headed by Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, with participation from representatives of the Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office.

In the new, fourth phase of its programme, Tempus office will continue with its administration, promotion of the programme towards academic community and other potential stakeholders. Tempus office will carry out activities related to project proposals and approved project, improve cooperation with other Tempus offices in the region and national contact points in EU countries and affirm its role as promoter of reform and modernisation of Croatian higher education.

One of the activities of Tempus office during the upcoming period will be the National Strategic Plan for implementation of Bologna process in Croatia, which has been approved and funded by the European Commissions.

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