

A. Background information on the Croatian Higher Education system

Details

Country	Croatia
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Main achievements since Bergen

<p>1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.</p>
<p>Following the creation of legislative and administrative frameworks for the implementation of the Bologna process, 2005 was marked by the implementation of the three priority goals of the Bologna Process: the reorganization of study programs and curricula based on two main cycles, introduction of the practice of recognition of foreign higher education qualifications based on the Lisbon Convention, and the development of the quality assurance system.</p> <p>1. By the end of June 2005, the most demanding Bologna priority has been fulfilled – the restructuring of all study programmes in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process. The evaluation of more than 800 study programmes has been carried out under the guidance of the National Council for Higher Education and the Agency for Science and Higher Education. To accomplish such a task over 1,000 evaluators were appointed, of which one third were foreign.</p>

2. In January 2005, a new method for the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications was introduced, which is much simpler and faster than the previous nostrification procedure. Out of 2.739 recognition requests received so far 2.187 have received recognition.
3. The creation of the Agency for Science and Higher Education created the institutional framework for the development of the quality assurance system. Four out of seven universities have already established quality assurance offices, while the remaining three are currently in the process of establishing them. These offices will form the National Network for Higher Education Quality Assurance, to be coordinated and overseen by the Agency.

National organisation

2. Describe any changes since Bergen in the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their roles.

The structure of public authorities responsible for higher education has not changed since Bergen. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES) is the only Ministry responsible for higher education and oversight of higher education institutions.

The National Council for Higher Education is an independent and advisory body that proposes measures for the advancement of higher education, proposes plans for development of the network of higher education institutions, advises the Minister on regulations for standards and criteria for the establishment and evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes, appoints evaluators and performs the evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education is responsible for providing expert support to the National Council for Higher Education in the process of evaluation of higher education institutions, their study programmes and quality assurance systems. It also collects and analyses data related to the national science and higher education system. Within the Agency, the National ENIC/NARIC Office is tasked with the recognition of foreign higher education qualifications.

Two new bodies have been established in 2005 – Science and Higher Education Funding Council that proposes criteria for the allocation of budget resources intended for science and higher education and Committee on Ethics in Science and Higher Education whose duty is to promote ethical principles and values in science and higher education.

According to the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, higher education institutions are autonomous in the following:

- setting out their development strategies,
- developing enrolment policies,

- recruitment of all their staff,
- creation, organization and execution of study programmes,
- establishing faculties, academies, departments, institutes, foundations, student centres, health institutions, libraries, technological centres, IT departments, cultural organizations, sports organizations and other constituents necessary for their work,
- management of the organizations they have established,
- creation of enterprises (whose income can only be used to advance the primary functions of the higher education institution),
- creating and executing internal quality assurance mechanisms,
- election of rector, deans and other academic and administrative managers,
- distribution of funds from the lump sum funding mechanism.

In January 2006, the first stage of the new lump sum financing model for public higher education institutions has been introduced. Under this model, the total amount of funds (salaries, material costs, scholarships, student activities...) is transferred from the state budget directly to universities which then divide the funds among their constituent parts. In this way the lump sum financing model is introducing a single financial policy for each university and represents the financial aspect of the legal integration of universities.

3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure

The institutional structure of the higher education system has remained the same, apart from the creation of new higher education institutions. All of the institutions, whether public or private, are covered by the same legislation – the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education¹.

Higher education institutions in Croatia are defined by this Act as universities (sveučilište), whose constituent parts can be faculties (fakultet), art academies (umjetničke akademije) and departments (odjel or odsjek); polytechnics (veleučilište) and schools of professional higher education (visoke škole). There are currently 7 public universities in Croatia (in Dubrovnik, Osijek, Pula, Rijeka, Split, Zadar, and Zagreb), 12 public and 1 private polytechnics, and 21 schools of professional higher education (of which 4 are public and 17 private).

The most important development in the last two years is the adoption of a policy of polycentric development of higher education, especially the development of professional studies in smaller urban areas. The aim is to increase the availability of higher education that is adapted to regional needs and particularities and to increase the number of persons with higher education in the general population. Since 2005, five public polytechnics (in Vukovar, Knin, Gospić, Sibenik, and Slavonski Brod), one university (in Pula), and four private schools of professional higher education have been founded.

¹ Official Gazette, no. 123/03 <http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/1742.htm>
no. 105/04 <http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2004/2025.htm>
no. 174/04 <http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2004/3013.htm>

There are two types of study programmes in Croatia: university (ISCED 5A and 6, called "sveučilišni studiji") and professional (ISCED 5B, called "stručni studiji"). Universities can offer both university and professional study programmes, while polytechnics and schools of professional higher education can only offer professional programmes. Croatia aims to establish a binary system, in which universities will offer only university programmes and polytechnics only professional programmes.

The number of students studying at higher education institutions in Croatia at the beginning of 2006 was around 160,000, of which there were around 110,000 studying at university studies, and 50,000 studying at professional studies (70:30 ratio). There were 13,000 students (8% of the total number of students) enrolled in private higher education institutions, and around 16,000 (10%) enrolled in polytechnics. The rest (131,000 or 82%) were enrolled at universities. Of all university students, 21,000 were studying at professional studies (12% of all students in Croatia), and 110,000 were studying at university studies.

Partnership

4. Describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

Oversight of the implementation of the Bologna Process can be divided into three activities: operational coordination, stakeholder information dissemination, and wider information dissemination.

Operational coordination is carried out by the MSES which, in consultation with the main stakeholders, introduces legislative and administrative changes at the national level, and the Croatian Rectors' Conference through its Committee for the Implementation of the Bologna Process which coordinates joint activities and provides guidance to higher education institutions.

The National Bologna Follow-up Group consists of 18 members and includes representatives of Croatian universities, polytechnics and schools of professional higher education, trade unions, the Croatian Student Council, business, the National Council for Higher Education, the Agency for Science and Higher Education and NGOs active in the higher education sector. The Group discusses avenues for further change and in this way serves as an advisory body to the MSES on further activities within the Bologna Process. It also disseminates information among the main stakeholders through regular meetings and exchange of information.

The wider information dissemination is conducted through two Tempus projects: The 2004 Tempus JEP project "Moving ahead with the Bologna Process in Croatia" and the 2006 TEMPUS SCM project "Furtherance of Bologna Process in Croatia" through which seminars and conferences on the Bologna Process policy development are organized. This SCM project also includes the Croatian Chamber of Commerce and the Croatian Employers' Association.

5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

Legislative reforms, mainly the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, that were introduced as a precondition for the implementation of the Bologna process also strengthened and increased student and staff representation in the governance of higher education institutions. The Act presents the following key stipulations regarding the universities' Senates and polytechnics' Councils which are the representative and decision making bodies:

- At least 15% of Senate or Council members are student representatives (10% students from the first and second cycle studies, 5% students from the third cycle studies). The same applies to representative bodies of the universities' constituent parts.
- Student representatives are given suspension veto power over decisions by the Senate which are of a special interest to students (such as the system of study, study programmes, quality assurance, and student welfare). Following a veto, the Senate discusses the question again after at least eight days have passed, but in the second vote students no longer have veto power.
- Non-academic staff are represented in the Senate, while the trade union representative participates in the work of the Senate without voting rights.
- Students, representatives of local government and business can also be members of the university Council, which is a university's management body.

Most recently, a new Act governing student organizations and representation has been drafted, in whose creation both student representatives and student organizations took part. The Act will introduce student ombudsman at all higher education institutions, and transfer most decision-making processes regarding student associations from the Ministry to the higher education institutions governing bodies. New mechanisms of funding of student organizations are also planned, which aim to ensure greater transparency and peer oversight in allocation of funds.

6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna Process.

During the evaluation of study programmes that have been restructured according to the principles of the Bologna Process, higher education institutions cooperated with partners from business in the creation of their programmes as this was one of the criteria in the evaluation process. The representatives of business are also members of many higher education institutions' Councils.

Representatives of business and social partners are members of the National Bologna Follow-up Group, which serves as an advisory body to the MSES on further activities within the Bologna Process, and have been regularly included in the consultation process during the implementation of reforms.

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements

Degree system

(Scorecard and Eurydice)
Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle.
7. Describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycle.
<p>With the adoption of the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, all higher education institutions were legally obliged to restructure their study programmes in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process and apply for accreditation to the MSES. In the 2005/06 academic year, following the evaluation of all study programmes offered in Croatia, two main cycles of study were introduced and students could no longer enrol in the pre-Bologna structured programmes.</p> <p>In the 2006/07 academic year only a second generation of students enrolled in the Bologna structured study programmes. In the academic year 2005/06 the number of first-year students was 37,161 while in the academic year 2006/07 the number of first-year students was 37,354. Therefore, the percentage of students below doctoral level who are enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2006/07 stands at around 50%.</p>
(Eurydice)
Stage of implementation of the third cycle
8. Describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.
<p>After the evaluation of first and second cycle of Bologna structured study programmes was completed in 2005, the National Council for Higher Education began with the evaluation of third cycle study programmes. The evaluation is based on similar principles as the evaluation of first and second cycle studies. Study programmes are evaluated on their overall quality in comparison with international standards, while special focus is placed on whether a proposed study programme complies with the Bologna Process and whether it meets standards related to teaching staff and available physical resources.</p> <p>In 2005/06 academic year there were 67 doctoral studies offered in Croatia. These programs will only be offered until the remaining students have graduated; new students cannot enrol in these programmes. Since the start of the evaluation of third cycle studies, higher education institutions proposed 99 Bologna structured doctoral programmes and so far 12 have been evaluated.</p> <p>The new doctoral studies last three years and include both taught courses (20-30%) and independent research (70-80%). Most of them include interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills. Normally no compulsory preparatory courses are needed to embark on doctoral studies.</p>

Entry requirements are usually a specific grade point average obtained during graduate studies, along with letters of recommendation. ECTS credits are also assigned in the doctoral studies, but higher education institutions are free to determine the number of credits necessary for the completion of study. Doctoral studies have been included in the proposal for the Croatian Qualification Framework (CROQF) as the final, eighth level, and in the final document on the CROQF they will be, like all other levels, linked to learning outcomes.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Access² to the next cycle

9. Describe the arrangements for access between the first and second cycles and second and third cycles.

Since the early nineties Croatian higher education has been set up in a binary system, differentiating between university studies (ISCED 5A and 6) and professional studies (ISCED 5B). With the implementation of the Bologna process, two cycle structure of study has been introduced for both university and professional studies.

All first cycle qualifications give access to several second cycle programmes. It is also possible to transfer between university and professional study programmes after the completion of any first cycle study programme. There are no requirements for transfer from university first cycle programme to professional second cycle programme, but the universities autonomously determine conditions for admission to university second cycle programme after the completion of professional first cycle programme. The most common conditions may include additional coursework and completion of a written work. There are no first cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle.

All second cycle university qualifications, which account for 85% of all second cycle programmes, give access to at least one third cycle programme. Entry requirements are usually a specific grade point average obtained during graduate studies, along with letters of recommendation. Second cycle professional qualifications (15% of all second cycle programmes) do not give access to the third cycle, requiring students who wish to continue their studies to complete additional coursework at university level.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Implementation of national qualifications framework

10. Describe the stage of implementation of the national qualifications framework to align with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA³.

² Access as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Access: the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education.

³ A Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA: <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

At the beginning of 2006 the MSES formed a working group which began preparations for development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF). Two subgroups have also been formed, one within the Agency for Vocational Education under the CARDS 2002 project and one within the National Bologna-Follow Up Group tasked with the development of the qualifications framework for higher education.

A proposal for CROQF has been completed and during November and December 2006 it has been presented to and discussed with all the relevant stakeholders at three conferences organized by the working group. CROQF is comprised of eight levels, with additional seven sublevels reflecting the particularities of the national education system. Levels six, seven and eight correspond to the three cycles in the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA. So far, the levels have been described only through credit ranges and qualifications gained after the completion of studies within a certain level.

The subgroup within the Agency for Vocational Education has already defined descriptors and key competencies for the first four levels of the CROQF. During 2007 the working group will define common standards and descriptions for all levels which will serve as a basis for development of detailed descriptions for all qualifications based on measurable learning outcomes and competencies.

11. What measures are being taken to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications?

The comprehensive enrolment of students into the two-cycle study system began in the academic year 2005/06. For this reason the first complete cohort of graduates with bachelor qualifications will be entering the labour market in October 2008. Croatia is using the time until 2008 to reform its qualification system. The work on the Croatian Qualifications Framework has started and the new Act on Academic and Professional Titles has been drafted. These documents will provide the labour market with clear guidance on the abilities and skills of bachelor graduates within the wider education framework.

Simultaneously with these changes, the needs of the labour market are being assessed. As part of the TEMPUS SCM project Furtherance of Bologna Process in Croatia, a survey is being conducted in cooperation with the Croatian Chamber of Commerce about the expectations of business from graduates holding bachelor qualifications. This survey will be used to estimate the labour market's needs for graduates with bachelor qualifications, and to plan further educational and policy initiatives.

An important contribution to the employability of students with bachelor qualifications will be the emphasis that the new, Bologna-adjusted curricula, place on the development of generic skills such as group- and team-work, independent research and communication skills. Finally, a new Tempus project that is currently in the application stage plans to develop career counselling services at Croatian universities.

Quality assurance

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

National implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA⁴

12. To what extent is your national system of QA already aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA?

The bodies responsible for quality assurance are the National Council for Higher Education, an expert and advisory body tasked with the development and quality of higher education system in Croatia, and the Agency for Science and Higher Education which provides professional support to the National Council and which is responsible, through its Quality Assurance Department, of assisting in the development of the quality assurance systems at higher education institutions and their evaluation.

In 2005 the National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia created the *Development of Institutional Quality Assurance Units* programme. In July 2005 it awarded funding to eight projects at Universities of Zagreb, Rijeka and Osijek for the establishment of quality assurance units at these universities and their constituent parts. The projects were completed in October 2006 and the quality assurance units at these universities are now operational.

In May 2006 the National Council for Higher Education adopted a Manual for Quality Assurance Systems at Higher Education Institutions, prepared under the CARDS 2002 programme, which fully incorporates *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA*. The manual is used by the newly established quality assurance units at four Croatian universities. During 2006, in accordance with the standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions, these units performed an analysis of the current state of quality assurance, a SWOT analysis and a benchmark analysis. They have also defined quality indicators for teaching and learning processes and designed the structure of their quality assurance system. Full internal evaluation at these universities is expected to be completed during the first part of 2007, after which an external evaluation based on the same standards and guidelines will be performed.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

13. Describe the quality assurance system operating in your country.

The bodies responsible for external quality assurance are the National Council for Higher Education and the Agency for Science and Higher Education. The National Council advises the Minister on regulations for standards and criteria for

⁴ <http://www.enqa.net/files/BergenReport210205.pdf>

the evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes, appoints evaluators, and performs the evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes. The Agency, through its Quality Assurance Department, is responsible for providing expert support in the process of evaluation. External evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes is carried out for the purpose of institutional accreditation and accreditation of study programmes granted by the MSES, and as one of the criteria for the allocation of state funding to higher education institutions.

All higher education institutions are subject to external evaluation according to a schedule devised by the National Council. At the start of 2007 the National Council will adopt a four year evaluation plan. The evaluations are carried out according to the External Review Manual.

For each evaluation of a higher education institution the National Council appoints an expert commission made up of six members: three representatives of another higher education institution from Croatia or abroad (one expert on quality assurance, one on financing and one member of the teaching staff); one member from business, one representative of students and one representative of the Agency. One of the criteria in the evaluation of a higher education institution is their self-evaluation. The evaluation also includes a site visit. On the basis of evaluation the National Council recommends to the Minister to issue or deny issuance of accreditation. The National Council informs the public on the results of the evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of student participation

14. Describe the level of student participation in your national quality assurance system.

Students have regularly been involved in the representative and governing bodies of higher education institutions. Most prominently, student representatives in university governing bodies have the suspension veto power over questions of quality assurance in study programmes. This veto power is granted by the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education.

Students also participated in the consultation process during visits by external evaluation teams to Croatian universities, such as the Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar Visiting Advisors Program to University of Rijeka in 2003, and University of Zagreb and University of Split in 2004. Students were also extensively consulted during the EUA advisory mission to Croatia in 2005, in which one member of the team was a student representative.

For several years now students have been involved in internal evaluations by some faculties and universities, most often through student surveys. More systematic involvement of students began at the end of the first semester of the 2005/06 academic year when most higher education institutions carried out an extensive student survey of the first generation of students enrolled in the Bologna structured study programmes.

With the development of the national quality assurance system, the role and involvement of students has been significantly increased. From January 2007 the nine member Board of the Agency for Science and Higher Education will include a student representative nominated by the Croatian Student Council.

At the start of 2007 the National Council for Higher Education will adopt a four year plan for the evaluation of higher education institutions. The evaluations will be performed by external review teams in accordance with the External Review Manual. The review teams will comprise of six members, one of which will be a student representative. As part of external review, higher education institutions are obliged to provide an internal evaluation report in which students will take part.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of international participation

15. Describe the level of international participation in your national quality assurance system.

International participation in the Croatian quality assurance system began with visits by external evaluation teams to Croatian universities, such as the Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar Visiting Advisors Program to University of Rijeka in 2003, and University of Zagreb and University of Split in 2004, or the EJA advisory mission to Croatia in 2005. Increased international participation began with the evaluation of first and second cycle of Bologna structured study programmes that was carried out in 2005. More than 1.000 reviewers, out of which 25% were foreign, were involved in the evaluation of more than 800 study programmes. Each programme had to be evaluated by at least one foreign reviewer.

From January 2007 the nine member Board of the Agency for Science and Higher Education will include one prominent scientist from abroad. At the start of 2007 the National Council for Higher Education will adopt a four year plan for the evaluation of higher education institutions. The evaluations will be performed by external review teams in accordance with the External Review Manual. The review teams will comprise of six members, three out of which will be representatives of higher education institutions from Croatia or abroad.

In 2001, before the Agency was established, the National Council became a member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies of Higher Education (CEE Network). In November 2006 the Agency became an associated member of International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). The Agency has already started the application procedure for membership in ENQA. It has prepared a self-evaluation report which was reviewed by ENQA and a full application will be made at the beginning of 2007.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of diploma supplement

16. Describe the stage of implementation of the diploma supplement in your country.

The EU/CoE/UNESCO diploma supplement format was established in Croatia through the Ordinance on the Content of Diplomas and Diploma Supplements which came into force in January 2005. Amendments to this Ordinance that came into force at the end of 2006 ensure that all students graduating from the Bologna adjusted study programmes at Croatian higher education institutions in 2007 and onwards will receive their diploma supplements automatically, free of charge, in Croatian and English languages and in the EU/CoE/UNESCO format.

Country-wide enrolment to the Bologna adjusted study programmes began in the academic year 2005/06, and therefore most of the students will receive their diploma supplements after completing the first cycle studies in 2008. Some study programmes were adjusted to the Bologna requirements prior to the academic year 2005/06 so it is expected that 7% of students graduating in 2007 will receive a Diploma Supplement under conditions mentioned above.

(Scorecard)

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

17. Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementing documents⁵ of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Croatia was one of the original signatories of the Lisbon Convention, in April 1997. The Convention was ratified in October 2000, and the new Act on the Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications⁶ that incorporated all the principles of the Lisbon Convention came into effect in July 2004. In December 2006 Amendments to the Act⁷ were adopted which more clearly separate academic from professional recognition and transfer the academic recognition procedure to the higher education institutions. The principles of the supplementing documents to the Lisbon Convention are taken into full account during the recognition procedure.

In July 2004 the MSES established the Croatian ENIC/NARIC office. It became fully operational by December 2004 after which it was transferred to the newly established Agency for Science and Higher Education. Since then, it has

⁵ Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition (2001); Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004); Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001)

⁶ Official Gazette, no. 158/03 <http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/2258.htm>

⁷ Official Gazette, no. 138/06 <http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2006/3114.htm>

received 2.739 requests for recognition of foreign qualifications (95% for professional recognition) out of which 2.537 were recognized, while the rest are in the evaluation procedure. There are no legal obstacles for the recognition of foreign joint degrees and the office has so far recognized several of them.

The following principles are already included in the Act:

- applicants' right to fair assessment,
- recognition if no substantial differences can be proven,
- demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted,
- provision of information about Croatian higher education programmes and institutions.

Regarding the provision of information, the Croatian ENIC/NARIC office cooperates with the Department for Higher Education in the Agency for Science and Higher Education on collecting information on the Croatian higher education system and has detailed information regarding accredited higher education programmes in Croatia. The office maintains a website (www.azvo.hr/enic) but most of the information is provided on request.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of ECTS

18. Describe the credit and accumulation system operating in your country.

With the introduction of the restructured study programmes in the academic year 2005/06, all higher education institutions were legally obliged by the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education to implement ECTS for their first and second cycle programmes. As a rule, each year of studies brings 60 ECTS credits, used both in terms of transfer and accumulation. ECTS credits are also assigned in the third cycle of study, but in this cycle higher education institutions are free to determine the number of credits necessary for the completion of such studies.

19. Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

Croatian National plan accentuates the importance of strengthening the legislative and administrative framework for recognition of qualifications. During a review of national legislation the Committee for the amendments to the Act on Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications found some parts of the Act need to be amended. The amended Act now clearly separates academic from professional recognition, and higher education institutions will be in charge of academic recognition. During the review it was established that the criteria for recognition of foreign educational qualifications are transparent, coherent and reliable, and that differences in terms of content, profile and learning outcomes are considered in a flexible way. Joint degrees are being recognized without problems, and the information on the recognition procedure is readily available.

Lifelong Learning

(Scorecard)

Recognition of prior learning

20. Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

Recognition of prior learning which was based on formal study is performed by respective higher education institutions as a basis for allocation of credits and continuation of study.

There are currently no mechanisms or national guidelines to recognize non-formal and informal learning, but several activities have been initiated in order to draw up such guidelines. The Act on Adult Education, which is currently in parliamentary procedure, includes non-formal and informal learning in the adult education and so opens up the possibility for their recognition.

Within the CARDS 2002 Vocational Education and Training: Modernisation and Institution Building Project, a multi-partner working group comprising representatives from all the main interest groups has prepared a VET White Paper which recommends creation of a VET strategy which would encompass non-formal and informal education. Within the same project the Qualifications and Curriculum Working Group is working towards developing standards for a system of evaluation and recognition of competencies gained by a variety of learning approaches, including non-formal and informal learning.

21. Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education.

The Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education places no obstacles for the provision of flexible learning paths in higher education. Any provisions that deals with such issues are determined autonomously by the respective higher education institutions. This includes admission criteria and flexible delivery methods for part-time students, especially those who are pursuing their studies while still at work. During their studies students take mostly requisite courses with some electives so as to personalize their study programme. The provision of education is being diversified with more opportunities for distance studies and e-learning, which is currently being developed under the JEP Tempus project Education Quality Improvement by E-learning Technology. More flexible delivery methods and programs that have modular structure are available through adult education programs.

Joint degrees

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

22. Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Joint study programmes are explicitly recognized and allowed in the Croatian higher education system in all three cycles, as stipulated by the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education. Joint study programmes that are currently being offered in Croatia vary in the manner in which degrees are awarded, but there exist no legal obstacles for universities to issue joint, double or multiple degrees.

The Croatian National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development launched in 2005 a funding programme entitled *Development of Joint-studies Programmes*. The programme was aimed at supporting the development of graduate and postgraduate joint studies in the priority areas established by the Strategic Plan of the National Foundation. It was designed to contribute to the development of institutional experience in offering joint studies and to identify obstacles in their establishment and execution. Four joint studies projects were accepted and funded with the total of €110.000.

There are also no legal obstacles for the recognition of foreign joint degrees. Croatian ENIC/NARIC office recognizes foreign joint degrees unless it is possible to demonstrate that there is substantial difference between the joint degree for which recognition is sought and the comparable qualification within the Croatian higher education system. The office recognizes these degrees with the greatest flexibility possible and several have been recognized so far.

C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

23. Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country - what percentage of research is carried out in HEIs; are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sectors.

Scientific and research activity in Croatia is carried out through 7 public universities, 26 public science institutes and 16 private science institutes. The largest part of research activities in terms of human resources and research institutions rests within the higher education sector. This sector makes up about 44% of all the research institutions and employs from 50% to 60% of all researchers. Taken together, the university sector and the public science institutes make up almost 80% of all research institutions in Croatia and employ 85% of all researchers. On average, half of full-time equivalent research-teaching staff at higher education institutions are actively involved in research.

A basic structure for conducting research activities in the public sector, including higher education, are scientific research projects and programmes within the nation-wide „Scientific projects” programme which is funded by the MSES. Of these projects, over 70% are performed by universities, while the remaining are performed by public and private science institutes.

The cooperation of the research sector, including higher education, with the business sector is organized and financed by two complementary programmes – RAZUM and TEST. The RAZUM programme provides direct support for increasing the competitive advantage of companies through investment in research, development and technology in cooperation with higher education and research institutions. The management of the programme has been entrusted to the Business and Innovation Centre of Croatia (BICRO). The TEST programme provides support for the development of new technologies, products, processes and services until the commercialization phase and the creation of Centres of Excellence in the area of research and technology on the basis of public-private partnerships. The management of the programme has been entrusted to the Croatian Institute of technology (HIT).

24. What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers; are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?

MSES is taking special care to attract the best students to take up research careers. Integration of young scientists into the scientific community is conducted under a special program called the “Young researchers’ scheme”. Since 2004 a total of 1,084 new jobs for young researchers have been created. Young researchers have the opportunity to use subsidized housing loans with the interest rate of 4.4% or 4.9%. The user pays the interest rate of about 1.7%, and the MSES subsidizes the rest. So far, 1,903 subsidized housing loans were approved.

The social dimension

25. Describe any measures being taken in your country to widen access to quality higher education.

Higher education in Croatia is provided on the principle of equal opportunity for access. There are three main categories of students in Croatia: full-time students supported by the MSES (43% of the total number of students in 2005), full-time students who pay for their studies (28.5%), and part-time students who also pay for their studies (28.5%). Undergraduate students who pay for their studies pay a proportion of the total price of study, which amounts to an equivalent of €800-1.200 per academic year. The paying status of full-time students is determined by the student's placement in a competitive merit-based admissions system.

All full-time students in Croatia are entitled to subsidised meals (a student pays €0.70 – 1.40 per meal), subsidised accommodation (a student pays €16 per month), health insurance, and subsidised transportation (depending on contribution by the local authorities). If full-time students hold temporary employment, their work is covered by special regulations under which the taxes are significantly reduced.

Access to higher education is also supported by a system of state scholarships. They are provided for full-time students whose parents are of low income, gifted students, war veterans, citizens of the town of Vukovar, those who plan to begin their professional careers in regions under special state care, and students who lived in child care facilities or foster families. Scholarships amount to an equivalent of €70 – 110 per month and are provided for the entire period of studying under conditions of continued academic achievement.

A special system of support is in place for the Roma minority students, who are entitled to a yearly scholarship in the amount of €1.200. The state scholarship is also automatically provided for students with disabilities. Some higher education institutions also provide automatic admission to the full-time non paying status to students with disabilities if they achieve a minimum number of points on the entrance examination.

Due to the comprehensive nature of the system of policies to widen access to higher education in Croatia, there currently exists no special system for monitoring the impact of these policies. A process is underway to develop a new system of funding for higher education institutions and the student welfare, which will include an evaluation of these policies.

26. Describe any measures to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background.

The system of scholarships and other financial support tools which alleviate the possibly adverse effect of a student's economic background was described in the previous question.

Guidance and counselling services in Croatia are not provided through a nation-wide programme. Individual universities and faculties provide psychological and career counselling services. There are two TEMPUS Joint European Programmes currently in the application stage which aim to establish guidance and counselling services at Croatian universities.

Mobility

27. Describe any measures being taken in your country to increase student mobility.

The introduction of ECTS has greatly increased inward mobility of students who can now more easily transfer between study programmes or between higher education institutions. In the following years this will be still further increased as more interdisciplinary programmes are introduced that are offered by several higher education institutions.

The main vehicles for student mobility are bilateral and multilateral interuniversity agreements of cooperation, and most Croatian universities have such agreements with neighbouring and central European countries. The full use of these agreements is made through the provision of scholarships by the MSES. In previous years the MSES funded a total of 4,000 months of scholarships per year for exchanges through bilateral agreements. The MSES also awards financial assistance to postgraduate and doctoral specialization abroad and more than 100 scholarships of up to €5,000 each are awarded each year. Possibilities for student exchanges are also available through programs such as Tempus JEP (Joint European Projects) and Tempus IMG (Individual Mobility Grants), Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS), and programmes run by individual organizations (eg. DAAD, Chevening Scholarship Programme, Open Society Institute scholarships).

28. Are portable loans and grants available in your country? If not, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants and loans.

The only type of grants provided to students in Croatia are state scholarships and scholarships provided by regional or local authorities. These scholarships are not portable and can only be used while studying in Croatia.

A comprehensive system of student loans has not been developed yet, but several commercial banks are offering loans to students under market conditions which can be used to pay for studying outside of Croatia. The MSES and the Science and Higher Education Funding Council are in the process of examining new models of student financing which will include scholarships and loans. The MSES is currently in negotiations with several commercial banks with the aim of establish a comprehensive model of loans with significantly reduced interest rates.

29. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to student mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Croatia partially participates in the Erasmus Mundus program because Croatian universities have the status of "third country" universities, but they can send their students and professors to universities abroad. From the academic year 2005/2006 Croatian universities can also host students and professors from abroad. Despite the promotion of this program, only two

Croatian students participated in Erasmus Mundus programs in the academic years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005. In 2007 a new funding and promotion structure is planned to further promote this programme.

The MSES decided that the TEMPUS programme was for the last several years a priority since it has proven an excellent instrument for the support of the higher education sector reform. At the end of 2006 the Agency for Adult Education that will be in charge of the lifelong learning policies has been established, and within it the Centre for Mobility and EU Programmes which will administer the Integrate Lifelong Learning Programme (ILLP).

One of the main obstacles for incoming students is the language barrier, since there are few programs offered in English. In that respect, the University of Zagreb organizes Croatian language courses for foreign and exchange students. Students who come within bilateral agreements are given a grant to attend such courses. In order to attract international students, higher education institutions are providing information on the courses within the new study programs restructured according to the Bologna Process that can be taught in English.

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to increase staff mobility.

Teacher mobility is mainly regulated through bilateral institutional agreements and direct research agreements, and most Croatian universities have such agreements with neighbouring and European countries. In that respect, the ratio of outgoing to incoming professors can be roughly estimated as 2 to 1. Possibilities for teacher exchanges are also available through programs such as Tempus JEP (Joint European Projects) and Tempus IMG (Individual Mobility Grants), Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS), and programmes run by individual organizations (eg. DAAD, Chevening Scholarship Programme, Open Society Institute scholarships).

31. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to staff mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Croatia partially participates in the Erasmus Mundus program because Croatian universities have the status of "third country" universities, but they can send their students and professors to universities abroad. From the academic year 2005/2006 Croatian universities can also host students and professors from abroad. In 2007 a new funding and promotion structure is planned to further promote this programme.

The MSES decided that the TEMPUS programme was for the last several years a priority since it has proven an excellent instrument for the support of the higher education sector reform. Additionally, participation in TEMPUS program considerably intensified mobility of university professors, which is considered a good ground for subsequent increase in mobility within the ILLP. At the end of 2006 the Agency for Adult Education that will be in charge of the lifelong learning policies has been established, and within it the Centre for

Mobility and EU Programmes which will administer the Integrate Lifelong Learning Programme (ILLP).

The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world

32. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

Promotion of the Bologna Process and the EHEA is conducted through two Tempus projects: the 2004 Tempus JEP project "Moving ahead with the Bologna Process in Croatia" and the 2006 TEMPUS SCM project "Furtherance of Bologna Process in Croatia". Through a large-scale programme of information dissemination, organization of seminars, and establishment of a network of academic staff in each faculty and department to facilitate the exchange of information and best practice, the projects are aimed at helping Croatian higher education institutions to integrate in the EHEA, raising awareness, and promoting Bologna reforms and the EHEA.

Future challenges

33. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country.

The main challenges of the Croatia higher education are the functional integration of universities, strengthening of the binary system of education (particularly by strengthening polytechnics and schools of professional higher education), ensuring vertical and horizontal mobility of students in such a binary system, further development of quality assurance and control, and greater synchronization of higher education with the needs of the labour market. In terms of financing of higher education, it will be necessary to establish a new system of financing of higher education, increase financing from other sources besides the state budget, and develop a model of financial support for students that uses available resources more efficiently.