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**REFORMING THE STUDY PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROVISIONS
OF THE BOLOGNA DECLARATION**

A Case Study (January 2003)

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I. Introduction: Trends and challenges facing the higher education system in Croatia

A new proposal of Higher Education Act has been drafted and it has already been thoroughly discussed in academic community. According to the present Higher Education Act and considering two types of studies (university's and polytechnic's), higher education in Croatia is based on a binary system. There are four established universities and the fifth one founded in the year 2002. Polytechnics (seven of them) and many teaching and vocational (professional) (Nomenclature in different languages is neither compared nor harmonised!) higher education schools have been founded in 1998. according to the Higher Education Act of 1993. In total, there are about 120.000 students both at the universities and other higher education institutions. The relations among universities and polytechnics are both, competitive and collaborative, and predominantly the university staff is directly involved in the education process at the polytechnics and higher schools. Also, faculties at universities are allowed to carry out vocational studies according to the special permission issued by the minister. Therefore, in practice, higher education in Croatia follows a mixed model all the time in spite of the legal provision.

The present higher education legislation is not adapted in view of the provisions of the Bologna Declaration, but a draft of a new Higher Education Act is in the process of presentation to the public and it is expected to be promoted and adopted in the Parliament soon (spring 2003). It is supposed that the provisions of the Bologna Declaration will be fully respected.

Croatia officially signed the Bologna Declaration in 2001, but the University of Zagreb, as a leading higher education institution in Croatia, has been devoted to the Bologna process since 1997, and in 2000 Senate of the University of Zagreb decided to accept the provisions of the Bologna Declaration. Also, the National Council of Higher Education has adopted the higher education policy in agreement with the Bologna Declaration.

Recently, specific developments following the provisions of the Bologna Declaration are defined in the expected legislation.

By providing series of documents, universities and other institutions of higher education have expressed their readiness to participate in the European transnational process. The academic community must agree on the most successful working methodology in order to reach the objectives of the Bologna process and set the pace for its implementation.

Taking into consideration the fact that Croatia joined the Bologna process in May, 2001 in Prague and signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with European Union, there was neither room nor time for waiting; competence, responsibility and deadlines for the fulfilment of obligations all had to be specified according to existing documents. The overall Croatian legislation, including the Higher Education Act have to be in conformity with European laws.

There are many current challenges referring the higher education in Croatia.

Priority attention should be paid to the well known six core objectives of the Bologna Declaration.

This is an essential precursor in the move towards harmonisation of the higher education system in Croatia with their European counterparts.

The Bologna Declaration (aimed at the harmonisation of higher education qualification systems in Europe) sets the following core objectives to be met in Croatia:

- ❖ Adoption of the higher education system based on two cycles;
- ❖ Adoption of the system of easily readable and comparable degrees;

- ⊗ Introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);
- ⊗ Creation of ECTS relevant documents;
- ⊗ Creation and introduction of a Diploma Supplement;
- ⊗ Implementing criteria and establishing the National Directorate for Recognition of Academic Achievements and Competence (equivalent to NARIC office);
- ⊗ Promotion of the mobility of students, teaching staff, researchers and administrative personnel;
- ⊗ Promotion of European trans-national education to ensure its better quality;
- ⊗ Promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education.

The universities undertook some activities in order to promote the Bologna process:

- a) implementation of the ECTS as a pilot project at some faculties of the University of Zagreb (since 1998/1999),
- b) lectures and round tables on the introduction of ECTS (with the participation of EU experts)
- c) a self-evaluation carried out in 1999 by the University of Zagreb in order to facilitate the higher education reform and quality assessment performed by several external evaluation bodies (CRE-today EUA, Salzburg Seminar, Academia Europea)
- d) dissemination of relevant information via newsletters and web sites of both the Ministry of Science and Technology and University of Zagreb (e.g. a special issue of the "University Bulletin", dedicated to the Bologna Declaration and ECTS) was published in 2000; the University of Rijeka published a brochure on the Bologna process, and some major higher education institutions (e.g. the Faculty of Science of the University of Zagreb launched a newsletter aimed at promoting awareness on the use of ECTS and mobility concepts among its students and staff).

It is clear that these activities were a very useful start of the process but there is a need to move forward with a series of changes that taken together complete the task of achieving diploma recognition and student mobility within the Higher education system in Croatia.

As a further step towards harmonisation of Croatian higher education scheme with the European higher education area there will be a new special law on Recognition of higher education qualifications. This one is supposed to replace the exiting law from 1996. The new legislation draft will incorporate the duties and powers of the newly proposed body, ENIC/NARIC office, particularly in respect of co-operation with the new national agency for quality assurance. Development change of standards for the assessment and recognition of competencies will be discussed in the near future again. This legislation is expected to be adopted soon (spring 2003).

II. The state of curricula in view of the provisions of the Bologna Declaration

1. Changes in curricula and their development

Concerning the change of study programmes, the University of Zagreb has elaborated several policy documents in such a way as to respond to the provisions of the Bologna Declaration. Since the new legislation hasn't been provided yet, the policy suggests to make possible the

changes within the frame of the actual legislation. This is a way to make the academic community ready for real change at the very moment of the adoption of the new legislation, which will fully respect the Bologna Declaration. Due to this policy documents, it was not obligatory to change the existing study programmes, but every newly proposed study program had to respect the provisions of the Bologna Declaration.

Following such policy, some faculties, taken as pilot institutions, already in 1998 implemented ECTS credit system including workload coefficients. They developed necessary documents like Learning Agreement, Diploma Supplement, and they prepared the Information Package, all for the graduate study (full degree / master students). At the same time, other of our faculties reorganised postgraduate study according to the Bologna Declaration. At the very beginning of the Bologna process it was suggested to all of the faculties of the University of Zagreb to benchmark their study programmes with the partner departments from European universities with which they cooperate. Our experience is that they are not advanced in the Bologna process at all. So, our remark at this stage is that the benchmarking at European higher education scene, concerning curricula change should precede the common harmonisation process.

The existing Higher Education Act and corresponding legislation on the university organisation and structure is the main obstacle for the full harmonisation of the Croatian higher education even within the university itself. According to the present Croatian legislation, the degree structure at the Croatian universities is organised as the graduate study (full degree/master equivalent), but it is called undergraduate study. This is the consequence of the fact that the study programmes are organised in one cycle only, and that diploma can be obtained only when full curriculum has been fulfilled including the individual research project, written thesis and final examination. Mostly, duration of such studies is defined as the time strictly devoted to the lecturing: e.g. 10 to 12 semesters are assigned to medical study programmes, and 8 to 9 to the other study programmes. Concerning the degree structure met in the Bologna process, additional confusion appears today with the actual postgraduate study which is divided into two cycles. The first one is called “magisterial study” and usually translated as the master degree, and compared with the master in Bologna Declaration even though it can be compared to Ph.D. study due to the level of education and research and duration of study (3 to 4 years). The second cycle within present legislation is called “doctoral study”, and usually takes 4 years of research. It is usually treated as Ph.D. level, even though corresponds better to the (in some countries) habilitation process. Obviously, there is a lot of misunderstanding not only in the general public opinion, but in the academic community, the legislation writers and ministry in charge as well. The misunderstanding originates back to the early 1960 through the higher education reform corresponding to the local social, economic and political circumstances of that time.

To overcome all these obstacles, University of Zagreb, and lately the other universities in Croatia organised seminars and round tables for the staff as well as for the students. Some publications about ECTS credit system have been printed in order to help understanding harmonisation of the higher education system. The local experts from the University of Zagreb have been called to the other Croatian universities, as well as to the universities in the region (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania), to promote Bologna process, ECTS implementation and harmonisation and mutual recognition of diplomas and study programmes.

Thanks to such promotion, ECTS credit system is in partial use at about 2/3 of the faculties of the University of Zagreb. But, unfortunately, credit transfer inside the University is not possible due to rigid study programmes and legal entity of every single faculty that makes part of the University. Even though Croatian students have no access to the Socrates, Erasmus, or Leonardo European mobility programme, hundreds of our students are mobile

through CEEPUS, IAESTE, DAAD, bilateral, and other co-operation programmes. Hopefully, in the near future, more joint degrees will be established between University of Zagreb and some European universities.

In conclusion, since the current Croatian legislation does not envisage two cycles of higher education, the education is processed through the integrated cycle giving full degree, equivalent to the master degree. The curricula for the degree of Bachelor and that of Master will be possible to organise according to the new legislation. The benchmarking of curricula has already started.

Concerning the accreditation, recognition of qualifications, and recognition of degrees and periods of study, the University of Zagreb made a self-analysis concerning institutional organisation, quality culture, and future development. The recognition of degrees and periods of study depends on a specific discipline and it is not regulated on the national level yet. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Science and Technology, under the influence of the University of Zagreb, applied a CARDS project on accreditation of academic achievements and competencies and on regulation of recognition of qualifications, and recognition of degrees.

At some faculties, as the pilot faculties of the University of Zagreb, Diploma Supplement has been fully developed since 1997 as the major document promoting student vertical mobility. It helps our graduate students to explain the confusion regarding local exotic academic titles connected to the integrated one cycle study programmes. Mostly, it has been used by our graduate students applying for doctoral study or a job in European countries.

Due to the university disintegrated structure and rigid study programmes, students are not encouraged to the horizontal mobility. Concerning the staff mobility in accordance with the Bologna Declaration, teachers of the University of Zagreb collaborate with the other Croatian universities and polytechnics. But, international mobility of teachers is not developed. From recently, some visiting professors from European countries have been teaching at the University of Zagreb.

2. Adoption of the system of easily readable and comparable degrees and diploma supplements

In order to foster transparency in qualification structures and convergence in the structure of higher education institutions throughout Europe, it is of vital importance to adopt the names/nomenclature for both, different higher education and academic qualification structures.

The newly suggested 3-5-8 (3+2+3), or 4-5-8 (4+1+3) schemes must be discussed and compared with academic titles introduced in the early 60s of the last century, as the result of not only professional but also political and socio-cultural conditions and reasons.

What does it mean?

In the previously mentioned circumstances, titles such as “dipl.ing.” (ingeniarius diplomate probatus) have been used for students completing sciences study programmes (without engineering courses) or the title of a Doctor of Medicine has been withdrawn and the title of Professor has been equally used for teachers at secondary schools and top-level scientists holding lectures at universities. A 4-year-study programme has been equalled to the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) programme, although only integrated study programmes are offered and the real workload of such 4 academic years of tuition rather corresponds to the Master of Science (M.Sc.). The title of the Master of Science (magister scientiarum) has been introduced as an academic level between the university Diploma degree and a Doctoral degree etc.

Croatia is not the only country where exotic academic titles have been used. There are similar cases in many other European countries that have been trying to restructure their higher education systems and introduce new academic titles in the last decades. One of the examples was a reform carried out in Finland about 10 years ago.

That is why the academic title of **baccalaureus** should be introduced for newly established **undergraduate study** and obtained after at least 3 years of higher education process. This title is in conformity with European titles as well as Croatian tradition, because it was first mentioned by king and emperor Leopold I in the 1669 charter that establishes the *Academia Zagrebiensis*, the forerunner of the University of Zagreb.

The next level, **graduate study**, that lasts at least 2 subsequent years, should lead to the academic title of **Master of Science** or **Graduated Engineer**, depending on the candidate's professional field. For instance, as the title of the Master of Pharmacy has never been abandoned, a graduate from the Faculty of Science could receive the degree of a Master of Natural Sciences, Master of Physics or Master of Chemistry etc., depending on different professional fields. A graduate from the Faculty of Civil Engineering should obtain the title of a Graduated Civil Engineer or a similar title depending on a discipline.

So, in conformity both with our higher education tradition, and proposed harmonised European standards (Bologna), the Croatian higher education studies would comprise 3 study cycles. Postgraduate study would be the third cycle and it would lead to a doctorate with the academic title of Doctor of Science (doctor scientiarum - dr.sc.). Two study cycles (undergraduate and graduate study) and at least 3 years of further study and research have to be completed before getting doctoral degree.

As the result of such higher education structure consolidation, the title of Master of Science would not be used any more. The title of Master of Science (M.Sc.) that could be achieved in the last 40 years, should not be compared to the title of Master (magister - mag.) obtained after completed professional studies within a certain scientific field. The latter could be achieved once our higher education structure has been consolidated with the European.

Pedagogical studies educating primary and secondary school teachers is a topic of the detailed discussion at the moment.

3. Diploma supplement

A joint working group of the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES (Strasbourg, 16 -18 March, 1999) suggested the introduction of a Diploma Supplement into higher education institutions, which has been accepted in Croatia by law already in 1993. Diploma Supplements should be gradually adopted in phases and, as in the case of the ECTS-system implementation, introduced faculty by faculty. They must be designed to facilitate the recognition of fields of study, study as a whole and different cycles within study structure. Diploma Supplement is conferred as an additional document to Diploma. It is important to note that academic levels should be acknowledged according to the current system of recognition, as well as the new one.

The currently valid Higher Education Law envisages Diploma and Diploma Supplement conferral upon the completed university course of study. Diploma provides students' biography data, information on the nature and length of study and the academic degree obtained. Besides such information, there is no other data about what the actual academic degree stands for. In line with the ECTS-system, Diploma Supplement contains valuable data, which has not been mentioned in Diploma and is of vital importance for the understanding of the completed course of study and the achieved level of education.

Considering the great number of details that should be noted down in Diploma Supplement, the pilot project (Guide for ECTS Users) divided this document into 2 parts, which proved to be very efficient:

- Diploma Supplement
- Appendix to Diploma Supplement (We have accepted such division).

As the Guide clearly depicts, Diploma Supplement must contain only the most important information about the student, which takes up no more than one page and Appendix to Diploma Supplement that must contain all the other useful information.

Appendix must be free from value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about Diploma recognition. In other words, Appendix must contain only objective data together with a detailed description of programmes of study as well as obligations and workload during the course of studies. Supplement is an addition to Diploma, but cannot be used in its place. It must have a national and international validity. Furthermore, Supplement cannot be used instead of a Curriculum Vitae. Diploma itself, the language it is written in, its content as well as its visual and textual form are all defined by a special book of rules, which does not have to effect the form and content of the additional document, and vice versa. Supplement is not legally valid and must not be used without an authentic Certificate or Diploma that confirms the education level acquired. It facilitates access to a certain academic programme, exemption from parts of programme (because they have already been passed at some other university) and enhances employment and student training. Supplement should be published from a central institution in order to reduce costs, prevent variations in content and approach as well as possible frauds and misrepresentations.

Supplements can be written in the language chosen by the issuing institution. Special attention should be paid to Supplement translations and names/ nomenclature. However, names of academic levels, i.e. awarded degrees, must not be translated, but the authentic Croatian and Latin name must be used instead. In that way, the official body for Diploma recognition is free to estimate the quality and quantity of acquired knowledge and skills. By not translating academic titles into the authentic language of the Supplement, any unintentional suggestion concerning equivalence of similar or different Diplomas in the process of their international recognition is completely avoided.

Taking into consideration the future needs of mobile students an additional document to Supplement and Appendix should be issued. Evaluation of such documents is regarded as one of the problems above the local level, because, apart from the fluctuation of goods and capital, an intensive mobility of highly educated labour is equally expected. According to a model developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES, a Supplement must contain a complete package of information about qualifications and acquired knowledge and skills on the basis of the following data:

- a series of personal information about the student and useful data on the university and faculty that may facilitate contacts with the central institution that issued Diploma and Supplement and thus, check the credibility of the information supplied by the student.
- description of the study programme, information on the national higher education system and the position of this programme within the system. The purpose of this description is to provide only the basic characteristics of the system and study programme and to serve as a guide for a more detailed information on web pages of the university and faculty in order not to overload the Supplement. Taking into consideration possible frequent changes and continuous evolution of study programme, it is extremely important to describe the national higher education system and study programme that were valid at the time of Diploma and Supplement's publication. University institutions that supervise and approve study programmes, and thus focus on quality assurance, such as the University

Senate or National Council for Higher Education (which is the case in Croatia), should equally be noted down.

- description of students' obligations and workload during the course of study. It should provide the lowest exam-passing rate, i.e. the percentage of successfully completed exam exercises (40%, 50% or 60%).
- exact level of degree obtained and its place within the specific national higher education system should be explained in order to define its function, for instance, whether this degree could be used for further university or professional studies and whether it leads to some specific qualification or university level of study. When a degree does not lead to employment or practical work within a field of "regulated profession", it is important to mention the institution which validates it. Besides having adequate degrees, student trainees studying to become teachers and doctors must be enlisted in the professional register.
- information on the way of studying, namely, if it is a full-time, part-time or lifelong study. This information should include the time of study spent abroad, too.
- time needed to complete the studies and committed workload, including every additional component, such as practical work. Workload should comprise the overall effort expected from a student, including the time spent at lectures, practical exercises, consultations with supervisors as well as the time used for studying and sitting for exams, etc.
- grading scale, national compared to ECTS (see chapter on "Introduction of an ECTS-compatible credit accumulation system")
- course units enrolled must be coded to facilitate the search for every unit's curriculum within the information package (in print or through the Internet data base)
- number of hours spent at lectures, seminars, practical exercises, consultations with supervisors etc., envisaged for successful acquisition of each course unit's subject-matter
- note on the student's individual research/ artistic project and the grade obtained
- information about the institution and supervisors whose guidance and support facilitated the final research work
- if the final research work leads to the preparation of a Thesis (Diploma paper), it is important to note down its title, the language it is written on and the library where it is archived. If the Thesis is written in Croatian, it is important to mention whether it includes the summary in English or some other language. That is why every Thesis should contain a bibliography reference card in Croatian and English to make useful data from the Thesis available (In our case Diploma thesis is stored at the relevant faculty and doctoral thesis in the National and University Library).
- whether and when the Thesis was defended and the grade received
- whether the Final examination was completed and how it was marked
- awards obtained during the course of study
- note on special students' activities in the course of their study, contributing to educational process and/or science, such as being an undergraduate assistant, participating in a research project, coach for a group of students etc.
- national and ECTS grades of all passed exams or a note on all completed courses that are not graded
- transcript of records
- transcript of all fulfilled requirements that make part of the study programme and are not graded, but are included in the students' workload, such as field work, professional training, foreign language courses etc.
- GPA (arithmetic average) of all passed exams
- all additional data relevant for better understanding of the study programme.

All these data are important for the recognition of degree and assure its righteous evaluation. It is generally recommended that professional/ academic titles should not be compared to similar foreign titles. Therefore, the Supplement should provide information on candidates' realistic level of skills and knowledge acquired to enable their proper classification in the further course of study or help them find a job. Introduction of the Supplement eliminates the problem of separate degree "nostrification" and facilitates the understanding of each study programme despite exotic and unintelligible academic titles used in certain countries.

The Supplement does not guarantee any automatic degree recognition and does not restrict the right of an academic, professional or governmental institution entitled to recognise it, but facilitates its work and enables righteous evaluation of each separate degree. This document should be carefully used. Recognition of foreign qualifications should be seen as a method of competence, experience and knowledge evaluation, so primary attention should be paid to a "fair recognition" without any attempts at equalising their value. The users of Diploma Supplements should focus on learning results and pass their value judgement on the basis of quality and quantity of the information enclosed. All confusing details should be avoided in the Supplement, but information necessary for its righteous evaluation, without additional explanations and instructions for further information sources, must be included.

As one of the signatory countries of the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe and the Lisbon Convention, Croatia committed itself to developing a legal framework for insurance and creation of a clear evaluation system as well as degrees and qualifications recognition system. For that purpose, the National Information Centre, as a part of the ENIC/ NARIC network must be set up as it was suggested by an European expert, invited recently by the minister, to discuss these issues within Croatian academic circle.

4. Appendix to diploma supplement

A good example of the Appendix to Diploma Supplement is a document that has been used at some of our faculties since 1998 in line with recommendations of the Senate and the Committee for Introduction of the ECTS Credit System at the University of Zagreb. The Appendix has been used in practice owing to the fact that it has been requested by and given to students pursuing doctoral studies or seeking employment in European and non-European countries.

5. Envisaged developments

The most important change can be envisaged in the harmonisation of the Croatian legislation. The Act on Higher Education, the Act on Science that will appear merged, the Act on Academic Degrees and Titles, together with the new organisation of higher education institutions and expected guaranteed autonomy of such institutions, will probably make full implementation of Bologna Declaration possible. Dynamics of the introduction of specific changes is not available yet, but it is expected that all the mentioned acts will be accepted within this year (2003). Accordingly, all major changes in higher education following the provisions of the Bologna Declaration could be made till 2006. Of course, the faculties are working on changing on their study programmes, organising the curricula for the degree of Bachelor and that of Master, even earlier.

The higher education reform in Croatia is fostered by introducing academic achievements and competence recognition at policy and institutional level in line with the Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon convention. The harmonisation of the Croatian Higher

Education system with the standards and practices of the EU member states is furthered, thus opening the way to diploma recognition and facilitating Croatia's European integration process.

The present situation in the process of the academic achievement recognition in Croatia is fragmented as regards to the criteria and dual in procedure. Namely, recognition of interdisciplinary studies is conducted by the Rector's office engaging an *ad hoc* body of experts, whereas for the recognition of specific study programmes the relevant Faculty Council appoints a committee of professionals. But, the procedure of recognition of higher education achievements obtained at non-standard institutions or by extra-institutional study programme is not defined by the law at all. This situation is the consequence of the organisational structure of the Croatian universities.

Recent research has indicated that there are problems in respect of recognition. This research has shown that students from well known universities in the States and Europe have not had their degrees recognised in Croatia. This is in part due to Croatian universities currently using assessment criteria based on curriculum rather than outcomes. In the absence of a standardised system based on a European model university recognition committees focus on quantitative issues (the number of semesters studied and the length of a thesis) rather than qualitative. This is at variance with the European universities who are more concerned with the outcomes of programmes and student competency.

We learnt that university degree recognition in the EU member states is based upon the existence of quality assurance systems. The quality assurance systems are often based on the regulations of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. These regulations were approved by the Third Network General Assembly on 27/5/2002. Essentially universities should have in place quality assurance systems such an integrated process of institutional audit informed by discipline/thematic audit trails. Normally each country will have in place a Quality assurance agency which is charged with the issuing and implementation of these standards. The proposal to establish such an agency in Croatia is incorporated in the draft legislation that will shortly be laid before the legislature. This should assist in the recognition process, once the quality standards have been implemented in Croatia.

As party of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (**Lisbon Recognition Convention**), the Republic of Croatia should become an active participant of the ENIC network. In November 2002 , the Croatian government formally ratified the Lisbon agreement.

An ENIC centre is a body set up by the National Authorities. The size and the specific competence of this body may vary but it will normally provide information on:

- The recognition of foreign diplomas, degrees and other qualifications
- Education systems in both foreign countries and the home country
- Opportunities for studying abroad, including information on loans and scholarships, as well as practical advice on questions relating to mobility and equivalence.

The Croatian ENIC office if it functions within the European model will have the following principal target groups:

- Students particularly those planning to study abroad
- Parents
- Employers
- Universities and other higher educational institutions
- Ministries responsible for higher education

- Other interested persons and organisations.

In Croatia, the ENIC network is in its embryonic phase, two members of the Ministry work part time on this activity and hear appeals from students dis-satisfied with decisions made by the universities in respect of their academic qualifications achieved in foreign universities. Currently in the region of 50 appeals are heard each year in the ministry. All records of these appeals are maintained in manual paper format. It is difficult to anticipate what the annual workload of a fully functional national ENIC office would be in Croatia, however research from the Swedish ENIC office would indicate that in a country with the size and population of Croatia, the following would apply:

- That in the region of 600-1200 applications for evaluation and statements of comparability would be received and that all would be completed
- That only higher education qualifications would be evaluated
- That assessment would be accepted from any holder of a foreign qualification, any authority that requires an assessment for its administrative procedures, any employer that requires an assessment in order to determine whether or not to hire an individual with foreign qualifications and any educational institution
- That the turnaround period would be in the region of three weeks in respect of any request for information. In no case should the processing of an application take more than four months. The maximum period allowed will be incorporated in the new draft law on recognition
- That initially work / advice would be divided on the basis of locality but would eventually move towards national assessment
- Staffing would be in the region of seven people, five academics and two administrators
- That there would be a national database with different levels of access
- That this office would have a training and development function.

6. Aims to be achieved

First aim: Amended legislation that relates to higher education, recognition and student mobility

1.1 Collect advice on the type of regulations/directives/by-laws that could be part of any Act on Recognition of Foreign Diplomas and Periods of Study (of mobile students) respecting the codes of good practice adopted by the EU Member States, the Council of Europe and the UNESCO;

1.2 Collect advice on the preparation of amendments for laws and by-laws concerning higher education (Law on Higher Education, Law on Academic Degrees and Professional Titles, etc.) to be compatible to the amended Act on Recognition.

1.3 Collect advice on regulations that will cover the purpose of recognition (employment or further study) and considerations for partial and conditional recognition

1.4 Collect advice on systems for recognition of people who might have lost their degrees or documentation due to refugee status

Second aim: The National Directorate for Recognition of Academic Achievements and Competence (NDRAAC equivalent to NARIC) associated to the Croatian ENIC office with adequate resources allocated for its functioning.

2.1 Find assistance with the defining of the role of the ENIC / NARIC national office as the national information Centre on recognition. This will involve the production of a paper

indicating different models currently operating in the EU and a recommendation for the Croatian situation. The drawing up of a mission statement and set of organisational objectives which includes a definition of remit, an outline of the warrants and rights of the ENIC/NARIC, which must include the ensuring of the promotion of the student mobility concept and full implementation of the ECTS.

- 2.2 Find assistance for the development of a methodology and code of good practice used for recognition
- 2.3 Find assistance with the development of an organisational structure and functions chart
- 2.4 Find assistance with the design of an archive and a database of the cases going through a recognition procedure (including those carried out over the last 10 years); the database should not only be applicable in future processes of recognition of diplomas for graduate students, but also in processes of dealing with academic achievements for mobile students (at HE institutions) and professional competence for holders of academic degrees
- 2.5 Find assistance how to ensure that the national authority responsible for recognition (ENIC/NARIC office) and the national authority responsible for quality assessment / accreditation (the National Council for Higher Education / QAA) work in a co-ordinated manner; This will be achieved by the development of a set of procedures for good practice
- 2.6 Find assistance for the design, delivery and management of training for ENIC/NARIC office personnel and workshops for credential evaluators; A minimum of 5 training sessions
- 2.7 Find assistance for in house training / seminars / work groups designed to improve the management of the recognition process and the efficient functioning of the office. A minimum of 3 sessions.

Third aim: The introduction and implementation of the quality control systems that are required by the Lisbon agreement into the university / institutions of higher education in order to assist the recognition process.

- 3.1 Find assistance among the experts who are developing the agency for Quality Assurance and its implementation arm (National council for higher education) in order to ensure that the appropriate systems are introduced in the Higher education institutions This will be achieved by regular meetings.
- 3.2 Find assistance to provide advice on the documentation that will be required in order to implement quality assurance into the universities. This will include the programme specification meeting the information requirements of each group of stakeholders (employers, academic community, current students, intending students)
- 3.3 To work with the appropriate bodies (including quality assurance agency, University rectors office, deans, ministry) to develop the criteria on which the following essential documentation that meets EU standards can be developed, these will include:

Academic community Documents. Module programme documents

Employers information. The transcript (Diploma Supplement), personal profile of student and institution, customised statement with reference

Quality assurance agency documentation. External evaluation documents including module / programme / subject reviews, external examiner reports, validation reports, student feedback reports and systems, professional body reports and feedback ,accreditation reports

Information to Students currently on programmes of study. Development of student handbook and guides that include module guides, key skills guide, assessment and

appeals criteria, levels descriptors and the ETCS points awarded for each course component

Information to intending students. This will include an on-line guide, course leaflet, prospectus and other relevant information and contact numbers.

- 3.4 To work on the design and implementation of systems that ensure reliability and accessibility of the information provided in the documents stated above. The Quality Assurance Agency will have the responsibility of ensuring that institutions have effective mechanisms for the review and validation of such information. It is important for the consultant to assist the university in the design of systems that can be used in the monitoring of this data. The output will be a set of guidelines for good practice.
- 3.5 To help university staff and academics in the movement towards the Lisbon agreement focus on the development of Systems that make learning goals and outcomes explicit. This will ensure that programmes contain aims, objectives, behavioural objectives and learning outcomes. **This is critical towards recognition of diplomas/degrees throughout Europe. The concept is to make academic standards more explicit. This process requires a clear and explicit connection between the educational aims, the way the aims are realised (teaching, learning and assessment methods) and the specific learning intentions "what a learner will be expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning" and the demonstration that these outcomes have been achieved throughout the assessment process. The output will be that this specification is met in the university**
- 3.6 To work on the design of programmes that will ensure that these systems are implemented in the university, this will include task forces, working groups, organisation of training sessions and seminars for senior staff from university and ministry. This will include the creation of some task groups, working groups and more training sessions

Fourth aim: Increased awareness of university staff, students and general public about the problems and solutions concerning higher education harmonisation, student mobility and recognition of diplomas and other academic and/or professional achievements. In particular the creation of the journal "Mobile student" and other support publicity material/documentation:

- 4.1 The development of a marketing strategy and information campaign targeting the local media about the challenges and advantages of higher education harmonisation;
- 4.2 The further refinement of the journal 'Mobile Student', its successful re-launching and the piloting of two editions
- 4.3 The development of a business and marketing plan for the Journal "Mobile Student" including a strategy for attracting advertising and sponsorship revenue.
- 4.4 The development of a small editorial office with appropriate staff located in a faculty of the university or the rectorate. Organisational structure and staffing to be developed in conjunction with the beneficiary.
- 4.5 Editing and publishing relevant brochures and leaflets to improve the information on all aforementioned aspects among the University community; minimum of 1500 leaflets
- 4.6 Seminars on student mobility for different target groups at higher education institutions (5 minimum). It is anticipated that there will be three seminars directed at the Media on topics such as diploma recognition, the ECTS as well as the updating on changes that have been made by the academic community in Croatia in the quest for harmonisation of Higher education towards meeting European standards

Fifth aim: The drawing up of a specification of Management Information System (MIS) and assistance with the development of a Higher Education MIS that will assist in the efficient

and effective management of the quality systems that exist in Universities and institutions of Higher education in Croatia. In addition drawing up a specification and assisting in the implementation of MIS systems that meets the requirements of the ENIC / NARIC office. Such specifications will be drawn up following full discussion with the government authorities and will include costing.

- 5.1 Drawing up in consultation with the universities, a specification as well as a plan for implementation, of a Management Information System (MIS) that meets the needs of the academic community. This MIS system is needed because of the changes that will be brought about by the signing of the Lisbon agreement such as the creation of quality assurance agencies with the requirement that such quality control systems are implemented in the universities.
- 5.2 Drawing up a specification of a management information system that meets the needs of the ENIC/NARIC offices. This will include recommendations on the type of databases that are required in order to ensure the proper functioning of a office of this type. The office will normally have systems, procedures and databases that meet the European standards for offices of this type. In particular there will be the need to draw up a specification that meets the system requirements of a database of the cases currently within and those going through the recognition procedure (including those carried out over the last 10 years). The database should also include the result of appeals that have been decided by the ministry. The database should not only be applicable in future processes of recognition of diplomas for graduate students, but also in processes of dealing with academic achievements for mobile students (at HE institutions) and in determining professional competence for holders of academic degrees. The costs include a sum of money in order to secure the purchase of the basic database required in order to make the ENIC/NARIC operational whilst awaiting the results of this research.
- 5.3 Producing a report that outlines the specification and details the costing of such proposals. Such a report will provide advice on the implementation of these databases and will be presented to the academic community.

Sixth aim: Wide implementation of the ECTS (using the EU competency outcomes approach) with information package and relevant environment, as the basic indispensable requirement for recognition. This will feature as a part of the transcript of the Diploma supplement.

- 6.1 To give assistance with the further development and refinement of the existing pilot schemes in order to achieve an acceptable system in accordance with EU practices. The implementation of the ECTS at all higher education institutions and its incorporation into study programmes, using the experience from the local pilot project. The final system to be included in the ECTS Information Package; the output measure will be a fully functional office working to EU standards.
- 6.2 To give advice and assistance with the development and establishment of appropriate codification mechanisms which conform with the EU criteria for credential evaluation. The output will be a set of codes that meet EU credential standards.
- 6.3 To develop the auxiliary documentation that becomes a basis of the transcript for the Diploma Supplement. The output will be the development of a transcript that meets EU standards.
- 6.4 To give assistance with the development of a series of bi-lateral agreements between Croatian universities and an EU counterpart that ensure effective and efficient recognition of periods of study abroad. The objective of this process to benefit the student who wishes to study in foreign universities. These agreements will be piloted in a series of

Universities and faculties throughout Croatia. The output measure will be a minimum of 2 bilateral agreements.

- 6.5 To produce and promote new guidelines/codes of good practice for the ECTS implementation. A draft copy of these handbooks to be made available to all the universities and institutions of higher education. In addition a shortened version for students explaining their rights and giving assistance on the process of studying abroad as well as obtaining accreditation for their studies will be developed and piloted.

III. Conclusions

Main achievements of the University of Zagreb in promoting curriculum reform in view of the provisions of the Bologna Declaration are the pilot projects implemented at some faculties of the University of Zagreb. Also very important achievement of the University of Zagreb is the influence on the other Croatian universities as well as on the other universities in the region respecting the provisions of the Bologna Declaration.

The pilot projects showed the benefits of the implementation of the Bologna Declaration, and disadvantages correlated to the specific organisation of the Croatian universities. It has been shown the readiness of Croatian university staff and Croatian students to face the changes: not only the readiness, but even a strong will to be harmonised to the European higher education system. This intention was shown through number of actions taken in order to prepare the higher education system for the harmonisation, even years before the relevant Ministry showed the interest, and in spite of the non-adequate legislative circumstances. Since the legislative is in the process of changes and a lot of work has already been done, it can be expected faster implementation of Bologna process at the University of Zagreb, and also at the other Croatian universities.

1. Assumptions underlying the project intervention

- The Law on Higher Education has been passed and enforced on the basis of a consensus between the authorities and the academic community.
- The Government has acknowledged the importance of establishing a centralised ENIC/NARIC office and has provided an appropriate level of funding.
- The Government supports and promotes the importance of mobility in the academic community.
- Support to the mobility centre is conditional on the Government making adequate financial commitments for their long-term functioning.
- Public communication and awareness campaigns have been launched to promote ECTS and educational mobility.
- That resources can be made available from either the Croatian Ministries or the European Union or other donor agencies to fund the databases that are essential for the full and effective implementation of this project.

2. Risks

- That the changes introduced particularly in the area of quality assurance in the universities are resisted by the faculties and that the central rectory office lacks the resolve to force through the essential changes required.
- That the government does not introduce the necessary legislative changes that are essential in order to legitimise and enforce change.
- That essential support systems particularly those relating to essential electronic databases are not introduced either due to lack of funding or the unwillingness of stakeholders to participate in this process.
- That the new Quality Assessment Agency does not provide appropriate quality standards and that these are not enforced by the academic community.

The project is therefore expected to improve the mobility of students, academics, researchers and administrative personnel, promote higher standards for quality of education and stimulate cultural diversity and openness, which is all in line with Bologna process.