

bologna process

NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

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1. Main achievements since Berlin

1.1. Give a brief description of important developments, including legislative reforms

In July 2003 the Croatian Parliament passed The Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, to which a number of amendments were added in July and November 2004. The present Act and its amendments form the legal framework and preconditions for the following changes in the system of higher education in the Republic of Croatia.

- The Act promotes European standards and is compatible with the Bologna Declaration.
- The Act will be followed by sub-legislation aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Bologna Process in institutions of higher education in Croatia.
- The Act guarantees university autonomy.
- By the end of 2007, faculties at Croatian universities will lose their status of legal entity which they have at present and which will be passed on to the universities.
- The two newly-established Croatian universities, the University of Dubrovnik and the University of Zadar, have corporate status; their departments do not have the status of legal entities.
- A new funding system for higher education will be introduced as of 1 January 2006, which will enable the universities to start functioning as integrated institutions.

2. National organisation

2.1. Give a short description of the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their competencies (For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport (MSES) is the only ministry responsible for higher education in Croatia.

The National Council for Higher Education is an independent and professional body that consults the MSES. The Government proposes the members of the National Council which are in turn confirmed by the Croatian Parliament.

The National Council for Higher Education has the following responsibilities:

1. To propose and encourage the adoption of measures for the advancement of higher education;
2. To propose long-term plans for a network of public institutions of higher education;
3. To give its consent to the criteria prepared by the Rectors' Conference and the Council of Polytechnics and Colleges of Higher Education for obtaining academic degrees and qualifications;
4. To advise the Minister in preparing regulations for standards and criteria for the establishment and evaluation of institutions of higher education and their study programmes;
5. To appoint referees and give its opinion on the establishment of new institutions of higher education and their study programmes;
6. To evaluate institutions of higher education and their study programmes and advise the Minister about their accreditation.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education is a specialized institution established by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in order to perform professional services related to the assessment of scientific activity and higher education, as well as the recognition of diplomas and qualifications.

The Agency performs professional services in the evaluation of the following:

1. Institutions of higher education,
2. Study programmes at institutions of higher education,
3. Quality assurance and control systems at higher education institutions and certification of study programmes,
4. It gathers and analyzes data related to scientific activity and higher education at national level.

The Agency is responsible for setting up:

- The National Network for Higher Education Quality Assurance, which then forms part of the European quality assurance network,
- The National Information Centre and the national network of offices for the recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications which form part of the European Network of Information Centres – ENIC.

The Agency uses the services of domestic and foreign experts for particular areas of scientific activity and higher education.

The Agency regularly reports to the National Council for Higher Education on the activities it has conducted and their results; National Council uses this information in making the necessary decisions.

2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure

(For example, number of public/private universities/other HE institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?)

Croatia has six universities with 85 faculties, art academies, colleges of higher education, university departments and university studies. There are also five polytechnics and six independent public higher education colleges.

The higher education institutions in Croatia employ a total of 9,787 employees, of whom 5,820 are teaching staff.

The number of students in higher education at present is 150,000, of whom 12,000 are

enrolled in private higher education institutions.

Private and state higher education institutions are covered by the same Act and no separate regulations exist for private ones.

2.3. Give a brief description of the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country

(National Bologna group, thematic working groups, composition and activities, stakeholder involvement)

The institutions responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Bologna Process in Croatia include the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, the Rectors' Conference (through its Commission for the Implementation of the Bologna Process and the Secretary for cooperation with the EUA), The National Bologna Promoters Team appointed by the Minister, bodies and persons responsible for international cooperation in higher education institutions, and the representatives of the Croatian Student Council in ESIB. They all organize various events related to the Bologna Process in Croatia and participate in those organized abroad. Croatia has two representatives in the BFUG. Between 15th September and 15th December 2004, a number of panel discussions relating to different aspects of the implementation of the Bologna Process in Croatian institutions of higher education were organized jointly by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport and the National Rectors' Conference.

Croatian universities are actively involved in the TEMPUS projects and CARDS programmes relating to the implementation and promotion of the Bologna Process, such as TEMPUS JEP-UM-18094-2003: "Moving Ahead with the Bologna Process in Croatia" and TEMPUS SCM "Croatian Bologna Promoters Team".

Croatian universities form part of various university networks (EUA, UNICA, the Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC), Alps-Adria Rectors' Conference, etc.).

3. Quality assurance

The following questions have been included in the template at the request of the Working Group on Stocktaking.

3.1. National quality assurance systems should include a definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

Please specify the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

According to the Act the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, The National Council for Higher Education, the Agency for Science and Higher Education, the Croatian Rectors' Conference and student associations are the bodies responsible for the process of accreditation and quality assurance procedures for higher education institutions in Croatia. (For further explanations please see answers 3.2. and 3.3.)

3.2. National quality assurance systems should include a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.

Describe the system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, if any.

The national quality assurance system and the system of accreditation and certification are based on regulations issued by the Minister of Science, Education and Sport on the proposal of the National Council for Higher Education.

Quality assurance services will be performed by the newly established Agency for Science and Higher Education. Higher education institutions will be evaluated at intervals determined

by the Act and the regulations determined by the Minister. However, if requested by the National Council for Higher Education, the Minister or the institution itself, the Agency may conduct evaluations at more frequent intervals. The evaluation report is sent to the higher education institution concerned before it is debated by the National Council for Higher Education. The institution may lodge a complaint against the report or provide the necessary explanations within 30 days, following which the Council decides on the final rating and submits it to the Minister and the institution in question. In case of a positive assessment, the Minister issues the institutional accreditation.

Accreditation is also a prerequisite for introduction of a new course of studies and for courses offered at a location outside the university.

The quality assurance system for higher education institutions envisages national and international assessment and includes a number of institutions and individuals, of whom all are engaged in enhancing the quality of higher education.

3.3. National quality assurance systems should include international participation, co-operation and networking.

Are international peers included in the governing board(s) of the quality assurance agency(ies)?

The National Agency will start working as of March 1st. It is expected to contact ENQA by 1 February 2005 and secure its full membership in it.

The evaluation of institutions of higher education has so far been largely entrusted to Croatian academics. It was only in some disciplines, especially in the natural sciences, that foreign referees were engaged, most often distinguished experts of Croatian descent. Several universities and faculties underwent evaluations by international associations. However, the Croatian academic community understands that it would benefit from the participation of international peers. It is also interested in getting involved in international accreditation and evaluation, particularly in areas where it believes to have competent experts.

Please add any general comments, reflections and/or explanations to the material on quality assurance in the stocktaking report.

4. The two-cycle degree system

The two-cycle degree system is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

In accordance with the Act, two-cycle and three-cycle study programmes will be introduced in the academic year 2005/06. Consequently, all higher education institutions in Croatia are expected to adapt their study programs to the new system.

Under the new system undergraduate courses will last three to four years and graduate courses one to two years. The introduction of the two-cycle system is obligatory for all institutions of higher education in Croatia, with the exception of some courses in which the two cycles will form a whole.

The Rectors' Conference has adopted a calendar of activities for the second part of the 2004/05 academic year, according to which all higher education institutions are to submit their new study programmes for evaluation by 31 March 2005. The National Council for Higher Education, assisted by the Agency, is to complete the evaluation of the programmes by early June 2005. The Ministry is expected to issue accreditations for the new programmes

in the course of the same month. Admission exams for the first generation of students studying under the Bologna system are to be held at the end of August and the beginning of September 2005.

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

Recognition of degrees and periods of study is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

The Act on Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications came into force on 1 July 2004. Recognition procedures will be part of the responsibilities of the Agency for Science and Higher Education, i.e. its ENIC/NARIC office. Until then, the ENIC/NARIC office is functioning within the Higher Education Directorate of the Ministry.

6. Doctoral studies and research

6.1. Give a short description of the organisation of third cycle studies

(For example, direct access from the bachelor level, balance between organised courses, independent study and thesis)

Under the new Act, there are two types of postgraduate studies:

- Doctoral studies lasting three years which, upon the completion of the course and the research involved, lead to the doctoral dissertation and the awarding of a PhD.
- Specialist studies will last for one to two years, leading to the degree of “specialist” in a particular field of study.
- At this stage of the implementation of the Bologna process just the first two cycles have been fully defined. Therefore, no conditions for access or the balance between courses have been defined.

6.2. What are the links between HE and research in your country?

(For example, what percentage of publicly-funded research is conducted within HE institutions?)

Research is a part of activity of all universities. 71% of the total public funds for research in Croatia is allocated to institutions of higher education.

Accreditation for postgraduate programmes is given only if the institution has adequate research facilities and, in particular, if its faculty includes researchers qualified to act as mentors on doctoral thesis.

Croatian universities are both teaching and research institutions. The Act includes a provision which stipulates that universities may organize second-cycle and postgraduate courses in cooperation with research institutes. Croatia has more than twenty such institutes, and the leading one has 25% of the national research capacity, mainly in the natural and biomedical sciences.

7. Mobility of students and staff

7.1. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of students from as well as to your country *(For instance funds devoted to mobility schemes, portability of student loans and grants, visa problems)*

Croatia has not yet joined European student mobility programmes.

At present, student and teacher mobility is based on bilateral, intergovernmental and interuniversity cooperation agreements. Croatia participates in the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS - exchange organized on the basis of "exchange months" among the member countries). Croatian students may apply for grants given by foreign governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, foundations and private donations.

7.2. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of students from as well as to your country

International cooperation offices at Croatian universities are preparing programmes for European student mobility. Mobility described in 7.1. functions according to established schemes and a very low percentage of students participate in exchange programmes. In order to enhance mobility in near future, some undergraduate and postgraduate courses are already taught in English.

7.3. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of teachers and staff from as well as to your country (For instance tenure of appointment, grant schemes, social security, visa problems)

The MSES provides funds for academic mobility through intergovernmental and inter-university agreements. Croatian higher education system also profits from guest lecturers through the exchange programmes funded by foundations such as Fulbright, DAAD, etc.

7.4. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of academic teachers and staff from as well as to your country

For the teachers arriving through intergovernmental agreements the MSES provides grants and all necessary help for the visa procedure (visas are easily obtained for such exchange scholars). For teachers arriving through inter-university agreements the universities provide the same type of help. The same goes for exchange students.

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

Is autonomy determined/defined by law? To what extent can higher education institutions decide on internal organisation, staffing, new study programmes and financing?

The Act guarantees autonomy for institutions of higher education in Croatia. Until 2007 the faculties will maintain their present status as legal entities, which means that until then faculties are entitled to negotiate on staffing and financing directly with the Ministry. However, new study programmes have to be evaluated by the National Council. Internal organization is defined by a statute of each institution of higher education.

At present the amount of funding for a particular institution of higher education is allocated according to its enrollment numbers, employees salaries and other operational costs.

As of 2006 the funding allocation policy will be changed as explained in the answer 1.1. From 1 January 2006 integrated universities will be able to decide on their own financing policies.

8.2. Describe actions taken to ensure active participation from all partners in the process

In spite of the fact that the faculties will maintain their present legal status until 2007, all partners - MSES, universities and their faculties actively support the idea of full university autonomy. In regards with that, from 2004 on they have all agreed to take a number of

practical measures which lead to the integration and full autonomy of the universities regarding finances (discussed in the univ. senate and not primarily in the faculty councils), enrollment policy (earlier primarily agreed upon between the faculties and MSES) and the academic staffing.

8.3. How do students participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions and at the national level?

(For example, participation in University Governing Bodies, Academic Councils etc)

The main student organization in Croatia is the National Students' Association.

Students are represented on the university and polytechnic Senates and faculty councils. Student representatives, directly elected by the student body, represent 15 % of the total number of Senate members. So far, students have not sufficiently participated in the preparation of study programmes.

The university statutes define areas of special interest to the students in which students have the right to a conditional veto on a Senate proposal, in which case the Senate must re-examine the proposal and submit it for another debate within eight days.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

9.1. Describe measures which promote equality of access to higher education

Access to higher education is guaranteed to all citizens, providing they fulfill the admission requirements. There are three categories of students in Croatia: full-time students who pay no tuition fee (having passed the admission exam), full-time students who pay a tuition fee, and part-time students.

The university admission procedure starts with the public competition advertised by the university, polytechnic or the higher education college, in which the institution must specify the conditions for admission, the number of places, the procedure, information on the documents to be submitted and the deadline for application.

Universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education adopt such admission procedures so as to ensure the equality of all applicants regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religious, political or other affiliation, ethnic or social origin, property, birth, social status, disability, sexual orientation and age. Institutions of higher education determine the criteria for admission and the granting of places (prior education grades, type of secondary school, the entrance or admission test score, special knowledge, skill or ability, etc.).

10. Developments in lifelong learning

10.1. What measures have been taken by your country to encourage higher education institutions in developing lifelong learning paths?

The Act provides the legal framework for the introduction of lifelong learning in Croatian higher education institutions. The institutions may organize training courses in line with the concept of lifelong education, learning and professional training. The Republic of Croatia has designed a national program of life long learning. However, no special financing has been provided on the national level to encourage further development of life long learning in higher education yet.

10.2. Describe any procedures at the national level for recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths

The Act stipulates that after a successfully completed period of further training within lifelong learning programmes, students obtain special certificates and ECTS credits.

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

11.1 Describe any legal obstacles identified by your country and any progress made in removing legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and/or joint study programmes

The Act for the first time opens a possibility for joint degrees, but it does not give any specific definition of a joint/double degree, nor does it stipulate any procedures. The need for further definitions is clearly visible.

11.1.1. Describe the extent of integrated study programmes leading to joint degrees or double degrees

Joint degree studies do not have a tradition in Croatian higher education. However, recently a certain number of new study programs leading to joint degrees has been initiated or is being prepared.

11.1.2. How have these programmes been organised? (joint admissions, mobility of students, joint exams, etc.)

Joint degrees: currently meetings are being organized to define structure and admission criteria.

Double degrees: there is one post-graduate program which gives a double degree (European Studies - organized by Univ. Pantheon - Assas Paris II and Univ. of Zagreb)

11.2. Describe any transnational co-operation that contributes to the European dimension in higher education

Joint program in cognitive neuroscience (Doctoral studies) - Univ. of Zagreb, Univ. of Vienna, Univ. of Amsterdam, Univ. Eotvos Lorand and Univ. Semmelweis, Budapest; supported by UNICA as a program with a European dimension, administered from Vienna. Organized within TEMPUS project (in preparation).

Joint activity in post-graduate studies in European Integration Law between Univ. of Rijeka, Catholic Univ. in Tilberg and Univ. of Macerata (cross-border students attend studies but no joint degree is awarded).

A number of joint programs are in preparation.

11.3. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension (For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

Some undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral courses are already been taught in a foreign language.

The University of Zagreb offers three postgraduate study programmes in European politics and economics (Croatia and Europe, Comparative Politics, International Relations and European Law). There is another program on European Integration Law mentioned in 11.2, etc.

After the evaluation of the new study programmes in spring 2005, the level of inclusion of the European dimension in the overall higher education programmes of studies will be

known.

12. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

12.1. Describe actions taken by your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA

We believe that the implementation of the Bologna Declaration principles and its pan-European dimension will help Croatian institutions of higher education and the Croatian education system to become part of the European system of higher education. The introduction of the three-cycle system of studies, the European quality assurance system, the ECTS, the harmonization of study programmes with European programmes, academic mobility and other factors will contribute to the quality of teaching in Croatian higher education institutions, making them more attractive for students from Croatia and other European countries. With this goal in mind, the MSES has organized many seminars, workshops, lectures and other events. All this has been done with the participation of higher education institutions, students and all those whose work is linked to the implementation of the Bologna Process. The National Bologna Promoters Team actively promotes and explains all the issues dealt with at the Bologna seminars. The Ministry fosters the promotion of the idea of the EHA through media and student associations.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

- Adoption of easily recognizable and comparable academic and professional degrees and introduction of diploma supplements which will facilitate employment and international competitiveness in the European Higher Education Area;
- Adoption of the three-cycle system.
- Introduction of the ECTS. Possibility to accumulate credits outside the system of higher education through lifelong learning programmes.
- Promotion of mobility and elimination of obstacles to free movement of students and teachers.
- Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance.
- Promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education.

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

- Full articulation of the national strategy for the development of higher education.
- Full implementation of the principles of the Bologna process.
- To reach a higher percentage of people with higher education in the overall population.
- Creation of the knowledge based society.