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**IMPLEMENTING THE
“EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010” WORK PROGRAMME**

2005 Progress Report
2005 Progress Report

CROATIA

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**Modernisation of the Education and Training Systems
towards the 2010 common goals**

National contributions to the 2006 Joint Council/Commission Report for

CROATIA

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Accession to the European Union creates new challenges for the Croatian educational system, such as the need to reach the level of quality, flexibility, mobility and responsiveness to the needs and changes in the Croatian society as well as the European Union. One of the highest risks facing the Croatian educational system is the question of adjusting to the needs and changes taking place in society. Furthermore, the additional risks are the falling-behind of certain social groups that have not been able to adjust accordingly, and the new form of the brain-drain phenomenon, caused by the poor coordination of the systems of education and employment, and the labour force mobility policy of the European Union. In order to minimize these risks there is a need for a comprehensive consensus of all social forces, political parties, economic protagonists and field experts.

Accession to the European Union means that Croatia, even though it has its own educational system, achieves the common goals of the EU related to the future of the education and training system. One of the framework strategies helping achieving common goals is the Education and Training 2010, objectives of which Croatia follows in the new **Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010¹ (ESDP)**, when setting up the objectives and strategy of the Croatian educational system.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND THE LISBON AGENDA

In Croatia, **Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES)** is the responsible ministry for planning, funding, monitoring and evaluation of the overall education system. However, the MSES is working closely with other responsible bodies, such as the **Agency for Science and Higher Education, Agency for Vocational Education and Institute for Education**, as well as other partners, such as **Health and Social Care Ministry, Ministry of Economy, Chambers of Commerce, Chamber of Crafts, Croatian Employment Service, Croatian Association of Employers, Croatian Association for the Education of Adults**; in order to coordinate implementation of the education and training elements of the **Lisbon strategy** in Croatia.

However, it is important to say that the Croatian educational system is currently facing major challenges which are influencing its development: a declining population, changes in the economic environment aimed at developing a knowledge-based economy, requirements in terms of the new knowledge and skills required by the labour force and accession to the European Union.

By introducing the ESDP, as one of the main strategical documents, Croatia envisages priorities that have to be achieved in the education and training system:

- education for social cohesion and economic growth;
- improving teaching and learning in schools, school equipment, raising staff expertise;
- raising awareness on the preventive role of schools;
- developing links between education and the labour market;
- developing varied means of helping pupils with their learning, extra-curricular activities and creating a more humane and tolerant school environment;
- improving school management and introducing a system of monitoring and evaluating education;
- developing of the new concept of adult education on the base of the live long learning
- decentralizing the educational system;
- increasing direct support to regional development and increasing the participation of local authorities and parents, as well as supporting inclusive education;
- planning financial improvements as a prerequisite for school improvement;
- supporting innovations,
- strengthening national and cultural values
- strengthening human rights and democratic citizenship education;
- strengthening of European cultural circle affiliation

in an effort to equalize and improve educational services across Croatia.

Certain measures have already been taken in order to bring EU objectives closer to Croatian reality.

Since April 2004, by receiving the status of a candidate country, several important measures have been carried out in the field of basic education in Croatia, like the adoption of the **Act on Amendments of the Act on Primary Education**², which regulates issues such as the modalities for employment of teachers, expert collaborators and other employees in schools, the requirements for teachers, expert collaborators and administrative staff in schools and the management of elementary schools and the drafting of the **Ordinance on primary education of pupils with special needs**. Measures intended to support early foreign language learning (already from the first year of elementary school), which enables a higher-quality education and a better preparation of pupils for the integration into the European Union, have also been implemented in that period.

One of the most significant achievements was the adoption of the **Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES)**³ which defines the knowledge, skills and abilities to be acquired by pupils at various levels of their education. CNES is the framework outlining the content of individual school subjects, thus contributing to the avoidance of overlapping contents and unnecessary repetitions while simultaneously clearly indicating the cyclic spreading of knowledge along the horizontal and vertical axis of the education process.

Starting experimentally in the school year 2005/2006 and fully in 2007, CNES will be used as a basis for developing a framework curriculum at state level while simultaneously allowing schools and teachers to develop implementation curricula with the objective of strengthening the independence of schools and the creativity of teachers; it will be used as a framework for writing textbooks; and for the verification of knowledge both in individual schools and at state level (state school leaving examination).

A direct goal of CNES is to determine the fundamental pupils' knowledge and abilities for the purpose of relieving the burden of the existing curricula and of encouraging pupils to creatively implement the acquired knowledge. CNES is aimed at following the permanent and dynamic changes with the objective of improving the quality of education in line with the values and developmental frameworks of the European Union.

In the field of secondary education, several important measures intended to further the quality of the education system were implemented in this period. **The Act on the National Centre for the Evaluation of Education**⁴ was adopted in January 2005, thus laying the foundations for the introduction of the school-exit exam. The Centre should become operational in the school year 2004/2005. **Amendments of the Act on Secondary Education**⁵ was adopted in May 2005, which ensures the legal preconditions for the introduction of the school-exit exam.

Along with the establishment of the **National Centre for the Evaluation of Education**, the **Agency for Vocational Education**⁶ was also established in January 2005. The Agency will serve to create better conditions for improving vocational education at all levels of upper secondary education, in accordance with the priorities of the European Partnership.

Moreover, work on the new **National Classification of Occupations**⁷ has begun in the **Croatian Bureau of Statistics**, in cooperation with the MSES. The new National Classification of Occupations will provide sufficient support for developing new programmes

and the network of secondary schools and pupils' homes and is developed in line with Copenhagen and Maastricht criteria.

In 2004 and 2005, **57 new programmes for crafts** occupations were adopted according to the unified programme for crafts occupations. Other 22 VET programmes (curricula) were revised and will be implemented in 2005/2005. The MSES is planning to continue working on the analysis and modernisation of VET programmes.

The reform of the VET sector has received a valuable support from the CARDS programme. The **CARDS 2001 project** (completed in November 2004) has produced several outputs, the most important being a **Green Paper for Vocational Education and Training**⁸ that sets out a clear vision and a plan of measures that need to be taken in order to modernise the Croatian VET system in line with EU practices and standards. **CARDS 2002 VET project-Modernisation and Institution-Building project** (starting in September 2005) will help prepare new legislation in vocational education and training and, building on the results of the previous project, will start a major curriculum reform process, start-up activities for developing NQF, developing VETIS (VET Information System), school networking, in close co-operation with the social partners. The **CARDS 2003 Centres of Excellence project** will help introduce newly developed curricula in larger multi-purpose, multi-sectoral school centres. The goal is to establish 10-12 centres of excellence in all areas of Croatia, which will be the foundation for education in new modern technologies.

Reform of the VET is defined as one of the priorities in Croatia and is being harmonized with **Copenhagen Declaration**, and its defined priorities.

In the field of adult education, the **Committee for Adult Education**⁹ nominated by the Croatian Government has been enlarged in order to include representatives of the social partners (employers and trade unions). The **Adult Education Act** has passed Parliamentary procedure and is now in the process of being adopted. The modernisation of the adult education sector will be supported by a **CARDS 2004 project on Adult Learning** which is now in preparation and should start by the end of 2005.

Higher education is regulated by the **Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education**¹⁰ from 2003. A number of amendments were added to this Act during 2004. By entering into force in 2004, this Act has provided a framework for the reform of universities and the implementation of the principles of the Bologna Declaration. As the result of the ratification of the Lisbon convention Croatia adopted a new act on recognition. The **Act on Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications**¹¹ came into force in July 2004.

The most important institutional measures that were carried out comprise the appointment of the members of the **National Council for Higher Education**, the highest professional body responsible for the overall development and quality of the higher education system.

They also serve as external experts to the **Agency for Science and Higher Education**¹², a state agency that became operational in March 2005. As an expert and independent body, the Agency provides logistic support to the **National Council for Higher Education** and carries out administrative tasks related to accreditation, evaluation of study programmes and higher education institutions, evaluation of quality assurance systems at higher education institutions and their integration into the **European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education** (ENQA).

More than **800 study programmes** at the Bachelor and Master levels, designed or restructured in accordance with the Bologna cycles and the introduction of ECTS, have undergone a process of **evaluation and accreditation** conducted by the National Council for Higher Education, assisted by the Agency for Science and Higher Education. These programmes will be implemented from autumn 2005.

The strengthening of the administrative capacity of the Agency for Science and Higher Education is supported by **CARDS 2002 project “Higher Education Mobility: Diploma Recognition Policy and Legislation”** (started in September 2004), while a **CARDS 2003** project, aimed at supporting the quality assurance activities of the Agency, is in preparation phase.

In parallel, the administrative capacity building at universities for the implementation of Bologna process has been supported by the TEMPUS programme. Its implementation in 2004 and 2005 has been very successful (approximately 30 projects were active in 2004, and 37 have been short-listed for implementation in 2005). The TEMPUS programme enhances regional cooperation (Western Balkans) of higher education institutions through forming consortia in JEP (Joint European Projects).

In the past two years MSES has secured substantial funding aimed at improvement of the infrastructure of Higher Education Institutions (HEI). Funding has been distributed for the construction of campuses and dormitories, and employment of teaching staff (400 posts) and research assistants (700 posts); with a goal of continual supplementation and lowering of the median age of scientific and academic staff at institutions of higher education. The new ICT infrastructure for academic and research community is also being introduced. In parallel, MSES has been conducting an intensive public awareness campaign in order to promote the Bologna Process.

In global, changes in educational and training system are focussed towards achieving horizontal, as well as vertical mobility within the system itself, which is making the whole system more flexible and transparent.

Obstacles Croatia is facing in trying to associate Education and Training 2010 priorities are changes in country's demography that has implications on human capital (the number of school-age population is declining). Furthermore, there are limited financial instruments, not only allocated from the state budget, but from other social partners as well (enterprises) and international funds and programmes.

The fact that Croatia can participate in Community programmes, but only with limited participation, which does not include funding from the EU, represents an obstacle, rather than the opportunity, with regards to supporting education and training financially.

2. INVESTING MORE AND MORE EFFICIENTLY: FOCUSING REFORM ON THE KEY AREAS

In terms of public expenditure for the education sector, while the MSES is the main actor, other central government ministries also spend on education and expenditures are incurred at local government levels as well. Thus, when estimating the share of public education expenditures in GDP, it is important to indicate which actors are included. For example, the total budget of the MSES accounted for 4.1 percent of GDP in 2004. If we add the

expenditures of the MSES to expenditures made by other central ministries and the expenditures at the local level, public education expenditures amount to 4.3 percent of the GDP in 2004¹³.

It is estimated that financing a detailed and sustainable education reform requires additional funding that equals to approximately 1 % of the GDP.

All new goals and challenges facing education emphasize the importance of prioritising education as an important element of future developments. Special attention should be dedicated to possible public-private partnerships, and existing national practice and educational administration should be taken into consideration.

The aim is to ensure that the State budget for education as a percentage of GDP moves closer to international standards. Special attention will be given to the financing of education in poorer regions and minorities' education especially for those who are insufficiently integrated into society. Within budget limits, state support should be extended to ensure statutory support for adults who wish to complete their primary or secondary education or progress to higher levels of education. Student financial support will be developed to give incentives for study. According to personal career plan, individual can receive funding for additional training for the purpose of increasing employability.

As the government cannot solely undertake the financial burden and as the benefits of learning are widely shared, new financing mechanisms and incentives will be supported for adult learning that encourage the (co-)investment by individuals and employers.

As for the financing of higher education, it is necessary to establish a new system of financing higher education which will replace the existing, inherited system of direct state administration of financial means to members of the University. At present, the amount of funding for a particular institution of higher education is allocated according to its enrolment numbers, employers salaries and other operational costs. As of 2006, the funding allocation policy will be changed, which will enable universities to start functioning as integrated institutions and will be able to decide on their own financial policies.

A model for student scholarships needs to be developed during the 2005 to 2010 period, which will answer to the needs of students and the society for specific occupations and human resources throughout Croatia. Introducing a new *lump sum* model for higher education financing by 2006 and increasing private expenditure in higher education by 2010 are the main targets in financing higher education.

Education and training system in Croatia, apart from financing from the State budget, it is co-financed and subsidised through different means, such as local and regional self-government, EU assistance programmes, pre-accession funds, or World Bank loans, as already mentioned in the Chapter 1.

Other ways of funding were recognised through bilateral MATRA project, which financed the project of inclusive schools.

World Bank loan was given to upgrade teacher and headmaster's competences; promote external evaluation of students (school-exit exam) and schools; improve school system management and discontinue working in shifts.

One of the main obstacles is a partial membership in EU Programmes. Croatia is not eligible to receive any funding from **SOCRATES** or **LEONARDO DA VINCI** programmes since it has to contribute with national financial contribution as well. At the moment, Croatia has limited financial resources and it has to decide on priorities when it comes to participating fully in any of EU programmes.

Without participating in EU programmes, which cover everything from pre-school to higher education, it is quite difficult to introduce and promote international partnerships between schools and/or universities.

The only funding source for promoting and facilitating reform of the higher education and Bologna process is the TEMPUS programme, which focuses on the development of the higher education system in CARDS, TACIS and MEDA countries through their cooperation with institutions from EU Member states. TEMPUS has provided a significant support for introducing Croatia to the European Higher Education Area.

According to the **Ordinance on Teacher Promotion in primary and secondary schools**¹⁴ there are 4 levels of promotion: junior teacher, teacher, mentor-teacher, and mentor-advisor.

Every junior teacher has to pass the state exam, and through the process he/she is monitored through the school management together with his/her mentor. Every teacher should regularly attend different kinds of trainings in order to improve skills and keep oneself updated. Teacher training seminars are offered every year by the Institute of Education and will be offered by the new Agency for Vocational Education and are financed from the state budget. It is important to mention that various trainings are offered by NGOs, valuable part of civil society. Along with the system of training there is a financial stimulation of teacher, which is defined only according to years of professional experience.

With regards to private education institutions, in primary and secondary education there exist different schools, which have to be in line with the official plan and programme of education system in Croatia. The largest interest pupils show for private economical schools and grammar schools.

There are various incentives being developed in order to enhance the efficiency and attractiveness of the education and training systems. One of them is **CASCAiD**, the career guidance software package, serving Croatian Employment Service as a professional guidance tool in counselling and helping the unemployed.

There are some enterprises in Croatia, which have recognised the importance of investing in education and training. However, this is not done systematically, but on a random base through different sponsorships (providing awards to students at competitions), scholarships for secondary and higher education students or postgraduates with regards to the needs of the enterprise.

Private education receives minimal funds from the state budget so they have to provide finances in other manner (student entrance fees, local community, etc.)

With regards to monitoring and evaluation of educational policies, Croatia, as a candidate country, follows international standards not only for EU projects but for other sources of funding as well.

3. PUTTING IN PLACE TRULY COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES

The concept of lifelong learning is not a new momentum in Croatia. However, it has not been promoted and followed at all levels and there has not been a coherent strategy existing to implement it on all levels for all learners.

At the moment, in Croatia, there are different reforms and changes in the whole education and training system underway, in order to employ the lifelong learning strategy more efficiently and to open doors to every citizen who wants to learn more and to participate as a valuable member of the society.

Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010 is the new strategical document, which specifies priorities in education and training sector in Croatia and is through all levels of education following the principle of lifelong learning concept.

It is important to start with considerations taken from pre-school education to adult learning when speaking of lifelong learning concept.

Starting with pre-school education, which is the first time pupils are introduced into the formal education system, according to studies, an overall knowledge is doubled every five years. If taken into consideration that a child to the age of six, develops one's potentials the most rapidly, it is important to start offering quality in education from the earliest age in order to build knowledge on good basics. It is for that reason one of the goals to increase the number of children participating in the pre-school education to 60% by the year 2010 in order to bring it closer to European standards.

In the area of primary education, new Croatian National Educational Standard for primary education has been presented in 2005 as the means to harmonise the national curriculum with European standards and to define competences to be acquired by pupils at different levels of their education. According to the **Act on Primary Education**¹⁵ every student finishes primary education with knowledge of two foreign languages. As already mentioned, the CNES is going to be piloted from the next school year in primary education and if passing the evaluation will become an integrated curriculum standard for all primary schools in Croatia in the school year 2006/2007. All teachers should be trained on the new CNES by 2007 and all teachers will be trained at least at basic level of ICT competences by 2008.

CNES for secondary education is planned to be developed by 2010 and will follow the principles of CNES for primary education in order to answer the needs of society and to appreciate competences acquired in individual's life.

Reform of VET develops in line with Copenhagen Declaration, which includes developing National Qualifications Framework. All relevant social partners are involved in the development of coherent VET policy through different projects. Restructuring VET system goes from input-based education to output-based education. CARDS 2002 starting September 2005 presupposes development of NQF and new curriculum, describing key competences.

This helps building a lifelong learning approach and facilitates horizontal and vertical mobility of students, as well as teachers. Vertical mobility is legalised in Croatia, however, it is not exercised efficiently so it needs changes and promotion. Defining and applying the CTS for VET will make horizontal, as well as vertical mobility easier. This will definitely affect the job market, since it will make competences recognizable and with monitoring the market make needs of the society more visible.

Traditional methods of teaching are slowly being replaced by active teaching methods and student-centred methods. One of the most important things is training teachers in order to use active teaching methods more. One of the priority tasks of the **Institute of Education** and the **Agency for Vocational Education** is to train teachers so as to incorporate the new ways of teaching and learning.

The **Amendments to the Act on secondary education**¹⁶ establish leaving examination 'matura' and its implementation will gradually establish an external review of attainment level through exam, and it is expected that by 2009 secondary school students will take this new examination. The aim is to increase the quality of teaching and learning by introducing new quality assurance procedures. Discussions on new 'matura' system involve all stakeholders as well as discussions on new NQF.

ICT and computer literacy are introduced in all levels of education and it is a goal to become a tool of every student. MSES funded ICT classrooms in order to equip students with necessary prerequisites for accomplishing that goal (one of them being a personal student account). According to the new legislative on secondary education, examining computer literacy and ICT skills will be a part of state 'matura' exam, and it is planned to be taken after 2 years of secondary schooling.

In the approach to lifelong learning, one of the very important things is to make learning available to everybody, as well as to improve knowledge, skills and competence through life.

Developing and enhancing adult learning policy is recognised through **Committee for Adult Education**, appointed in 2004, which drew a **Strategy on Adult Learning**¹⁷, proposing strategies and plans in the field leading it to a **draft proposal of the Act on Adult Learning**.

Strategy for Adult Learning defines lifelong learning as a right and an obligation of all the citizens of the Republic of Croatia. Many preconditions have to be met in order to plan and programme the adult learning education and to speed up the integration of labour and learning. However, adult learning is seen in the strategy as an integral part in primary, secondary and higher education and the development of CTS and recognition of competences will definitely help involving all citizens in the world of education, which will then help building knowledge-based economy, as one of the Lisbon goals.

As the adult education is one of the most neglected areas due to not having the tradition of developing one, Croatia has to tackle many problems in the area. There is a lack of coherent policies and limited participation of relevant stakeholders in different international initiatives. Employers are not sufficiently engaged with the Croatian Employment Service and there is a shortage of resources. Other problems are integration of war veterans into the society and labour market. Their qualifications usually do not meet the current labour market needs, and the amount of remedial education and training available does not meet the demand.

With regards to disadvantage groups, a special concern should be expressed towards persons with special needs. The existing regulations undoubtedly emphasize the right of each child to be brought up and educated under equal conditions. Elementary education is compulsory for all children, while secondary education is available to everyone under equal conditions regarding their abilities. Croatia involves special needs children into the education system; however children with physical disabilities are insufficiently included due to lack of financial resources.

To ensure a better quality integration of pupils with special needs, teachers need to be well trained to work with these pupils and this can be achieved by providing professional teacher training, by developing new contemporary curricula that integrate this issue, and by implementing a monitoring system for special needs children even after they complete their schooling. Special institutions that are ran under the auspices of the Health and Social Care Ministry should become professional logistics to the educational system. Development targets in ESDP emphasize that inclusion of pupils with special needs into appropriate educational programs on local levels is of a great importance. Ensuring added legal and professional provisions for children with special needs is another goal. Education of students with special needs will be additionally governed with new legal and professional regulation. To increase the flexibility of program proposals with the aim to increase the enrolment of children with special needs into the school system and society as a whole is seen as a valuable part of lifelong learning strategy in Croatia as well.

One of the great obstacles in Croatian education and training system is current non-recognition of non-formal and informal learning. When building new strategies and policies on all levels of education and training, Croatia takes into considerations the importance of its recognition. One of the strategic goals of Adult Education policy is setting standards to recognize the knowledge and skills attained in non-formal education. With regards to recognising voluntary work, the Proposal of the **Act on Volunteerism** will be proposed to the Government, which would help many NGOs to implement the youth policy (National Plan of Actions for the Youth¹⁸, 2003).

Promotion of lifelong learning in the region is seen through **ERISEE**¹⁹ (Education Reform Initiative South East Europe) office that will be working on different projects in the region.

According to the current economic requirements, all actions taken in restructuring in education and training system include tri-partite social partnerships.

Projects in line with CARDS projects in the area of labour market have been promoted at national and regional level as well. All processes of restructuring VET are following the same guidelines, and preparations for the project on dissemination of Copenhagen process in cooperation with ETF (European Training Foundation) are being made. Within the same project, establishment of a new web-portal on VET is being made, as well as VETIS (information system) including all stakeholders and social partners.

MSES funds competitions in different subject and occupations on local, regional and national level in order to promote lifelong learning approach.

4. REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports is the ministry responsible for education in Croatia. Another public authority responsible for HE is the National Council for Higher Education, The NCHE is appointed by the Parliament and its authority is design of the HE strategy as well as evaluation of institutions and study programmes. A specialised agency, Agency for Science and Higher Education, provides professional support to the NCHE. The Agency is also responsible for the recognition of higher education qualifications.

Croatian higher education system consists of 6 universities, 5 polytechnics, 6 public higher education colleges and 16 private higher education colleges. HEIs employ 9,787 employees, of whom 5,820 are teaching staff. The number of students is 150,000, of whom 12,000 are enrolled in private HE institutions.

The year 2005 was marked by a sweeping change of study programmes in Croatia, which will allow students to enrol into programmes that are harmonized with provisions of the Bologna Declaration. The reform of the previous system was a task that demanded legislative adjustments, establishment of new institutions, alteration of existing and proposal of new programmes, as well as their evaluation.

Legislative adjustments

Croatia signed Bologna Declaration in 2001. The first step in the preparation of the reform was the preparation of the new higher education act. The Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education was adopted in 2003. In 2004 a number of amendments were added and the act entered into force in July 2004. In December 2004 five Rules of Procedures covering the field of higher education were adopted. These **Rules of Procedure**²⁰ regulate the establishment of HEIs, measures and criteria for the evaluation of quality and efficiency of institutions and study programs, contents of student database, contents of student document, content of diplomas and diploma supplement. Another legislative adjustment was made in the field of recognition of foreign education qualifications. The Act on Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications came into force in July 2004. Rules of procedure stipulating considerably lower fees for recognition process entered into force in May 2005.

Institutional framework

In 2004 and 2005, institutional framework for the implementation of the Bologna Process was set up. In April 2004, **the National Bologna Follow-up Group** was appointed. In November 2004, the National Council for Higher Education was established. The NCHE is an independent and professional body that consults the MSES.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education was established at the end of February 2005, whose basic task is to ensure quality assurance in higher education and to provide professional services to the NCHE. In the past few months, the Agency has also completed part of the work in evaluating study programmes. However, it is still facing a great deal of work ahead, during which it will coordinate the development of mechanisms to ensure quality at institutions of higher education as well as making it part of the network of similar European agencies.

Since July 2004 Croatia is implementing the Law on recognition of foreign education qualifications, which is harmonized with the Lisbon Convention. At the beginning, the National ENIC/NARIC Office for recognizing foreign education qualifications was established as part of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, which presently operates as a section of the Agency for Science and Higher Education. Since July, the Office has received more than 700 requests for recognizing diplomas of which the majority has been processed positively.

In May 2005, the Council for Financing Science and Higher Education was appointed. The Council is an advisory body of the NCHE and its task is to develop the criteria for distribution of public funding within science and HE sectors. Following the criteria developed by the Council, the MSES will allocate funding to HEIs according to the new, lump sum, model starting January 2006.

Apart from the governmental bodies, the Rectors' Conference has also set up two specialised bodies the function of which is facilitating and coordinating the implementation of the Bologna Process. In 2004, the **Commission for Implementation of the Bologna Process** was appointed. The Commission serves as an advisory body to the Rectors' Conference. At the same time the **Commission for Harmonisation of Normative Acts** was appointed. Its task is to coordinate normative adjustments at the level of HEIs.

Structural changes

Establishment of the two-cycle system was one of the main tasks in 2005. Accreditation of the first and second cycle programs (over 800) has been completed in June 2005. The accreditation cycle required unprecedented engagement and commitment of the public authorities and academia:

- several thousands professors and administrative staff have been involved in the preparation of study programs
- over a thousand referees involved in the evaluation process (around 30% international experts and Croatian scientists working abroad)
- Implementing team of around 30 experts involved in the process (number of persons involved in some stages of the process is over 130).

Beginning with next academic year students will enrol new study programs.

Investments in the higher education sector

Over the past two years funding has been secured for the employment of 700 research assistants and 400 teachers (assistant professors and professors). Campuses: funding secured and construction of campuses at several universities well under way. Technological infrastructure: internet access introduced in over 50% of student dormitories, completion of this project planned by the end of the year. Establishment of the giga-based academic and research network is underway.

CARDS / TEMPUS

CARDS project: Higher Education Mobility, implemented by the Ministry, implementation started in September, lasts for 18 months, budget: 600,000 € goals: helping establish the legislative framework (revisions of the Recognition act, help in preparation of the proposal of the higher education qualifications framework), training of experts in public bodies (ENIC/NARIC office, Agency for Science and HE, higher education institutions).

Croatia has had access to TEMPUS funding since 2000. Until now, over 15.5 mil € has been used for TEMPUS projects geared towards the preparation and the implementation of the reform. Croatian higher education institutions have so far been granted funding for 36 joint European projects aimed at institutional building, curriculum development and university management.

Participation of stakeholders

In 2005, considerable upgrades in term of inclusion of stakeholders in the reform processes have been made. Students have been involved in regular coordination meetings of highest public and academic authorities. Unions and employers have also been more actively involved in the process. The National **Bologna** Follow-up Group has been expanded and now includes the representatives of employees, business, union and civil society. Stakeholders have actively participated in the national public awareness campaign.

Public Awareness Campaign

One of the main challenges in this year was raising the visibility of the reform and its goals among students, academia and general public. To this end in 2004, MSES organised a series of over 20 public discussions on the implementation of the **Bologna Process**. Over 800 representatives of stakeholders attended discussions. In April and June 2005, MSES published a special supplement on the **Bologna Process** and circulated it to all relevant education and other public institutions.

Within the framework of the **TEMPUS**, the **Bologna Promoters team** was appointed and has organised seminars at Croatian universities. Public campaign is also one of the important activities of the **CARDS** project. By the end of 2005, 30 seminars, with over 800 participants, will be organised in all university centres.

Efforts undertaken by the Ministry have been matched with students' projects. In 2004 and 2005, students organised the 1st and the 2nd national student congress which gathered representatives of all student associations and organisations.

Challenges ahead

Further legislative adjustments planned by the end of 2005 are:

- a) student organisation – a proposal of new act which will provide more effective model of student organisation is being prepared.
- b) revisions of the Act on Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications (distinction between academic and professional recognition not clear enough).
- c) new act on academic and professional titles

With regards to Quality assurance system, the institutional framework has been established (the National Council for HE, the Agency plus QA units at some universities/level of development varies). Steps foreseen are: further development of the system, criteria and procedures, follow-up measures, training of experts.

With regards to financing: new financing model of the higher education sector will be introduced in 2006. The new, lump sum, model introduces allocation of public funding to the universities (rector's offices) as opposed to the current practice of allocating funding directly to the university units (colleges/departments). This novelty represents the financial aspect of the integration of universities as it will allow centralised financial management and planning.

Legal integration of universities is planned by the end of 2007. Universities have harmonised their normative acts with the Act on Higher Education which stipulates the integration of universities. Current level of integration varies. Transition to a fully integrated university is rather smooth at recently established universities in Zadar and Dubrovnik. Though it is far more demanding goal for the well established universities, they are also making notable progress.

Steps planned in establishment of the binary system, which is a legal imperative by 2010, are institution building projects at polytechnics, co-op arrangements with universities that would enable polytechnics to use some of the resources they lack, enhancing the distinct profile and attractiveness of professional studies, increasing enrolment numbers.

Polycentric development of polytechnics; transformation of the county centres in the centres of professional higher education, parallel need to enlarge this profile of graduates and establish linkages with regional for-profit sector and entrepreneurs. Process of establishing polytechnics in Vukovar and Knin mark the beginning of the polycentric development.

Enhancing the participation of all stakeholders in the reform processes is important to intensify the cooperation of students and business sector.

One of the priorities of the Ministry is establishing and supporting linkages between higher education, R&D, and businesses so as to include Croatia in European Research Area. Initial steps have been undertaken: the National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development is the institution promoting and funding collaborative projects. Another important form of linking these sectors is the cooperation of businesses, government and academia in the National Competitiveness Council.

Apart from these national priorities Croatia fully supports and will work on the implementation of actions adopted by the Bologna signatories (removing obstacles to mobility, widening participation, ensuring equal access to higher education etc.).

5. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

As a candidate country, Croatia is following the Copenhagen process and Maastricht documents. The Croatian VET system is in reconstructing process and the main priorities area of restructuring are (described in previous chapters):

- Developing of NQF and new curricula;
- Forming of broader occupational sectors

- Vertical and horizontal mobility;
- Introducing Croatia to Europass (European Language Portfolio is in the piloting phase; European CV is recommended; Certificate Supplement will be introduced after establishing NQF and CTS);
- Quality assurance will be provided through external (National Centre for the Evaluation of Education) and self-evaluation and VETIS
- School networking
- Agency for Vocational Education, established in Jan 2005, will become fully operational by the end of 2005
- Establishing centers for vocational excellence (CARDS 2003)

All activities are in line with the policy for social and economic cohesion. Restructuring and modernization of VET will increase attractiveness of VET.

In last few years, there is a rise in interest for VET, as the effect of conditions on labour market. Trends and request of the labour market influence establishing different polytechnic schools.

There is a special approach to the needs of low-skilled and disadvantaged groups and schools are offering different programmes to help them enter the labour market.

Enrollment quote is defined by MSES, in cooperation with Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Crafts, Ministry of Economy and CES.

It is important to mention that education for crafts occupations is regulated by the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship.

At the moment, there are no legal barriers for continuation of education. However, the barrier exists when students from secondary vocational school need to pass the university entrance exam, since it is based on general subjects. It is supposed that school-exit exam will increase enrollment of VET students in higher education institutions.

Teacher training, considered as very important in the process of restructuring of VET, in next two years will be focussed on: teaching methods, professional upgrading, EU dimension. One of the main components in CARDS 2002/2003 is teacher training.

Early identification of skills needs and planning of VET provisions will be improved through CARDS projects in VET, labour market and regional development.

Close cooperation with Association for HR Development in Croatian Chamber of Commerce, Croatian Association of Employers Croatian Chamber of Crafts has been established.

Building an efficient network of VET schools is seen as an obstacle and preconditions are visible in CARDS 2002/2003 projects in order to prepare them for future absorption of ESF and ERDS funds. There is a great need for all kinds of programmes and projects in the area of staff development and capacity building.

6. CONSOLIDATING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In all areas of education and training, various changes and reforms are underway in order to increase and promote mobility and make the whole system more transparent.

Act on the Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications²¹, ENIC-NARIC office was established within the Agency for Science and Higher Education, which contributes to promotion of mobility in higher education.

There is National Qualifications Framework in preparation within the CARDS 2002 projects in higher, as well as in vocational education.

All processes of restructuring VET are following the same guidelines, and preparations for the project on dissemination of Copenhagen process in cooperation with ETF (European Training Foundation) are being made. Within the same project, establishment of a new web-portal on VET is being made, as well as VETIS (information system) including all stakeholders and social partners. The institution covering activities in VET area on all levels is the Agency for Vocational Education, cooperating with different institutions dealing with labour market needs and future forecasting of labour market needs.

Agency for Science and Higher Education and Agency for Vocational Education and MSES are currently institutions that carry on all activities linked to CARDS and future PHARE projects in the area of education and training, working closely with all other Ministries dealing with social and economic cohesion (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (MFAEI), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, Croatian Employment Service, etc.).

Promotion of the European dimension has been one of the criteria in the process of accrediting 800 study programmes. Number and intensity of foreign language courses has overall been increased as well as the number of courses taught in foreign languages. Several double degree and joint programs were introduced over the past few years and this trend is growing.

Pursuant to the recommendation of the European Commission, Croatia has adopted a selective approach in deciding in which Community programmes to enter in 2006. Since the TEMPUS programme, aimed at supporting the Croatian higher education reform in line with the Bologna practices and EU standards, is running very successfully, and the VET sector is currently engaged with implementing several CARDS VET projects, it was estimated that Croatia should not apply for full membership in SOCRATES and LEONARDO before 2007. One of the major reasons behind such a decision was the fact that it is not possible to participate both in TEMPUS and in SOCRATES, and the MSES estimated that TEMPUS is currently a priority since it furthers the higher education reform, which is a precondition for successful mobility that will be achieved through the SOCRATES programme. Although mobility of university professors is at a satisfactory level, the mobility of students is very low and the Ministry is trying to remove some remaining obstacles to mobility of students. Through TEMPUS programme many teachers and professors from higher education institutions have been able to participate in JEP (Joint European Projects) or have been granted IMG (Individual Mobility Grants), which gave increase to their mobility.

MFAEI is a state body coordinating all the activities linked to harmonization with EU standards and processes and is promoting EU dimension on national, as well as on regional and local levels.

Every year they organize EU quiz for primary and secondary students' school; publishing different brochures; organizing workshops, lectures, seminars on the EU etc.

MSES and MFAEI work closely with Delegation of European commission in Croatia on different projects and are within **Absorption Capacity Building Fund (ACBF)** dealing with Lisbon goals.

There are different organizations promoting EU dimension at all levels, such as: **European House** (Zagreb, Slavonski Brod); **European Youth Parliament** (Slavonski Brod); and others.

Education has a crucial role in equipping all children and young people with equal opportunities when entering society and the labour market, whatever their social background. The Croatian educational system now faces challenges to promote and maintain national, cultural and humanistic values which develop a sense of communality, acceptance and tolerance of differences, solidarity, responsibility for sustainable development, as well as supporting active citizenship and the development of democratic societies as a whole. Excessive differentiation in education could lead to reduced possibilities for the continuation of education, and also to educational exclusion. It is necessary to ensure that all citizens have access to information societies which in turn requires that all citizens have access to information technology as well as developed skills to use it.

European and inter-cultural dimension in the training of teachers and in the primary and secondary level curriculum, are implemented at all levels (from pre-school to adult learning), according to **National Curriculum for Human right and Democratic Citizenship Education**²², in projects such as **Education for Democratic Citizenship, European studies for democratic citizenship, School networking, Europe at school**, etc. Human right values are implemented through cross-curricular approach in a large number of subjects, so it is an integral part of proposed curriculum. **Act on education on language and script of minorities**²³ puts into legal framework three models of education: education on the language of minorities; bilingual education; and fostering language and culture.

Main obstacles Croatia is facing in the implementation of Lisbon policies are lack of financial resources in order to implement education and training policy more efficiently; slow process of forming school network so as to prepare them for future participation in projects funded by European Social fund and European Reconstruction Development Social Fund.

Limited participation in EU programmes (SOCRATES, LEONARDO DA VINCI) gives negative affect to mobility of students and teaching staff in schools and at universities. VET teachers lack sufficient teacher training and the overall absorption capacity for future Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and European Neighbourhood Policy Programmes (ENPP) funds is low.

SOURCES:

- ¹ Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010 (ESDP), adopted by Croatian Government, May 2005;
- ² Decree on Amendments of the Act on Primary Education, (OJ, 76/05);
- ³ Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES), <http://www.mzos.hr/default.asp?ru=528&gl=&sid=&jezik=1>;
- ⁴ The Act on the National Centre for the Evaluation of Education (OJ 151/04);
- ⁵ The Act on the Amendments of the Act on Secondary Education, June 2005;
- ⁶ Decree on Establishment of the Agency for Vocational Education, (OJ 10/05);
- ⁷ National Classification of Occupations, (OJ, 13/03);
- ⁸ Green Paper for Vocational Education and Training, CARDS VET component 1, June, 2004;
- ⁹ Decree on Establishment of the Committee for Adult Education, adopted by Croatian Government, Feb 2004;
- ¹⁰ Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, adopted by Croatian Parliament, July 2003, amended July and November 2004, OJ 123/03 and 105/04;
- ¹¹ Act on Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications (OJ 158/03 and 198/03);
- ¹² Decree on establishing the Agency for Science and Higher Education (OJ, 101/04);
- ¹³ Data from ESDP, 2005;
- ¹⁴ On the basis of the Act on Primary Education (OJ, 59/90. and 27/93.) and the Act on Secondary Education (OJ, 19/92., 26/93., 27/93. and 50/95.);
- ¹⁵ Directive on implementation of special programme for early foreign language learning, MSES, Aug, 2003;
- ¹⁶ Amendments to the Act of Secondary Education, June, 2005;
- ¹⁷ Strategy on Adult Learning, July, 2004;
- ¹⁸ National Plan of Actions for the Youth, The State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, Aug, 2002;
- ¹⁹ <http://www.see-educoop.net/>;
- ²⁰ Rules of Procedure in the field of higher Education, Dec 2004. (OJ 138/04, 139/04, 140/04, 141/04, 142/04);
- ²¹ Act on the Recognition of Foreign Education Qualifications, (OJ, 158/03);
- ²² National Program of Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education. National Committee for Human Rights Education, 1999;
- ²³ Act on Education on Script and Language of Minorities, (OJ, 56/00).