

Building a quality culture, a south-east European perspective

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Summary



- Building a quality culture – Croatian experience
- Lessons learned
- Open issues



Development of QA system in Croatia



2009 - Act on QA in HE and Science

2022 - Act on QA in HE and Science

2005 - ASHE
establishment

2011 - 1st cycle of external
QA processes

2017 - 2nd cycle of
external
QA processes

2023 - 3rd cycle of external
QA processes

In line with ESG 2005

In line with ESG 2015

EQA

2005

2023

Establishment of IQA bodies
at HEIs/setting up procedures

Follow-up activities based on
the results of the 1st cycle

Follow up activities based on
the results of the 2nd cycle

Development of strategic
documents/strategic planning at HEIs

Strengthening of IQA activities based on PDCA cycle

Development of formal
IQA documentation at
HEIs

Beginning of IQA procedures based on PDCA cycle

IQA



Agency for Science and Higher Education



_TIMELINE



agencija za znanost i visoko obrazovanje
agency for science and higher education



agency for science and higher education croatia



Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE)

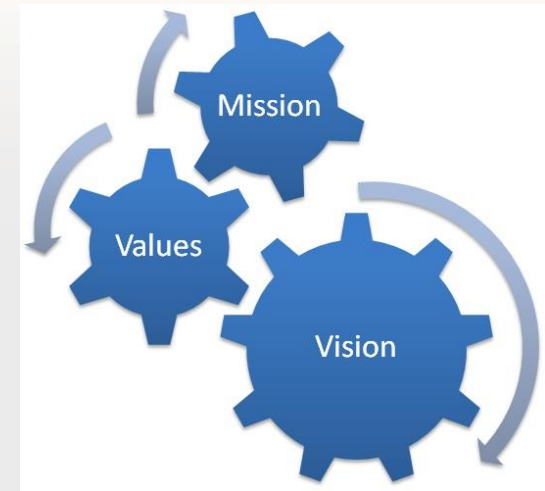


Mission

ASHE promotes the importance of quality assurance in higher education and science with the aim of **continuous quality improvement of higher education institutions**, scientific organisations and the overall Croatian system of science and higher education and its recognisability within the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, while encouraging the society's sustainable development.

Vision

By actively participating in **shaping trends and innovative practice in the field of quality assurance**, ASHE will strive to contribute to positive changes in the European Higher Education Area.



ESG – as a tool for development of QA system



ENQA reviews of ASHE



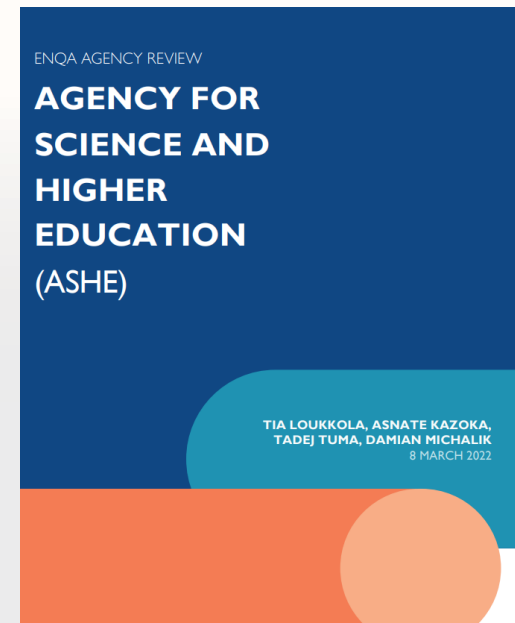
ASHE **strategic goal** – full member of ENQA and EQAR

2011 – externally evaluated – ENQA/EQAR membership/full compliance with ESG

2016/2017 – renewal of ENQA/EQAR status

2021/2022 – renewal of ENQA/EQAR status

	Panel conclusion	EQAR decision
Fully compliant	13	12
Substantially compliant	1 (ESG 3.1)	
Partial compliance		2 (2.7., 3.1)



Expectations fulfilled





1. **Quality Assurance activities in HE and Science**
2. Collecting and analyzing data on the systems of science and higher education
3. National ENIC/NARIC Office
4. Central Applications Office
5. Support to various national bodies
6. International cooperation





Institutional re-accreditation



- All HEIs in five-year cycles
- First cycle: 2011–2016
- Second cycle: 2017–2023
- This was the first time a comprehensive evaluation of the entire system of higher education in Croatia (131 institutions) was carried out in accordance with a single methodology and criteria, in compliance with the ESG and examples of good international practice.
- Conclusions: HEIs, other stakeholders and the general public recognise the importance of quality assurance, with many positive changes having taken place at the level of institutions, programmes and the system as a whole.
- Positive attitude of the heads of institutions towards the evaluation procedures and the results and outcomes thereof; these changes encourage higher education institutions to improve their activities, and ASHE to continue its work.

Areas of improvements



- Further development of functional internal quality assurance systems
- Development and modernization of study programmes based on the concept of learning outcomes
- Revision of ECTS in accordance with actual student workload
- Introducing/strengthening student practice
- Student-centred learning, teaching and evaluation
- Student support services
- Professional development of teachers and strengthening teaching competences
- Strengthening mobility and internationalization
- Enhancing quality and quantity of scientific research



Lessons learned



- **ESG as a tool** for the development of internal and external QA systems
- **Overregulated national regulatory frameworks** as the main obstacle for QA agencies to fully comply with the ESG
- Expectations from the ministry to put more **focus on compliance** with the national criteria (control more important than enhancement)
- Development of a **fit-for-purpose QA scheme** (appropriate for the national context and specificities – no „one way fits all”)
- Appropriate balance between **administrative workload** and effectiveness/impact of QA procedures



Lessons learned



- Independence of QA agencies is crucial
 - **organisational independence** guaranteed in official documentation; appointment/dismissal of governing body members
 - **operational independence** in setting up own procedures and methodologies, appointment of experts
- Involvement of stakeholders in QA activities/**partnership** (but not consultancy!)
- **Fair and equal treatment** of all stakeholders (both public and private)
- **Building trust** among the stakeholders
- Supporting the development of **staff competences** (QA professionals)

Lessons learned



- **HEIs – primarily responsible** for the development of QA system
 - regularly and consistently implement IQA procedures in accordance with the HEIs own quality concept
 - conduct IQA in PDCA cycle-based quality cycles and close the loop
 - to foster the culture of self-assessment and self-reflection
 - link EQA and IQA results and findings to strategic goals
 - HEI management’s dedication to quality objectives and active inclusion is key
 - provide adequate resources for the implementation of IQA processes, define competences and responsibilities
 - involve internal and external stakeholders
 - properly communicate IQA and EQA system purpose, processes and findings.



Lessons learned



- External QA strongly encourages the development of internal QA
- **Support of QA agencies to HEIs** in the development of their internal QA systems (activities in addition to regular QA activities)
- Commitment of stakeholders in the development of reliable and efficient QA systems



Open issues



- Different stages of development of QA systems in the region?
- Further support to development of QA systems in the region?
- Removing obstacles in reaching compliance with the ESG?
- Are the QA systems in the region the guarantee of quality? Do they encourage enhancements sufficiently?
- Transparency and trust in regional QA systems?
- Impact of QA on the fair recognition of qualifications?
- Foreign QA agencies operating in the region – do they apply the same standards consistently?





Thank you



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