



Institutional reforms – amending higher education legislation: View from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of Croatia

**Dubrovnik Conference on Higher Education:
Addressing Questions of Institutional Reform in Creating
the European Higher Education Area
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Higher education Act

- Croatia passed the new Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education in 2003 (amended in 2004 and 2007)
- Introduction and implementation of the Bologna Process
- Lump sum (block grant) financing of universities
- Suspension veto power for student representatives
- Tax reductions for investments in science and higher education (2007 amendments)
- Intermediary bodies (councils, agencies, committees)
- Functional integration of universities
- Binary system of higher education (division between university and professional programmes)



Academic and professional titles Act

- Passed in October 2007 - outlines the rules for establishing equivalence between the old and the new degrees
- Old 4-year degrees equivalent to second-cycle degree
 - These degrees allowed access to PhD programmes and in reality required almost 5 years of full-time work
- Old 3-year degrees equivalent to first-cycle degree
- Old 2-year degrees' equivalence will be determined based on rules set by the Rectors' Council and the Council of Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education
 - Equivalence will be based on the students' expected learning outcomes in particular programmes



Student representation Act

- New Act on Student Council and other Student Organizations passed in 2007
 - Students were majority in the act drafting committee
- Student Council is autonomous in establishing its internal governance
- Student ombudsman
- Greater accountability for the state funds that are provided to the Student Council



Constitutional Court decisions

- December 2006
- Law cannot prescribe final date of legal integration of universities
- Law cannot prescribe that only polytechnics and schools of professional higher education deliver professional study programmes
- New initiatives:
 - Goal of functional integration of universities still valid
 - Ministry communicates with rectorates directly
 - Strengthening of polytechnics and schools of professional higher education (funding, equipment, staff, young teachers)



Legislature and implementation

- The legal framework was successfully established
- Implementation mechanisms were developed in parallel
 - Establishment of relevant agencies: Agency for Science and Higher Education (2004), Agency for Adult Education (2006), Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (October 2007)
 - External evaluation of all study programmes performed in 2005
 - Internal quality assurance is being strengthened in higher education institutions
 - Large increase in resourcing of higher education (funding, staff, infrastructure)



Steps ahead

- Strengthening of Agency for Science and Higher Education in its quality assurance role
- Accreditation and empowering of the Agency for Mobility and EU programmes
- Reform of the system of tuition fees
- Strengthening of capacity for lump sum implementation
- Development of the Croatian qualifications framework
- Strengthening student participation in higher education governance at national, university and constituency levels



Learning outcomes (of a sort)

- Change in paradigm of HE systems governance
– provisional questions

Intermediary bodies	Agencification of governance system?
Lump sum (block grant) budgeting	Ministries primarily set strategies and individual programmes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Quality assurance▪ Greater university autonomy	Governance not by control, but through regulation and incentives?



Questions to consider

- What are the new competences that ministries must have?
- If we accept that European universities have won autonomy from the state, how can accountability be assured (i.e. Quality assurance?)
- Does university have autonomy :
 - in governance and management? (Yes?)
 - in quality assurance? (Yes but what about external quality evaluation?)
 - in programme development? (Yes but what role for students?)
 - in funding? (Yes: lump sum funding. BUT issues concerning private funding, state initiatives, tuition fee caps have to be addressed)
- Role of students in academic community?
 - Consumers? Equal members of academic community?
 - ESU's Bologna with Student Eyes – not laudable results in student participation in university decision making

Thank you!



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