



TFBHC & ERI SEE Cluster of Knowledge: Development of National Qualifications Frameworks

**Seminar**  
**Regional capacities for quality assurance**  
**and their relation to development and implementation of NQFs**  
 (Biograd na Moru, Croatia, 28 June 2013)

**REPORT**

The Seminar on *Regional capacities for quality assurance and their relation to development and implementation of NQFs* was organized by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MoSES) of the Republic of Croatia.

The purpose of the Seminar was to review regional QA arrangements, with respect to vocational (VET) and higher education (HE) and to contribute to efforts of understanding how these respond to development and implementation of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). The Seminar was divided into 3 thematic sessions covering issues related to existing national arrangements for QA in HE, national arrangements for QA in VET and effects of development and implementation of NQFs on QA in education. The Agenda of the Seminar is in Annex I.

The Cluster was chaired by Ms Ana Tecilazić Goršić (MoSES) and co-moderated by Ms Daria Arlavi (MoSES) and Mr Mile Dželalija (University of Split).

The Seminar hosted 25 participants. The list of participants is in Annex II.

**FIRST THEMATIC SESSION: Existing national arrangements for quality assurance in HE**

The first thematic session hosted 5 speakers, namely:

- Maja Macan, Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Sandra Bezjak, Agency for Science and Higher Education, Croatia
- Lindita Tahiri, University of Prishtina, Kosovo
- Stela Guvir, Tehnical University of Moldova, Moldova
- Zorana Lužanin, National Education Council of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia

Representative from **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, Ms Macan, presented country's HE system and development of procedures and policy documents which form a base for the HE reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina. New institutions for HE (Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications

in HE and the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance- HEA) have been established by the Framework Law on Higher Education. Ms Macan reminded participants that in Bosnia and Herzegovina jurisdiction over HE is shared between the cantonal governments (10 cantons in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), entity (Republic of Srpska) and Brčko district which presents certain challenges for implementation of HE reform. Licensing of higher education institutions and study programmes is regulated and conducted by relevant authorities, while accreditation is implemented through the procedure which is proscribed by the relevant Ministry, but in cooperation with HEA.

The HEA has created Criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions as well as the criteria for the accreditation of study programmes which were developed through TEMPUS project and 33 study programmes were included in a pilot accreditation phase. Ms Macan stressed that both national and foreign experts are involved in the process of accreditation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina a period for accreditation lasts for 4-6 years. Experts must be appointed from the HEA list of experts, and currently there are 324 appointed experts. HEA is an affiliate member of ENQA network. Accreditation process is at the very beginning and 10 higher education institutions are currently in the process of accreditation. During open discussion Ms Macan emphasized that in Bosnia and Herzegovina licensing includes more quantitative procedures. HEIs must fulfil quantitative criteria which are part of the licensing procedure (material conditions, staff conditions, organisational conditions and requirements, etc.), but also the qualitative part (compliance with relevant regulations, including study programmes quality check). It was pointed out that so far none of the HEIs are included in the State register of accredited HEIs, but process at some higher education institutions is at the very end and it will be finished very soon.

**Croatian** representative, Ms Bezjak, presented the system of QA of HE in the Republic of Croatia. Croatia signed the Bologna Declaration in 2001 introducing three cycle system and ECTS. The first Bologna generation of students enrolled into universities in 2005. Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) is in charge of QA, collecting and analysing data on the systems of science and higher education. There are two additional offices located in the ASHE, the ENIC/NARIC Office and the Central Applications Office which is the national centre for application to study programmes via national IT system for applications to higher education institutions. Procedures for initial accreditation (for new study programmes and new HEIs), reaccreditation, audit and thematic evaluation (for example, thematic evaluation is currently being done for doctoral studies) were also presented. With regards to thematic evaluation of learning outcomes, significant differences were noted between different HEIs in terms of understanding methodology for development of and delivering respective learning outcomes. Licencing and accreditation are joined procedures in the Republic of Croatia performed during 5 year cycles. The reaccreditation process is the ASHE's ongoing activity. Taking into account the EQAR recommendation, stating that the procedure for reaccreditation should include "input, process and output", ASHE is particularly focused on the "output". When compared to public HEIs, more difficulties during accreditation process were found in privately owned institutions. Furthermore, ASHE will soon commence the procedure of tracing the employability of students. During discussion Ms Bezjak added that while developing the rules for accreditation Croatia used the CHEA's expertise – an umbrella institution for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation from the USA. Also, extensive international study visits and concrete examples from other EU countries assisted in solving problems during first years of ASHE's work. Additionally, regular brainstorming sessions among the staff contributed to overall development phase of rules for accreditation.

Representative from **Kosovo**<sup>1</sup>, Ms Tahiri, gave an overview of the system of QA in Kosovo with the emphasis on procedure conducted by the University of Prishtina. Kosovo has over 30 HEIs. The National Agency for Accreditation was established and it operates in accordance with European standards. The University of Prishtina consists of 16 faculties which implement a number of different university and professional studies. In addition, the Center for Lifelong Learning was established by a Government decree and is currently in the capacity building phase. The HE system in Kosovo is centralized with majority of HEIs located in Prishtina. There are no short cycle programmes but new legislative acts allow for such to be implemented in a near future. Privately owned institutions in Kosovo are not under obligation to have QA mechanisms but they usually hire an expert to perform QA procedures in line with HE legislation. Because of the economic crisis, but also taking into account that Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe (65% of population is younger than 25 years of age), many students are continuing their education and training, particularly in the area of soft skills. Procedure for monitoring student's employability is still not in place and is centered mainly on small scale polls regarding competencies acquired during education, which are necessary for employment. Procedure for reaccreditation usually last for 3-4 years, depending on the purpose of reaccreditation. Some institutions apply for reaccreditation of parts of study programmes, while some apply for full reaccreditation of study programmes.

**Moldovan** representative, Ms Guvir, presented their system of QA in HE and stressed the need to reform the Moldovan HE system in accordance with European standards. A reform will be based on the Development National Strategy of the Republic of Moldova 2012-2020. QA in Moldova is ensured through the Quality Assurance Offices at institutional level, through the Ministry of Education and the National Agency on Quality Assurance (NAQA) to be established by the end of 2013. QA tools contain criteria and indicators of quality evaluation and evaluation methods. Quality evaluation on institutional level is done through self-evaluation and internal evaluation based on the reference standards to be proposed by NAQA. At national level, quality evaluation is done through external evaluation (carried out by NAQA or other agency registered in EQAR). Certain possible future challenges were identified, ranging from introduction of new technologies, decline of public funding and current demographic changes in Moldova. Also, Ms Guvir informed the participants that Moldovan Ministry for Education developed the National Qualification Framework for HE but not for other levels of education. Technical University developed framework for 48 qualifications in 2008, and those qualifications are undergoing revision. Moldova does not have third cycle qualifications, only first and second cycle qualifications as well as doctorate qualifications. The framework of qualifications developed by Technical University is not exactly a Moldovan full scale NQF but more an institutional framework regarding different area or occupation. The Ministry of Education developed NQF only for HE, but not yet for primary and secondary general education and VET. NQF for HE developed by the Ministry contains Dublin descriptors.

**Serbian** representative, Ms Lužanin, briefly introduced the national system for QA in HE in the Republic of Serbia. In 2003 Serbia joined the Bologna process and consequently in 2006 the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) were set up. In April 2013 CAQA became a full ENQA member. CAQA is not an

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<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

institution but a body made from 15 professors, 5 students and 5 other stakeholders. A system for accreditation and QA is implemented based on standards and procedures for accreditation of HEIs and their study programmes, standards and procedures for external quality control of HEIs and standards for self-evaluation and assessment of quality of HEIs. Accreditation process results in a formal decision from CAQA stating that minimum requirements were met. Currently, there are 205 accredited HEIs, and 1553 study programmes submitted for accreditation with 89592 students enrolled in state and private HEIs. What does present a certain problem in HE is a lack of students. External quality control is currently undergoing the first round (2011-2015) and until now CAQA has accepted 78 reports on external quality control of HEIs. Self-evaluation of the study programmes includes analysis and redefinition of learning outcomes which started in 2012. Development of NQF based on learning outcomes is in progress. A Serbian representative identified lack of trained professionals in quality domain, lack of financing and insufficient training of teachers as possible challenges for future period.

## **SECOND THEMATIC SESSION: Existing national arrangements for quality assurance in VET**

The second thematic session hosted 5 speakers, namely:

- Tamara Hudolin, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Croatia
- Daria Duilović, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Teuta Danuza, National Qualifications Authority, Kosovo
- Moldovanu Radu, Ministry of Education (Vocational Education and Training Department), Moldova
- Dana Carmen Stroe, National Centre for TVET Development, Romania
- Jelena Jakovljević, Institute for Improvement of Education, Serbia

**Croatian representative**, Ms Hudolin, gave an outline of the VET system in the Republic of Croatia highlighting that 70% of secondary school students attend VET schools. Flexibility of qualifications is necessary in order to allow access to labour market, further education and to support lifelong learning. The existing Sectoral Councils work and responsibilities were presented alongside with sector profiles, standards of occupations, standards of qualifications and curricula which were developed within IPA project implemented by the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE). Additionally, AVETAE developed an on-line tool "E-kvalifikacije", designed for easier, transparent and quality development of qualifications. Through different IPA project, AVETAE also developed an on-line application "e-Kvaliteta" which provides assistance to VET schools in development of self-assessment report. Self-evaluation puts emphasis on experience and progress of the students and is based on quality criteria. It is conducted as a part of annual quality cycle and follows principles of EQAVET. According to VET act, VET schools in Croatia implement self-assessment based on the Manual for self-assessment which was developed by AVETAE. In addition to the Manual, AVETAE developed a Methodology for development of vocational standards of occupation, qualifications and curricula. AVETAE developed 26 new standards of occupation, standards of qualification and curricula which are currently being piloted in VET schools and QA check will be done accordingly. Sectoral Councils were not involved in development of standards of occupations, standards of qualifications and curricula during IPA projects. According to VET Act, role of Sectoral Councils as advisory and expert bodies was to give opinion on and approve standards of occupations and standards of qualifications that were

developed by expert working groups, in line with Methodology for development of standards of occupations, standards of qualifications and curricula. Also, role of Sectoral Councils was to provide feedback and serve as a link with labour market in order to identify trends and demands necessary for identifying skills, knowledge and competencies. The CROQF Act prescribes changes to function and responsibilities of Sectoral Councils in the future. Initially, Sectoral Councils were envisaged only for VET sectors, but the Act expands their scope of work to all education levels and sectors. Sectoral Councils will, among other responsibilities, be responsible for validation of standards of occupations and standards of qualifications.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina representative**, Ms Duilović, presented some main features of the VET system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which to large extent resembles the VET systems in the region. The work on development of QA system was mostly done through IPA assistance. Within the sector for agriculture and food 13 standards of occupations and standards of qualification were developed. The challenges facing the VET system in Bosnia and Herzegovina mainly rise from the fact that there are three separate agencies responsible for VET system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Representative from Kosovo**, Ms Danuza, gave an overview of QA in VET system in Kosovo. Performance indicators were tackled, being the important part of the process of development of qualifications in Kosovo. The establishment of National Qualifications Authority was marked as an important step towards improvement of QA system in VET based on EU standards. NQF is being developed and maintained by the National Qualifications Authority. NQF has 8 levels of qualifications, based on learning outcomes and it will introduce credit system into VET along with strong emphasis on QA and development of mechanisms for recognition of prior learning. In Kosovo everyone has a legal possibility to initiate procedure for development of qualifications. However, a standard of occupation on which new qualification will be based needs to be developed before a standard of qualification. If this is not the case, then the provider first has to develop a standard of occupation. Performance indicators were developed on the basis of EQARF and correspond to EU standards. Existing system allows for a development of partial qualifications. Qualifications in Kosovo are almost entirely module based, which is different when compared to other systems in the region. In Kosovo, programmes are called qualifications, hence the term “qualification module”.

**Romanian representative**, Ms Stroie, provided an overview of the Romanian VET system with emphasis on the related QA system developed in accordance with the existing EU standards. In 2008, the EQAVET framework inspired the revision of the National Quality Assurance Framework for TVET. Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) inspired the development of the Romanian National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF) for TVET (Romania was the first country piloting and later adopting the CQAF, while taking the national context into account). Under the coordination of the National Centre for TVET Development (NCTVETD), with the support of the Ministry of Education and the County School Inspectorates, NQAF has been gradually implemented in IVET (Initial Vocational Education and Training). NCDTVET coordinated, with the support of the Ministry of Education, the training of IVET actors. The National Group for Quality Assurance (GNAC) is an informal structure functioning as a national reference point for QA in education and training and coordinates the harmonization of QA in education and training. Qualifications in Romania are based on training/occupational standards, validated by the Sectoral Committees. Also, qualifications are competence based and assessment criteria are part of the qualification description. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is carried out in centres for the assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning. It has been authorised,

periodically evaluated and monitored in terms of quality by the National Qualifications Authority. Some valuable lessons from Romanian experience were given as concluding remarks, such as: legal framework and instruments are needed but are not enough for securing the success; empowerment of main actors is crucial; QA and improvement should be primarily secured in the teaching, learning and training process; commitment of teachers and trainers to quality is a prerequisite of every successful approach.

**Serbian representative**, Ms Jakovljević, gave a brief overview of Serbian VET system with latest developments in establishment of QA system in VET. Serbia has a 5 level Framework of Qualifications in Vocational Education. Each level contains descriptions of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes necessary for performing a job or for further learning. In the future this Framework should be integrated into the NQF that is being developed. Serbian representative stressed a need for development of NQF in Serbia which will allow for sound and strong QA system, particularly when faced with growing number of VET qualifications currently implemented in VET schools. Development of QA mechanisms is required in the process of qualifications development, accreditation of providers, in the process of acquiring qualifications, for exams, public documents on qualifications and credit system of qualifications. Further efforts have to be made in development of the system for recognition of prior learning in VET, development of accreditation system and a credit system in VET.

### **THIRD THEMATIC SESSION: Effects of development and implementation of NQFs on quality assurance in education**

Third thematic session, moderated by Mr Mile Dželalija, offered discussion about impacts of NQFs on QA in education. Every country representative expressed their greatest challenges in QA: **Croatia** as a challenge identified coordination of QA procedure with reaccreditation process and its compliance with CROQF. There is a need for joint working groups from all interested stakeholders to prepare the base for validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning. **Bosnia and Herzegovina** emphasized that there is a long way from QA system to QA culture. Bosnia and Herzegovina is still not preparing for implementation of ECVET, and more things have happened in terms of development in the HE than in VET. Bosnia and Herzegovina has proposed a regional cooperation in IPA 2 projects with the aim of implementation of ECVET principles and EQARF structure in VET in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, the European Training Foundation (ETF) should help countries in the region in building their QA in VET. As a conclusion, representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina proposed a closed conference or multi beneficiary projects on development of NQF, with Croatia as a leader in the region, since Croatia has done most progress in the field of development of NQF. **Kosovo** stated a need for further review of their NQF and the challenge of placing proper qualifications to higher levels of NQF. Also, a lack of apprenticeship programmes and their QA is one of areas Kosovo would like to see further improvement. Kosovo has proposed further discussion regarding mutual recognition of qualifications in the region. **FYROM** representative believes that the greatest challenge in their national context will be to develop the NQF for the VET sector and then to connect that part with the existing HE framework since there is a need for development of NQF which will include all level of education and training in FYROM. **Moldova** identified as challenge insufficient know-how in development of accreditation and validation processes and in development of NQFs. Greatest improvement needs to be done in the area of external QA, including the establishment of national agency responsible for accreditation in

HE and a shift to NQF based on learning outcomes. **Romania** is putting an effort to improve a "workbased learning" and QA in apprenticeship programmes. Current revision of QA framework is a challenge taking into account the specificities of informal learning and certification procedures. More attention should be placed on the strategy for LLL. **Serbia** identified challenges in the area of development of system of accreditation and qualitative indicators for QA in HE. Lack of integration and implementation of NQF at a national level is a major obstacle yet to be tackled. Serbian representative stressed the importance of integration of general education into NQF and further improvement of doctoral studies.

The seminar was concluded with discussion on future regional activities in this area.

Representative of the **Regional Cooperation Council** (RCC) Mr Mladen Dragašević informed the participants that the Ministers in charge of the economy, meeting regularly at the SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC) format under RCC, adopted an outline of a comprehensive cooperation agenda and mandated the SEEIC to develop the South East Europe 2020 Strategy (*Job creating growth and EU integration*) in line with the Europe 2020 strategy. Under the pillar II Smart growth dimension, *Education and Competences* is specifically aimed at developing education sector in order to contribute to the development of regional economies. At the 17th ERI SEE Governing Board meeting held in Sarajevo, on 20-21 March, ERI SEE has been appointed as the coordinator of the dimension *Education and Training*. The Strategy relies on IPA 2 financial programme and it is important to stress that due to specificities of SE Europe, Strategy contains a new pillar not represented in the EU 2020 –"Governance for growth". RCC representative reported that the contracting procedure for selection of consultants was completed. Consultants will provide assistance in development of the Strategy, and their input will be reflected through cooperation with the ERI SEE Governing Board. The Draft Strategy should be presented by the end of September. Furthermore, in Turin, Italy, a RCC and ETF meeting was held about the project *FRAME* (*FRAME: Forecasting Skills and Assessing Human Capacity*) coordinated by ETF and financed from IPA financial programme.

The **ETF** representative Mr Michael Graham concluded with the remark that Croatia did a tremendous work in the pre-accession period in which ETF established efficient cooperation with Croatian representatives, mostly within the Ministry for Science, Education and Sports. As Croatia joins EU on 1 July 2013, the ETF's role will be replaced with CEDEFOP.

Ms Loredana Maravić a Croatian member in the **ERI SEE Governing Board** informed participants that according to the Terms of Reference, the respective Cluster of Knowledge on NQFs should continue its work until 31 December, 2013. Thus, Ms Maravić asked the participants to inform their ERI SEE Governing Board representatives about perceived value of the Cluster, so that the ERI SEE Governing Board can reach an informed decision about the possible continuation of the Cluster. She also invited the participants to express their interest in taking over the lead of the Cluster and submit such nomination to the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. Representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms Duilović expressed positive opinion about the Cluster's work and suggested that this form of cooperation should continue and that Croatia as a leading country should maintain a coordinating role.

## Annex I

Seminar on regional capacities for quality assurance and their relation to development and implementation of NQFs (Biograd na Moru, Croatia, 28 June 2013)

### AGENDA

9:00 – 9:30	<p>Opening remarks</p> <p>Conclusions from the International Seminar: <i>QA in HE and VET in the context of NQFs, EQF and QF-EHEA – promoting trust between the sectors?</i> (27<sup>th</sup> June 2013, Biograd na Moru, Croatia)</p>
9:30 – 11:00	<p>Session 1</p> <p><b>Existing national arrangements for quality assurance in HE</b></p> <p>Presentation from the countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Serbia</p> <p>Invited Reactions</p>
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:30 – 13:00	<p>Session 2</p> <p><b>Existing national arrangements for quality assurance in VET</b></p> <p>Presentation from the countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, Serbia</p> <p>Invited Reactions</p>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 15:30	<p>Session 3</p> <p><b>Effects of development and implementation of NQFs on quality assurance in education</b></p> <p>Open discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effectiveness of existing QA models – identifying challenges</li> <li>2. Compatibility of QA systems in VET and HE: can we identify similarities and where are the differences?</li> <li>3. Institutional infrastructure of QA in the countries in the region: looking for the best fit model: one QA agency for all levels or specific agencies for different qualifications levels (pros and cons for different models)?</li> <li>4. Can NQF implementation enhance existing QA arrangements in HE and VET?</li> <li>5. How can NQF implementation integrate existing QA arrangements in HE and VET?</li> <li>6. Learning outcomes-based NQFs - how can QA systems in VET and HE sector ensure that intended learning outcomes have been properly written, implemented, assessed and verified?</li> <li>7. Sufficiency of existing QA tools, criteria and guidelines in VET and HE: what are we missing?</li> <li>8. To what extent the QA systems contribute to enhancement of the quality of education?</li> </ol>
15:30 -16.00	<p>Conclusions, including:</p> <p>Future events - priority issues and method of cooperation</p>



**Annex II**

## Seminar on regional capacities for quality assurance and their relation to development and implementation of NQFs (Biograd na Moru, Croatia, 28 June 2013)

*List of participants*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Country</b>
DARIA	ARLAVI	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	CROATIA
SANDRA	BEZJAK	Agency for Science and Higher Education	CROATIA
JURE	BILOGLAV	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	CROATIA
BILJANA	BIRAČ	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	CROATIA
TEUTA	DANUZA	National Qualifications Authority	KOSOVO
MLADEN	DRAGAŠEVIĆ	Regional Cooperation Council	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
DARIA	DUILOVIĆ	Ministry of Civil Affairs	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
MILE	DŽELALIJA	University of Split	CROATIA
MICHAEL	GRAHAM	European Training Foundation	EU
STELA	GU VIR	Technical university of Moldova	MOLDOVA
TAMARA	HUDOLIN	Agency for VET and Adult Education	CROATIA
VANJA	IVOŠEVIĆ	Centre for Education Policy	SERBIA
JELENA	JAKOVLJEVIĆ	Institute for Improvement of Education	SERBIA
NATASHA	JANEVSKA	Ministry of Education	FYROM
VITOMIR	JOVANOVIĆ	Centre for Education Policy	SERBIA
ZORANA	LUŽANIN	National Education Council of the Republic of Serbia	SERBIA
MAJA	MACAN	Agency for Development of HE and QA	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
LOREDANA	MARAVIĆ	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	CROATIA
HUSEIN	NANIĆ	Agency for Development of HE and QA	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
MOLDOVANU	RADU	Ministry of Education	MOLDOVA
IGOR	RALIĆ	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	CROATIA
DANA CARMEN	STROIE	National Centre for TVET Development	ROMANIA
MAJA	ŠEGVIĆ	Agency for Science and Higher Education	CROATIA
LINDITA	TAHIRI	University of Prishtina	KOSOVO

ANA	TECILAŽIĆ GORŠIĆ	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	CROATIA
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