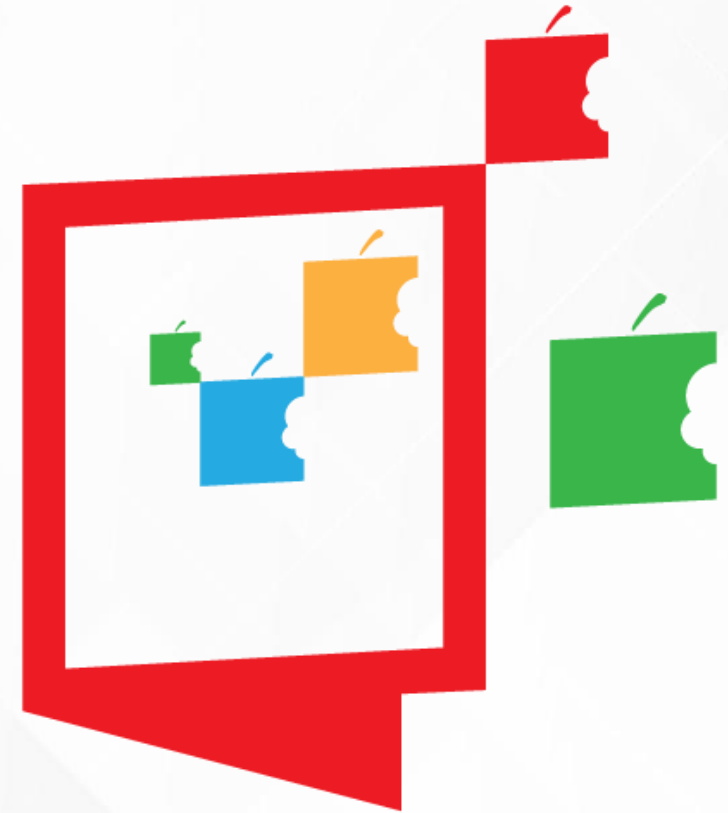


Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education and QA System in Croatia

CEENQA BI Monthly online meeting
15 September 2021



Summary

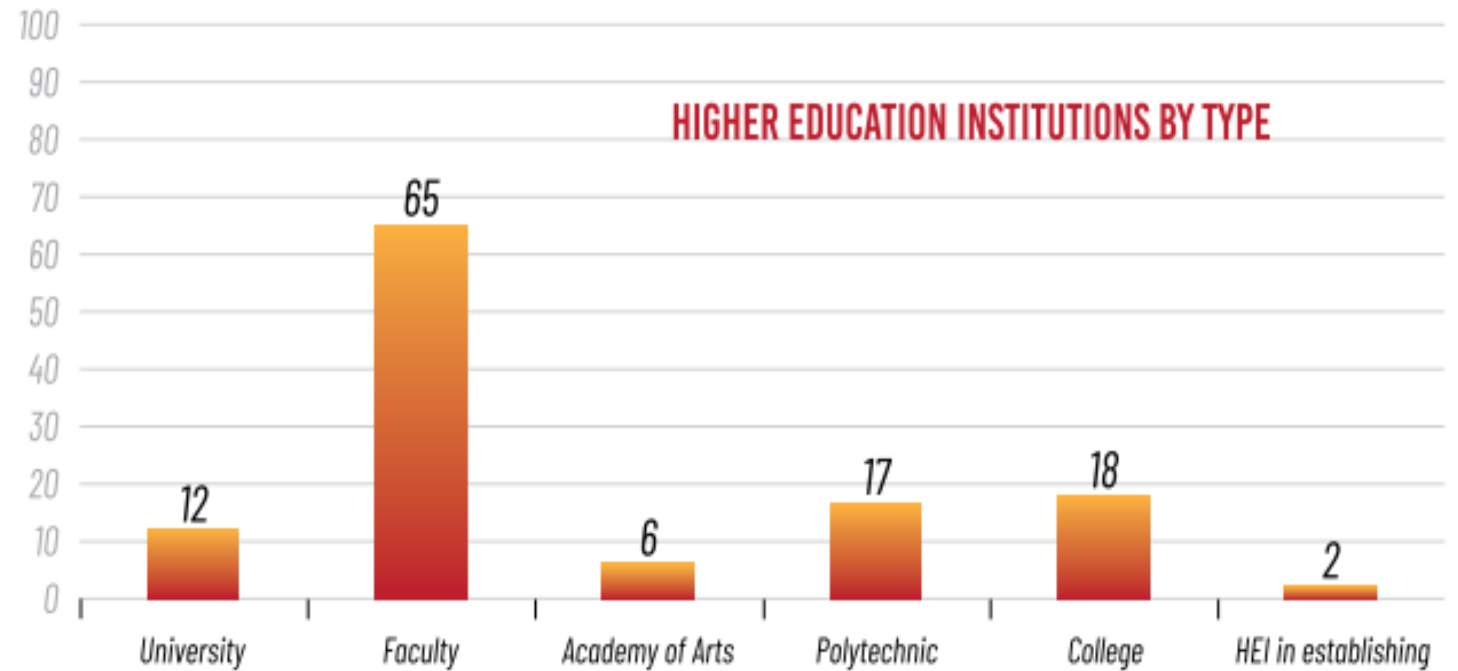
- Croatian HE system
- QA System in Croatia
- ASHE
- QA activities
- Organization of work in a pandemic
- Prospect for the Future



Croatian HE system

- Long academic tradition, some of universities are the oldest in South-East Europe
- HEI's are: universities and their constituent units (faculties and arts academies), polytechnics and colleges
- Depending on their type of funding: public or private

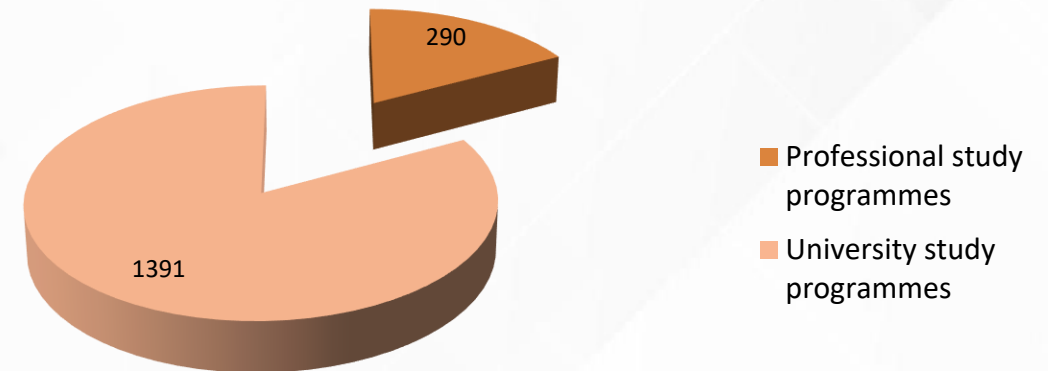
- 12 universities (9 public and 3 private)
- 17 polytechnics (11 public and 6 private)
- 18 colleges (3 public and 15 private)
- 162,928 students (2018/2019)



Study programmes

Croatia is a member of the Bologna Process, and all study programmes in Croatia are aligned with the Bologna structure

- Types of study programmes:
 - **university study programmes** (qualify students for work in science, arts and higher education, private and public sector, and society in general; they also qualify them for the development and application of scientific, artistic and professional knowledge; delivered by universities)
 - **professional study programmes** (enable a direct integration into the labour market; the programmes are delivered by colleges and polytechnics; in some instances, they can be delivered by universities).
 - 1681 accredited study programmes ([Directory of Study Programmes, 15 June](#))



Croatian Qualification Framework (CroQF)

Levels		Types of programs	
8	8.2.	Postgraduate university study – PhD	
	8.1.	Former Master's Degree – 2 years	
7		Postgraduate professional study	
		Graduate university study	Graduate professional study
6		Undergraduate university study	Undergraduate professional study
5		Professional study – less than 3 years Training programs – training and additional education	
4	4.2.	Secondary education – 4 years + State Matura	
	4.1.	Secondary education – 3 years + final exam	
3		Secondary vocational education – 1-2 years	
2		Vocational training	
1		Primary school (8 years)	

- CroQF – instrument that defines the entire system of qualifications on all educational levels in Croatia through standards of qualifications that are based on learning outcomes and aligned with the needs of the labour market, individuals and the society
- CroQF Act prescribes level descriptors of learning outcomes for all levels of study



QA System in Croatia

- AZVO (English: ASHE) – **only national body responsible for carrying out external QA activities** in higher education and science.
- ASHE was founded in 2005 with the aim of conducting procedures of external evaluation and improving the quality of science and higher education in Croatia.
- The Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education adopted in 2009 enabled the Agency (**ESG 3.2**) to achieve its **full independence** (**ESG 3.3**) and bring its QA activities into compliance with **ESG**.

- 2011 – externally evaluated (**ESG 3.7**) – ENQA/EQAR membership/full compliance with ESG
- 2016/2017 – renewal of ENQA/EQAR status
- 2021 – external evaluation for renewal of ENQA/EQAR status was conducted in June 2021



ASHE in international context

- ASHE is actively working on the inclusion in the international system of quality assurance in higher education and science, already being its recognised and active member
- **Full member of ENQA and listed in EQAR**
- Member of: CEENQA (Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education), INQAAHE, ENIC and NARIC Networks, ECA, APQN, CHEA International Quality Group, IREG, IAAO (International Association of Admissions Organisations)



ASHE Mission, Vision, Strategy

Mission

ASHE is a **public, independent, internationally recognised agency** that is, together with its **stakeholders**, dedicated to an ongoing **development of quality assurance in higher education and science**, aimed at a continuous quality improvement of higher education institutions and scientific organisations, and contribution to better positioning and recognition of the Croatian higher education and science within the EHEA and the European Research Area.

ASHE encourages the development of the Croatian HE system in which students have access to a high-quality, inclusive higher education that contributes to the development of an individual creative potential, and enables the acquisition of qualifications that are internationally recognised.

Vision

ASHE is a recognised example of good practice and creativity in the field of quality assurance in higher education and science at national and international levels.

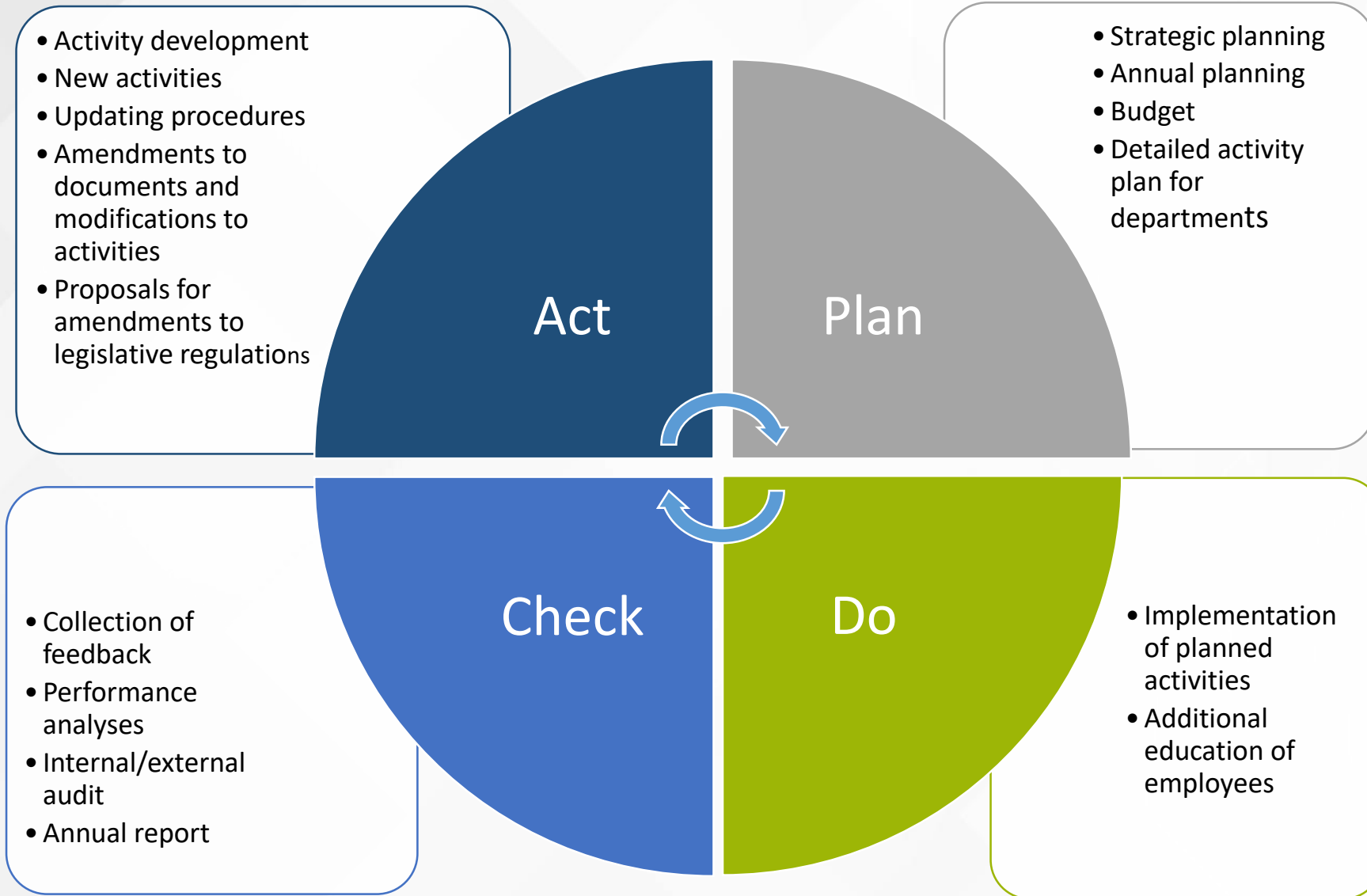
[Strategy 2021 - 2025](#)



ASHE's internal QA System (ESG 3.1)

- Quality Policy – general direction for employees and stakeholders
- Mission – description of the basic purpose for management, employees, stakeholders
- Vision – general development goals
- Values and Ethical Principles – main principles of professional and ethical business conduct
- Strategic document, Operational and Financial Plan – management of the organisation and quality goals (planning, process implementation, monitoring, reporting),
- Operating procedures, forms, reports, analyses, improvements, innovations – implementation of processes and activities, monitoring, evaluations, reporting, improvements.

ASHE's QA System



ASHE activities

- External evaluation in higher education
- External evaluation in science
- Collecting and analyzing data on the systems of science and higher education
- Applications to study programmes and the fulfilment of requirements for enrolment in HEIs
- Expert and administrative support to strategic and professional bodies (e.g. National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development, scientific area councils, scientific field committees, etc.)
- Recognition of foreign higher education qualification – Croatian ENIC/NARIC Office
- Educational activities (workshops, seminars, conferences and webinars)
- International cooperation

The image shows two screenshots of the ASHE website. The top screenshot is a dashboard with a grid of nine colored buttons: 'Applications for graduate programmes' (dark blue), 'Data about applications' (orange), 'Calendar' (yellow), 'News' (light blue), 'All about applications' (green), 'FAQ' (grey), 'Employment' (dark green), 'EMREX' (dark blue), and 'Central Applications Office' (light blue). The bottom screenshot shows the main website interface with a navigation menu including 'About us', 'Higher Education', 'Science', 'Evaluations', 'ENIC/NARIC office', 'Publications', and 'Workshops'. The 'ENIC/NARIC office' section is expanded, displaying text about the office's role as an information centre for academic mobility and recognition of foreign higher education qualifications. It also lists the scope of activities, including professional recognition of foreign qualifications and information on national education systems.

ASHE Quality Assurance activities

1. INITIAL ACCREDITATION

- new HEIs and/or new study programme
- new scientific organizations established and/or financed by state
- scope: fulfillment of necessary academic criteria is checked

2. RE-ACCREDITATION

- **mandatory for all public and private HEIs** in five-year cycles (first cycle until 2015)
- mandatory for all scientific organizations established and/or financed by the state (until 2015)
 - re-accreditation of part of activities of HEI (re-accreditation of PhD studies)
- scope: quality assurance (accountability) and quality improvement (enhancement)

3. AUDIT

- mandatory for HEIs
- scope: degree of development and efficiency of the internal QA system of HEIs

4. THEMATIC EVALUATION

- scope: equivalent evaluation subjects

Four stage peer-review method (ESG 2.3.)

1 Self-assessment

2 External assessment / site-visit

3 Report

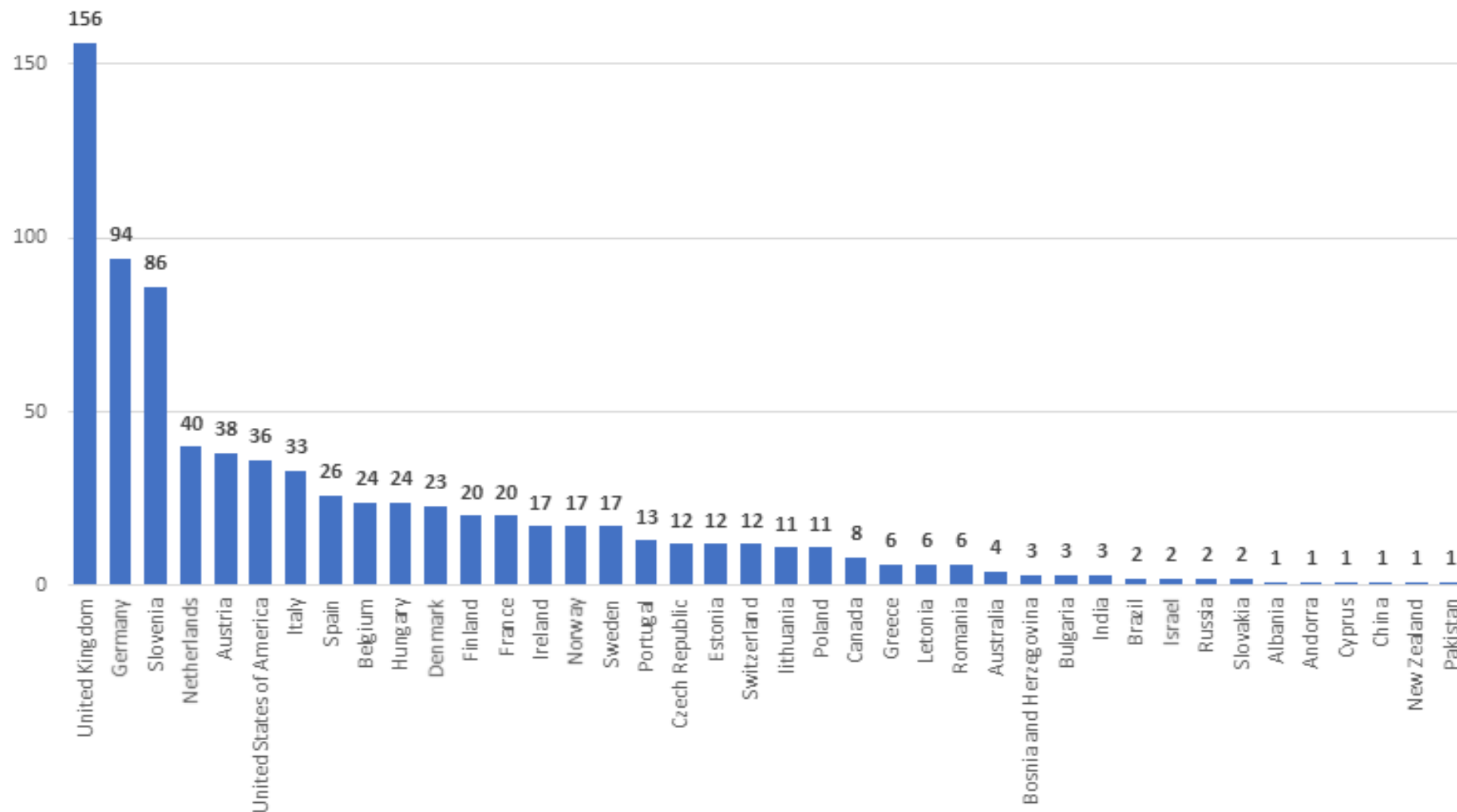
4 Follow-up



Pool of experts – international experts



Distribution of foreign experts in re-accreditation procedures by country of origin
(total = 795)



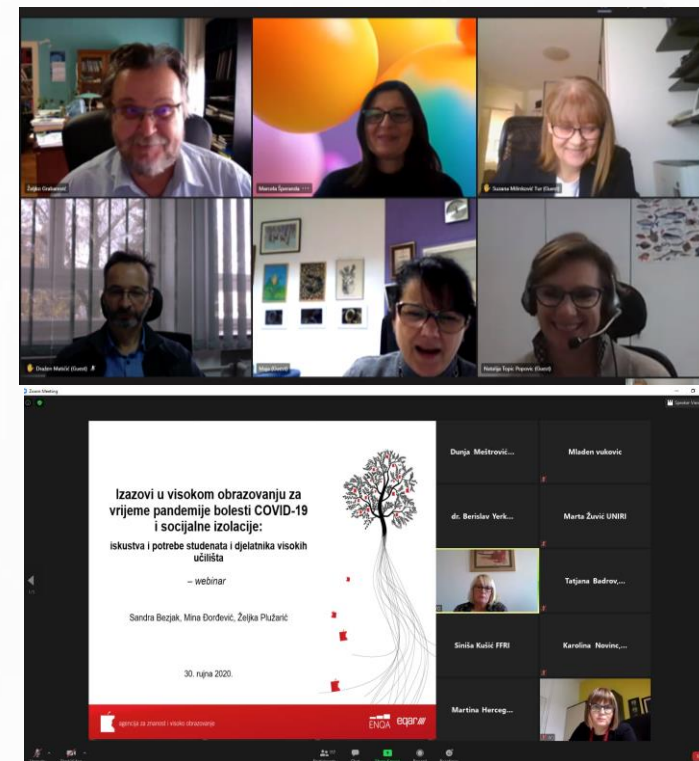
Annual trainings for potential panel members and different workshops for HEI's before 2020



2020 Retrospective

ASHE Organization of work in a pandemic:

- *Decision on the way of carrying out the external evaluation procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic*
- The procedures were carried out based on the **hybrid model / online model** with professional help from ASHE – successful response to the circumstances caused by the pandemic
- Technical support to *online* external evaluation procedures: Document *Technical Instructions for Online Reaccreditation of HEIs*
- Online training of panel members
- Training activities / webinars for higher education institutions: strengthening the capacity of HEIs (topics: teaching competencies, professional guidance and strengthening the role of career guidance services, online teaching, etc.)
<https://www.azvo.hr/en/radionice/odrzane-radionice>
- Online meetings of strategic and expert bodies in the system of science and higher education
- COVID measures in the work environment: temperature measurement, hand sanitization, registration before entering, wearing masks, social distancing, work from home, disinfection



2020 Retrospective

ASHE conducted research on *experience of studying during pandemic and social isolation*

- Goal: better understanding the influence of exceptional circumstances, such as a **pandemic and social isolation**, on **the experience of studying and teaching**
- Online survey during June and July 2020 (staff members and students from HEIs throughout Croatia participated)

General findings:

- ✓ participants emphasise **the effectiveness of online teaching** and its applicability in the transmission of theoretical knowledge, but they place great emphasis on the non-substitutability of direct contact between teachers and students
- ✓ The needs of students and HEI's: stable internet connection, access to digital literature, **better organisation of online exams and prevention of unethical behaviour**, the possibility to carry out part of the teaching in person, the evaluation of **the increased teacher workload**, psychological counselling services, etc.



Cross-border activities

One of the strategic goals of the ASHE is to intensify external evaluations abroad

- **External evaluation of joint programmes** in accordance with the European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes, ESG and the national legislative framework (joint study programme Epitech – Alegbra)
- **External evaluation of foreign HEIs and study programmes** (University of Mostar, School for Social and Business Studies (ISSBS) Slovenia, Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, Ukraine)
- **External evaluation** of Agencies for Quality Assurance in Higher Education aimed at renewing their EQAR membership (ASIIN e. V agency)



Prospect for the Future

- Extend a full membership in ENQA and EQAR
- ISO 9001 recertification
- Integrate new activities related to Croatian Qualifications Framework, e.g. national Registar of qualifications
- Finish 2nd cycle of re-accreditation of HEIs
- Keep abreast with new developments & innovations in QA
- Develop a new model of external evaluations for the next cycle
- Strengthen Cross-border activities



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