

## Mobility report

Viktoriiia Maltseva, MFHEA to ASHE, Croatia

Please provide the following information about the mobility. This document, accompanied by the proof of multiplier presentation that is to be conducted after the mobility period, should be submitted to project coordinator at [goran.dakovic@enqa.eu](mailto:goran.dakovic@enqa.eu) no later than one month after the end of the mobility.

### 1. What were your expectations of the mobility? What did you want to learn or achieve?

The main objective of the staff mobility was to see and understand the work of the QA Agency that is fully in line with the ESG. The Croatian national Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) was chosen for this activity as it has an established QA system and extensive experience in Institutional, Programme Accreditation and EQA audits. I had the opportunity to benchmark the procedures and observe the work of the agency, from the planning of accreditation and audit procedures to implementation and follow-up. In addition, I had the opportunity to learn about the Croatian education system, discuss the Internal Quality Assurance system, including the independence status of the ASHE, understand the work of the coordinators responsible for the accreditation of study programmes and institutional accreditation, explore methods and criteria for peer reviewers, including training for peer review experts, and collect the knowledge, ideas and experience on how to improve the Internal Quality Assurance, accreditation and EQA procedures of the MFHEA. One of the expectations was to see how the ASHE agency supports HEIs in preparation for accreditation/EQA audit site visits, guides the institutions in preparing the Self-Evaluation report and conducts other activities to improve their internal procedures and quality of education in general.

### 2. Please provide a detailed description of activities during your mobility

Please add a detailed agenda, and a short description (a few sentences) of aims and objectives for each listed session.

Wednesday, 31 August

- Introduction of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) and introduction to the Higher education and QA system in the Republic of Malta
- Introduction of the Agency for Science and Higher education (ASHE) and introduction to the Higher education and QA system in the Republic of Croatia
- Introduction of the institutional re-accreditation of the higher education institutions in Croatia

Topics:

- Differences between institutional re-accreditation and programme accreditation
- Re-accreditation procedure: Expert panel members, Site-visit protocol, Report and Standards for Quality Assurance, Follow-up, Complaints, responsibility of the ASHE coordinators (staff) and support to HEI.
- Practical information, examples, discussion according to the preferences

The main objective of the day was to learn about the Croatian education system and benchmark the accreditation procedures. We discussed in detail all the steps and processes involved in accreditation, including the responsibility of the coordinators and the Agency. We touched on many different topics, and I had the opportunity to ask questions for clarification.

Thursday, 1 September

- Introduction of the Audit of Higher Education Institutions in Croatia

Topics:

- Differences between re-accreditation and audit process
- Audit process: conditions and procedure of the audit, Site-visit, selection and training of expert panel members, responsibility of the ASHE coordinators (staff) and support to HEI in preparing for the audit, Reports and transparency, Complaints and appeals.
- Practical information, examples, discussion according to the preferences and exchange of experience

The main goal of the sessions was to learn about the EQA audit processes and the responsibilities of the staff and the Agency. We discussed in detail the audit process, including the compliant and appeal procedures. We also discussed challenges with providers and solutions for them.

Friday, 2 September

- Introduction to other ASHE activities

Topics:

- Thematic evaluation in higher education
- DEQAR database
- MOZVAG database
- ASHE directory of study programmes
- More about institutional / re-accreditation or audit procedures in Croatia
- ENQA Agency review process – ASHE experience
- Practical information, examples, discussion according to the preferences and exchange of experience

The objective of these sessions was to learn about the IQA system of the ASHE, including the independence status. On the last day, we also discussed the ESG standards and the work involved in preparing the self-assessment report for the ENQA review. The ASHE shared best practices and experiences in planning, implementing and monitoring the accreditation/EQA audit activities and the work of the staff involved.



3. To which topics/objectives of the SEQA-ESG was your need for peer support linked? Please check all that apply.

- legal frameworks in line with ESG compliance;
- alignment of the QA processes to the ESG peer-review method;
- connection of national criteria with the ESG;
- appropriate methods and criteria for the involvement of peer reviewers;
- stakeholder involvement in external QA;
- other.

3.1 Please elaborate on how the mobility increased your knowledge of the topic(s)/objective(s) mentioned above:

The mobility has increased my knowledge and understanding of the legal framework and the importance of independence of QA Agencies. I learned how the ASHE makes and processes its decisions, the responsibility of various stakeholders involved, including the Accreditation Council and the Ministry. We discussed the structure of the Agency and Internal Quality Assurance system that supports all activities carried out by the ASHE.

The discussions about the methods and criteria for involvement of peer review experts helped me understand the deference between the methods and criteria used by the MFHEA and see how the Croatian Agency tackles the issues that are similar to ours. I also learned about the involvement of different stakeholders in EQA processes and programme accreditation of ASHE, including students. We also discussed how the Croatian agency supports institutions through different types of workshops, trainings and seminars.

Through this activity I learned more about the complaint and appeal procedures and what it involves, including the cases that have arisen in Croatia. There were important debates about the strategies, strategic plan and planning of accreditation and EQA audit activities. I also had the opportunity to discuss with the Head of ASHE the ESG Standards, Terms of Reference and ENQA requirements for Self-Assessment report in preparation for the ENQA audit.

4. How has/will the mobility impact(ed) the implementation of the national action plan/agency review action plan?

The staff mobility activity provided a great opportunity to benchmark the processes and procedures of the MFHEA with the experienced agency with established quality assurance system and observe the work from the planning of accreditation and EQA audit procedures to implementation and follow-up. I shared gained knowledge and experience with the Head of Accreditation and QA, CEO of the Authority and other staff, and discussed the strategic plan, national action plan and action plan for the external review of MFHEA and its implementation. The staff mobility activity helped me to have more fruitful discussions with my colleagues regarding the independence status and IQA system of the Authority, which are part of the action plan. I explained to my colleagues the structure of the ASHE, how they make and inform institutions about their decisions, including the complaint and appeal procedures. In addition, I could contribute to the discussions and planning of the training of peer reviewers and staff, as during the staff mobility we identified common difficulties in these processes and discussed solutions for them. I also contributed to the topic of student involvement in the programme accreditation process, ASHE shared their experience since they involve students in their initial accreditation/re-accreditation and EQA processes, including accreditation of study programmes. I also contributed to the task 'Implementation of the Accreditation Manual', which is part of the action plan, and had productive discussions on how we can devise and improve our internal procedures for institutional accreditation and EQA audits. I also had the opportunity to

learn from the ASHE about their experience undergoing the ENQA review, including the preparation process and drafting of the SAR. This helped me to contribute more to the action plan for the external review of the MFHEA.

5. What was your overall experience of the quality of the mobility offered? Please select one of the below options.

- excellent;  
 good;  
 sufficient;  
 poor;  
 very poor.

5.1 Please elaborate on your answer. What was (excellent, good, sufficient, poor, very poor) about the mobility? Were your expectations on the knowledge shared met?

The mobility was very well prepared and organised by the ASHE. The detailed agenda and topics for discussion were agreed and drafted in advance. The Head of the ASHE, that I was in contact in preparation for the mobility and throughout the process was extremely welcoming and courteous. The staff of the host agency that I met were very friendly and professional and it made me feel very comfortable as it was my first visit to Croatia. During the first meeting, we agreed not to limit ourselves to the presentations but be more practical and have open discussions according to the agreed topics. My expectations on the knowledge shared were met as the staff of ASHE are very experienced, and the responsibilities were clearly divided among them. All discussions were supported by printed material or links to the policies and procedures that are published on the ASHE website, which I find very useful as I can easily access any information or procedure I need to refer to now or in the future. Another good practice is that during our open discussions, I was able ask a lot of questions, share my own experience, ask for advice, or elaborate on a particular issue or procedure.

6. How have you disseminated the learning outcomes of the staff mobility within your organisation?

The learning outcomes of the staff mobility were disseminated through the following meetings:

- 5<sup>th</sup> September – informal meeting with the QA officers  
12<sup>th</sup> September – meeting with the CEO and the Head of Accreditation and QA  
7<sup>th</sup> October – management meeting  
12<sup>th</sup> October – QA staff

The first meeting with the QA officers was informal and involved a lot of discussions and questions as the officers were very interested in learning about the education system in Croatia, the activities carried out by ASHE, the differences in procedures and responsibilities of the coordinators of accreditation and EQA processes. The meeting with the CEO and Head Accreditation and QA was

more structured and was followed by a proper discussion about the structure of the agency, independence status, involvement stakeholders, including students, complaint and appeal procedures and ASHE experience undergoing ENQA review process. During the management meeting and the staff meeting scheduled for October I will give a presentation (attached) and be available to clarify, elaborate or discuss any questions that may arise.

7. How could the mobility and the learning experience have been improved (relevant for possible SEQA-ESG2 project)?

The staff mobility exercise is an integral part of the project, to improve it I would suggest involving more than one staff member, including a person in a managerial position. Just to mention that online meetings/workshops would not have the same impact as face-to-face collaboration. In addition, I believe that having more open discussions and allocating sufficient time for this could add great value to the project and mobility.



With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.