

**The Action Plan for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International
Learning Mobility for the Period 2010-2012**

**The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia
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THE ACTION PLAN FOR REMOVING OBSTACLES AND ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL LEARNING MOBILITY FOR THE PERIOD 2010-2012

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The Action Plan for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility for the Period 2010-2012 (Class: 910-01/10-01/00237; File No: 533-06-10-0001) has been prepared by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in cooperation with institutions and bodies represented in activities of the Working Group for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations, Ministry of Finance, Tax Administration, Croatian Institute for Health Insurance, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, Agency for Science and Higher Education, University of Zagreb, University of Split, University of Rijeka, J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, University of Zadar, University of Dubrovnik, J. Dobrila University in Pula, Council of Public and Private Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education, Institute for the Development of Education and the Croatian Student Conference). The Directorate for International Cooperation and European Integrations of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has coordinated the elaboration of the Action Plan and it will coordinate its implementation.

The Action Plan for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility for the Period 2010-2012

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education mobility is among priorities of the Bologna process. As the signatory of the Bologna Declaration, the Republic of Croatia has started to fulfill the goals implied by the Bologna process, including the promotion of international mobility of students and academic staff.¹

International mobility in education implies spending a certain period away from the place of residence in order to gain new knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications. In addition to other goals of the Bologna Declaration, international mobility has been adopted as a strategic priority for the development of higher education system², and full accession to the mobility programmes, Lifelong Learning Programme³ and Youth in Action Programme^{4 5}, presents a pre-accession requirement for the Republic of Croatia in order to become a member of the European Union.

Since the accession of Croatia to the Bologna Process in 2001, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has made continuous efforts in order to strengthen institutional capacity for mobility, referring to the number and training of staff at the Ministry, sectoral agencies and international relations offices at higher education institutions.

Preparations for the accession to the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme included the establishment of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes. The Agency was established in 2007 as the national agency for the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme⁶. The Lifelong Learning Programme includes four sectoral programmes (COMENIUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, ERASMUS, GRUNDTVIG) that enable students, pupils, employed and unemployed persons to participate in activities related to mobility and partnerships (implementation of joint projects with partners from the EU and EFTA countries). The Programme enables participation of formal and informal education system, from kindergardens, primary and high schools to higher education institutions and institutions providing adult education. In addition, the economic sector also has the access to the Programme through participation of employed persons

¹ "Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to mobility for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services and mobility for teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights." (*Bologna Declaration*, 1999)

² "There shall be promoted mobility and overcoming obstacles to free movement of students and teachers." (*Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010*, p. 33, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Zagreb, September 2005)

³ Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)

⁴ Youth in Action Programme (YiNA)

⁵ Considering interconnectedness of the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme, some measures from this Action Plan, in addition to mobility in education, also include mobility for the purpose of volunteering.

⁶ The Agency for Mobility and Programmes of the European Union was established pursuant to the Act on the Agency for Mobility and Programmes of the European Union (OJ 107/07).

seeking professional development abroad, as well as the participation of unemployed persons in order to offer them an opportunity for a new job through professional development abroad.

In the Communiqué of the ministerial conference held in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, countries participating in the Bologna Process set a general goal that 20 per cent of students should have spent a period of study abroad by 2020.⁷

Based on the questionnaire administered by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in January 2010, higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia estimate that in the 2011/2012 academic year they will have a total of 1036 outgoing mobility students (0.6 per cent of a total number of students⁸) and that is a long way from the general goal of the countries participating in the Bologna process.

Based on the questionnaire administered by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in June 2010, higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia plan to host 320⁹ foreign students in the 2011/2012 academic year, mostly within the framework of ERASMUS.

As a candidate country, in the pre-accession period the Republic of Croatia is required to ensure necessary legal basis and effective administrative procedures supporting international mobility, particularly among the Republic of Croatia and members of the European Union, as an important element of preparatory measures for full accession to the Lifelong Learning Programme.

In order to achieve a strategic goal of increasing international incoming and outgoing mobility, particularly in the higher education system, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports established the Working Group for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility in June 2009. Members of the Working Group are representatives of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations, Ministry of Finance, Tax Administration, Croatian Institute for Health Insurance, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, Agency for Science and Higher Education, representatives of universities, the Council of Public and Private Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education, Institute for the Development of Education and the Croatian Student Conference. The Working Group has been envisaged as a platform for a dialogue among beneficiaries (participants in international projects with mobility as their integral part), and representatives of authorities responsible for legislation and procedures related to international mobility.

In the form of the Multi-annual Action Plan, the Working Group has proposed amendments to legislation supporting international mobility in education, simplification and changes of certain procedures related to international mobility, and other activities contributing to increasing and promotion of mobility.

In the first part of the Action plan there is a narrative overview of foreseen activities. It is followed by the tables outlining the measures, responsible institutions and deadlines included into the Action plan.

⁷ "The European Ministers responsible for higher education agreed that mobility shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area. At least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad in 2020." (The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué)

⁸ In the 2009/2010 academic year, higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia had a total of 175.739 students. (Communication of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 29 June 2010). (http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2010/08-01-07_01_2010.htm)

⁹ Since student mobility has not been monitored systematically through the national data base on student mobility, the estimate of incoming student mobility includes neither all categories nor modalities of student exchange, not even a total number of foreign students that spend the whole period of their study programme at a higher education institution in the Republic of Croatia.

II. DESCRIPTION OF MEASURES

1. Increasing financial resources for international learning mobility

1.1. Full accession to the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme

In view of the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports provides guidance to beneficiaries of the state budget to elaborate and achieve their activities using programmes and funds of the European Union since majority of resources available for activities aimed at development may be accessed exactly through these resources.

After several years of preparations for the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme, following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the participation in the Youth in Action programme and in the action programme in the field of lifelong learning (2007-2013), planned for November 2010, the Republic of Croatia will become a full member of these two programmes in 2011. In order to become a full member of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Government of the Republic of Croatia will continue to allocate significant budgetary resources that will have to be increased progressively, for the purpose of the national contribution for the participation in the Programme, as well as for the operation of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and the Republic of Croatia on the participation of the Republic of Croatia in the Youth in Action programme and in the action programme in the field of lifelong learning (2007-2013), the national contribution for full participation in the Lifelong Learning Programme equals 6 million EUR for the year 2011, 8 million EUR for the year 2012, and 10 million EUR for the year 2013.

The adoption of the Act on Recognition of the Memorandum of Understanding has been planned for the first quarter of 2011.

RESULT

From the year 2011, educational institutions at all levels may join all mobility programmes in cooperation with partnering education institutions in EU member states. For the purpose of full access to the Lifelong Learning Programme in 2011, the Republic of Croatia will secure a national contribution equalling 6 mill EUR due to be paid next year. Translated into the projection of number of individual mobility to be ensured by full participation, next year there will be ensured a minimum of 2.000 individual mobility for students, pupils and teachers of the entire education sector. Within the framework of ERASMUS the estimated number of student scholarships equals 1.000.

The budget of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) along with the estimated number of individual mobility per sectoral programme ensured by the national contribution for each year of the programme implementation¹⁰

| Year | LLP national contribution (EUR) | ERASMUS (EUR) app. 40% of the national contribution | ERASMUS (EUR) student mobility – 87% | ERASMUS no. of outgoing student mobility | ERASMUS teacher mobility – 5 % |
|------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 2011 | 6,000,000 | 2,308,000 | 2,016,000 | 1003 | 77 |
| 2012 | 8,000,000 | 3,200,000 | 2,688,000 | 1392 | 106 |
| 2013 | 10,000,000 | 4,000,000 | 3,360,000 | 1740 | 133 |

| Year | LLP national contribution (EUR) | LEONARDO (EUR) app 25% of the national contribution | LEONARDO no. of individual mobility of teachers and students |
|-------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| 2011. | 6.000.000 | 1,318,000 | 602 |
| 2012. | 8.000.000 | 1,763,000 | 758 |
| 2013. | 10.000.000 | 2,500,000 | 947 |

| Year | LLP national contribution (EUR) | GRUNDTVIG (eur) app. 3% of the national contribution | GRUNDTVIG no. of individual mobility of teachers and students |
|-------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 2011. | 6,000,000 | 182,000 | 110 |
| 2012. | 8,000,000 | 240,000 | 137 |
| 2013. | 10,000,000 | 300,000 | 171 |

| Year | LLP national contribution (EUR) | COMENIUS (EUR) app. 12% of the national contribution | COMENIUS no. of individual mobility of teachers and pupils |
|-------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 2011. | 6,000,000 | 720,000 | 488 |
| 2012. | 8,000,000 | 960,000 | 610 |
| 2013. | 10,000,000 | 1,200,000 | 763 |

¹⁰ The exact data on distribution of resources among sectoral programmes will be known following the consultations with the European Commission. In the tables the national contribution has been translated into the number of individual mobility ensured by the national contribution in order to show the extent of mobility necessary to use the national contribution. It should be emphasized that institutions from the Republic of Croatia may achieve a larger number of mobility, according to the number and quality of applications.

The estimated budget of the Youth in Action Programme (YiNA) along with the estimated number of individual mobility ensured by the national contribution for each year of the programme implementation

| Year | YinA national contribution (EUR) | no. of individual mobility |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2011 | 1,800,000 | 800 |
| 2012 | 2,000,000 | 1000 |
| 2013 | 2,200,000 | 1200 |

1.2. Increasing the financial grant amount for ERASMUS student mobility

In view of the full accession to the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports particularly encourages higher education institutions to participate in the ERASMUS, international cooperation programme for mobility of students, teaching and academic staff in higher education. Financial support for student mobility equals 200 to 400 EUR per month, as prescribed by the European Commission, and these funds are modest and in most cases insufficient for covering the entire cost of study period abroad.

The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes shall negotiate with the European Commission in order to arrange an increase of the financial grant for student mobility up to the maximum amount allowed to be applied from the 2011/2012 academic year. The measure shall be implemented until the third quarter of 2011.

In addition, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports shall ensure that students receiving a grant for study period abroad continue to be entitled to a national scholarship awarded by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, since this is not a case of double financing¹¹. In the light of this fact, following the adoption of the new Higher Education Act, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports shall amend the Regulations on Awarding State Scholarships to Full-time Undergraduate Students and Co-financing Tuition Fees to Postgraduate Students (OJ 151/02). It will enable scholarship portability and make a clear distinction between a state scholarship and a financial grant for study abroad.

The measure shall be implemented until 2011.

¹¹ "Students' entitlement to a national grant or loan scheme for studies at their home institution shall be maintained during their period abroad. The National Agency shall ensure complementarity of Erasmus mobility grants with the national, regional and/or other systems, including systems which provide for compensation of the additional costs of studying abroad." (*National Agency Guide*, 8.2.6. Complementarity of Erasmus grants with national support schemes; 23/24: "Double financing does not refer to national/local grants normally awarded to students for full-time study at the home higher education institution nor to funds that higher education institutions may allocate for an increase of the financial student grant, if they wish to do so." (*ERASMUS Guide*))

RESULT

Students who are beneficiaries of the ERASMUS financial grant shall be awarded a maximum financial grant for study period abroad thus encouraging and enabling increased outgoing student mobility.

Students who are are beneficiaries of the ERASMUS financial grant shall be entitled to use a national scholarship during their period of study abroad since this is not the case of double financing.

There will be considered a need and justification that students beneficiaries od financial grants from other international mobility programmes become entitled to a national scholarship during their period of study abroad.

2. Improvement of the national legislation referring to the income tax – (non) taxation of scholarships and financial grants for education and training abroad

Provisions of the Income Tax Act (OJ 177/04, 73/08 and 80/10) and the Income Tax Regulations (OJ 95/05, 96/06, 68/07, 146/08, 2/09 and 9/09) referring to tax relieves and amounts of scholarships, awards and allowances exempt from taxes, stipulate different tax procedures for scholarships allocated from the state budget and those allocated within the framework of bilateral government agreements based on a public call open to all candidates under equal conditions. In addition, under existing legislation (laws and regulations), financial grants for international mobility for the continuation of education and training are not a separate category of international mobility different from business trips and scholarships for full-time study.

2.1. Improving the system of taxes applying to scholarships

Resulting from coordinated efforts of numerous partners and experts, supported sistematically by the Working Group for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility, amendments to the Act on Amendments to the Tax Act (OJ 80/10) opened up a possibility for arranging a high-quality system of scholarships in Croatia.

Pursuant to Article 4 of the Act on Amendments to the Income Tax Act (OJ no. 80/10), the Article 10 stipulating the income exempt from the income tax has been amended in a manner that point 13 has a new provision that scholarships for full-time study at higher education institutions shall be exempt from the income tax if the funds have been planned in the state budget of the Republic of Croatia or allocated/awarded from the budget of the European Union, respectively.

Moreover, the point 18 of Article 10 stipulates that the income exempt from taxes (up to the amount to be stipulated by the Income Tax Regulations) shall refer to scholarships for students selected based on a public call open to all student under equal conditions for full-time study at higher education institutions. These scholarships may be awarded by foundations and other institutions registered in the Republic of Croatia for activities related to education or scientific research, operating according to special regulations and established for the purpose of awarding scholarships.

The implementation of the abovementioned Act and the manner of granting the abovementioned exemption of taxes in case of scholarships shall be stipulated in detail by the new Income Tax Regulations that are in the stage of drafting. The Institute for the Development of Education and the Croatian-American Foundation for Education and Training, in cooperation with tax experts Zgombić and partners and the Adris Foundation, endorsed by the Working Group for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility, have elaborated Draft Amendments to the Income Tax Regulations (OJ 95/05, 96/06, 68/07, 146/08, 2/09 and 9/09) that would enable a payment of scholarships in the amount of real costs of study exempt from the tax.

New Regulations should replace a current limit of the scholarship amount exempt from the tax (1,600 Croatian kuna) by a detailed specification of costs covered by a scholarships and the manner of their documentation for the purpose of efficient control of designated spending of scholarships exempt from the tax.

Moreover, it is necessary that the provision stipulating that scholarships for full-time study shall be exempt from the income tax, applies equally both to the full-time study in Croatia and abroad. Since Croatia participates in the Bologna process and since encouraging student and teacher mobility is among major goals of the Bologna process, it is particularly important to enable awarding of scholarships exempt from the tax for study abroad as well.

Therefore it is necessary to supplement the Article 7 and Article 45 referring to exemption from a requirement to pay the tax on scholarships for study at secondary schools and higher education institutions only up to a certain monthly limit, in order to expand a possibility of awarding scholarships exempt from the tax to full-time students at secondary schools and higher education institutions upon fulfilling certain conditions. According to proposed amendments, scholarships paid from funds of certain institutions could be exempt from the tax in the amount of real costs under certain conditions. Specification of these costs and the manner of their documentation would be stipulated as well. Tax experts believe that detailed and clear specification of costs eligible for financing using scholarships exempt from the tax would enable efficient control of designated spending of awarded scholarships.

Moreover, it is necessary to define in more detail specifications of eligible costs and a manner of their documentation. Costs of full-time study refer to tuition fees and allowances paid to secondary schools or higher education institutions as well as to books and education material necessary for attending secondary schools and higher education institutions.

Other eligible costs during full-time education at secondary schools or higher education institutions refer to costs of housing at the place of study, transportation at the place of study, food during the period of study, student's moving to the place of study, student's transportation to the place of study, as well as health insurance for student's medical care abroad if the place of study is outside Croatia. These other costs may be significantly higher in cases when a student leaves the place of permanent or temporary residence valid immediately prior to the beginning of the study, particularly in cases of studying outside Croatia, so these costs should not be neglected.

Adoption of the Income Tax Regulations is planned for the fourth quarter of 2010, while mechanisms of supervision and control related to the procedure of awarding scholarships should be determined separately during 2011.

Since the Article 4 of the Act on Amendments to the Tax Act (OJ 80/10) does not include scholarships paid or awarded according to bilateral government scholarship programmes, in the medium term, during 2011, it is necessary to review whether there is an argued need to propose legislative changes in order to regulate tax/tax exemption of this scholarship's category.

RESULT

Advanced system of taxes/tax exemptions for scholarships intended for full-time study in Croatia and abroad, based on real costs of full-time study exempt from taxes, enabling equal tax treatment of all scholarships awarded from various sources following a public call.

2.2. Harmonisation of calculating funds for implementing mobility activities within EU programmes

In the period 2009/2010 beneficiaries of the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme implement project activities using funds from the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). Pursuant to the Framework Agreement between the Commission of the European Communities and the Government of the Republic of Croatia on Rules for Cooperation related to financial assistance of the European Community to the Republic of Croatia in the implementation of assistance within the framework of the Instrument of pre-accession assistance (IPA) (OJ – International Agreements 10/07), these funds have been exempt from taxes. Following full accession of Croatia to these programmes, participation of institutions from the Republic of Croatia in programme activities shall be financed from the national contribution of the Republic of Croatia to the budget of the European Communities. Therefore, beneficiaries of the programmes in the Republic of Croatia shall be obliged to apply rules and procedures from national legislation when calculating funds for travel expenses related to participation in mobility activities funded from the programmes.

The Income Tax Regulations (OJ 95/05; 96/06; 68/07; 146/08; 2/09 and 9/09) stipulate tax-exempt amounts related to daily allowances for business trips, while longer stays abroad for the purpose of continuing education and training have not been regulated as a separate category of business trips, so they are treated as other income.

Amounts of eligible costs for daily allowances related to business trips stipulated by the Income Tax Regulations have not been harmonised with the programme rules of the European Commission since the latter imply that beneficiaries of financial grants awarded in the framework of these programmes shall receive fixed amounts for costs of daily allowances and accommodation (i.e. *subsistence rates*). These fixed amounts have been stipulated by the programme rules according to financial regulations of the EU, so all EU member states and countries participating in the programmes (Republic of Croatia) are obliged to implement them.

In case that the amount of such a financial grant is higher than the amount calculated following existing national regulations, a final beneficiary is obliged to pay the income tax related to the difference. In case that the amount of such a grant is lower than the amount calculated according to existing national regulations, according to national regulations there is a possible additional cost for the institution paying respective daily allowances.

According to existing Regulations, a mobility grant awarded to tax payers without employment is also deemed as an income and therefore it is liable to taxes.

In the first quarter of 2011, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will set up a special expert group including tax experts and representatives of accounting departments of education institutions that are beneficiaries of international mobility programmes, in order to carry out an analysis of existing tax legislation of the Republic of Croatia, programme rules of the European Commission, EU financial regulations, as well as practical implementation in other

countries beneficiaries of the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme. Based on this analysis, there will be prepared recommendations for tuning regulations and practice related to the financial implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme in the Republic of Croatia.

RESULT

The analysis and recommendations prepared by the expert group shall provide a basis for tuning regulations and procedures for practice in this field.

The implementation of this measure shall result in a thorough understanding of legal framework and mode of its application thus enabling the provision of high quality information and counselling on financial procedures and obligations to beneficiary institutions as well as end-users.

3. Setting up an optimal and the most economical manner of bearing costs, and the accounting treatment of exchange rate changes related to payments of funds from EU programmes¹²

In the capacity of the national agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme, the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes receives funds for these programmes in EUR and transfers them to accounts of end-users in Croatian kuna. Moreover, end-users reimburse funds to the Agency in Croatian kuna, but in the appropriate equivalent amount calculated in EUR. These foreign currency transactions in Croatia result in additional costs due to exchange rate changes. The European Commission does not agree that the cost of exchange rate changes be covered by the end-user nor that these changes are paid by the Agency from its overheads.

The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes will cooperate with the Ministry of Finance on identifying optimal and the most economical manner of bearing costs and accounting treatment of exchange rate changes related to payments of funds from the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme, and provide beneficiaries of these programmes with operating instructions.

Deadline for the implementation of this measure is the fourth quarter of 2010.

RESULT

Optimal and the most economical manner of bearing costs and accounting treatment of exchange rate changes will be set up in a manner that the end-user of the financial grant awarded in the framework of an EU programme does not receive a decreased grant amount.

¹² „Programmes of the European Union“ is a collective term referring to programmes of the European Commission. Participants of these programmes are EU member states and candidate countries that concluded memoranda on understanding for respective programmes with the European Commission (previous term: Programmes of the European Communities).

4. The alignment of foreign students' entitlements with those of Croatian students

Full accession of the Republic of Croatia to the Lifelong Learning Programme, i.e. to its sectoral programme ERASMUS, will enable higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia a participation in full range of activities related to student exchanges. It is expected that incoming student mobility will increase significantly, so it is necessary to ensure to incoming ERASMUS students, conditions of study and entitlements equal to those of Croatian students at respective higher education institutions¹³.

Furthermore, according to Article 24 of the Act on Science and Higher Education (OJ 46/07), following the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union, students with citizenship of EU member states shall be entitled to equal rights as students with citizenship of the Republic of Croatia.

The alignment of foreign students' entitlements with those of Croatian students is possible by amending secondary legislation stipulating entitlements related to subsidized accommodation, subsidized meals and jobs through the student service center. Amending secondary legislation will precede amendments to the valid Act on Science and Higher Education. It is a prerequisite for clear definition of jurisdiction for respective mobility programmes and ensuring necessary funding in the 2012 state budget.

By economic approach to using funds from the state budget, it is necessary to regulate entitlements to accommodation and meals of students of Croatian higher education institutions who are participating in outgoing student mobility, as well as entitlements related to subsidized accommodation, subsidized student meals and jobs through the student service center to foreign students who are participating in incoming student mobility in the Republic of Croatia in the framework of international mobility programmes.

During its meetings, the Working Group for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility agreed on the following concrete measures that need to be implemented:

Entitlement to subsidized meals

Amending Regulations on Subsidized Costs of Student Meals, and the Agreement concluded between the ERASMUS student and the higher education institution, by inserting a provision that students of higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia who are participating in outgoing international student mobility shall have their entitlement to subsidized meals suspended during their study visit abroad.

Amending Article 4 of the Regulations on Subsidized Costs of Student Meals, by inserting a provision that incoming ERASMUS students shall have equal entitlement to subsidized meals as other full-time students in the Republic of Croatia, and that the cost of their meals shall be covered by the Ministry.

Continue negotiations between the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and universities, until reaching the agreement on covering costs of meals for foreign full-time students at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia in the framework of other international mobility programmes and programmes of inter-university exchange.

¹³ "The institution also agrees to ensure equal academic treatment and services to home and Erasmus students (**Erasmus University Charter**). Foreign university/higher education institution shall enable you academic treatment and scope of services equal to its home students." (*Erasmus Student Charter*).

Entitlement to subsidized accommodation

Since the accommodation of foreign students who are not grantees of the Ministry is under jurisdiction of higher education institutions, it is necessary to bring a decision on quotas and criteria for foreign incoming students both in the framework of inter-university agreements and the ERASMUS programme, while students of higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia who are participating in outgoing international student mobility should have their entitlement to subsidized accommodation suspended during their study visit abroad.

Entitlement to jobs through the student service center

According to Article 140, point 5 of the Act on Foreigners (OJ 79/07 and 36/09), foreign citizens with the status of a full-time secondary school student or a student at a higher education institution, are allowed to work without a work permit or a business permit, respectively, if they work through a licensed agent and do not get employed.

The Regulations on Agency Services Related to Providing Jobs to Full-time Students (OJ 16/96, 125/97 and 37/06) do not stipulate specific entitlements of foreign students with the status of full-time students, as stipulated by the Directive of the Council 2004/114/EC from 13 December 2004, on conditions of placement of citizens of third countries for the purpose of study, student exchange, unpaid training or voluntary work.

In addition, these Regulations do not make a difference between various job categories provided by the student service center, referring to unpaid work, paid work and practical training, or practical part of teaching, respectively.

According to the agreement on principles for identification of entitlements of foreign students that has been reached during partnership consultations between the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and universities in the Republic of Croatia, in the winter semester of the 2010/2011 academic year, it is necessary to transfer the agreed principles into clear jurisdictions and procedures related to entitlements to subsidized meals, accommodation and jobs through the student service center of incoming foreign students, as well as of principles related to suspension of the entitlement to subsidized meals and accommodation of outgoing ERASMUS students.

Following consultations with the relevant institutions, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will elaborate amendments to the Regulations on Agency Services Related to Providing Jobs to Full-time Students, stipulating special entitlements of foreign students related to paid and unpaid work through the student service center, as well as the entitlement of foreign students to practical training.

A prerequisite for amending the Regulations on Agency Services Related to Providing Jobs to Full-time Students is a previous stipulation of the status of practical training, student volunteering or paid student work by higher education institutions.

Following the implementation of new procedures in the pilot stage during the summer term of the 2010/2011 academic year, a full-range implementation of agreed procedures has been planned for the 2011/2012 academic year.

RESULT

Regulated and transparent system of entitlements to subsidized accommodation and subsidized meals for foreign students participating in incoming international mobility programmes at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia. Foreign students in the Republic of Croatia have been provided an opportunity for subsidized accommodation

and subsidized meals, as well as jobs through the student service center thus aligning their entitlements to those of Croatian students.

5. Regulating residence of foreign citizens in the education system

Upon entering into the Croatian education system, foreign citizens face various difficulties that are mainly administrative in nature, and result from existing regulations, while others occur due to the language barrier. The first contact of foreign citizens with state authorities takes place during regulation of residence. In order to facilitate entry into the Republic of Croatia and make the stay of foreign citizens in the Republic of Croatia as comfortable as possible, the Working Group has elaborated several proposals for tuning legislation and administrative procedures for regulating residence of foreign citizens in the Republic of Croatia.

5.1. Expediting the procedure of regulating temporary residence for the purpose of study in the Republic of Croatia

According to Article 48 of the Act on Foreigners (OJ 79/07 and 36/09), a request for approval of the first temporary residence shall be submitted to a respective diplomatic mission, or a consular office of the Republic of Croatia, respectively. In addition, according to the Article 48, paragraph 2, point 3, a foreign citizen may submit a request for approval of the first temporary residence to a police department, or a police station, respectively, in cases of grantees of the programmes approved by the ministry responsible for education and science. A foreign citizen who submitted a request for approval of the temporary residence to a diplomatic mission, or a consular office of the Republic of Croatia, respectively, may decide to request from a diplomatic mission, or a consular office, respectively, at his/her own expense, an urgent delivery of his/her request to the Republic of Croatia, thus shortening the entire procedure for one to two weeks.

In order to enable interpretation of the provision of Article 48, paragraph 2, point 3 of the Act on Foreigners, so that it also refers to students coming to a study visit at a higher education institution in the Republic of Croatia in the framework of international agreements and exchange programmes that are not implemented directly by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, in the fourth quarter of 2010 the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Ministry of Interior will define and set up a procedure by which the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports approves the international mobility programme providing the basis for incoming students. A higher education institution hosting a foreign student will fill up data on the student and agreement providing the framework for international mobility, using the form prescribed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

The Working Group for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility will propose an amendment to Article 48, paragraph 2, point 3 of the Act on Foreigners, so that in addition to the abovementioned grantees it also covers a category of incoming students participating in study visits at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia and foreign citizens coming to the Republic of Croatia within the framework of EU programmes referring to both programmes implemented by the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes of the Republic of Croatia – Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme supporting the mobility of volunteers. According to the Plan of Activities for Adoption and Implementation of the *acquis* of the European Union, the amendments to the Act on

Foreigners have been planned for the fourth quarter of 2010, while amendments to the Regulations on the Status and Work of Foreigners have been planned for 2011.

In order to facilitate the procedure for regulating residence and cut the costs of state authorities, the Working Group will enter into consultations with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations on upgrading information systems for regulating residence of foreign citizens in Croatia, following the procedure for issuing Croatian visas to foreign citizens. Some examples of good practice are Ireland, Great Britain and the United States of America. These countries have also elaborated information systems that present a network of state authorities responsible for foreign and internal affairs. Information on submitted requests are forwarded electronically by the consular office to the immigration service of the home country and the same manner, in the opposite direction, is used for forwarding decrees/approvals of residence. At present, in the course of performing their consular affairs with foreigners, respective Croatian diplomatic missions/consular offices only forward requests for issuing visas to the Ministry of Interior. It is necessary to upgrade the existing information system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations (IKOS) by adding applications, so that requests for issuing temporary residence permits received by diplomatic missions/consular offices may be forwarded to the Ministry of Interior via IKOS. Namely, according to the Act on Foreigners, as a rule, a foreign citizen submits a request for issuing temporary residence permit in person. Forwarding these requests by diplomatic missions/consular offices to the Ministry of Interior and vice versa via IKOS will speed up significantly a procedure of dealing with received requests.

In the first quarter of 2011 the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will enter into consultations with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations on adding applications to the IKOS information system.

5.2. Facilitating a procedure for regulating temporary residence for the purpose of study in the Republic of Croatia

In larger cities, during a certain period in the course of the year, an officer of the respective police department, or a police station, respectively, will receive requests for regulating residence referring to universities. An example of good practice of involvement by universities is the example of the Netherlands: universities have set up offices that submit requests for temporary residence on behalf of students prior to their arrival to the Netherlands. The implementation of this action will remove a language barrier, waiting in long lines, and enable foreign students to attend lectures and perform obligations related to their study without interruption.

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is the fourth quarter of 2010.

The Ministry of Interior will consider a possibility for receiving documents required for regulating temporary residence not only in Croatian, but also in English, as it is a case in Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway.

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is 2012.

5.3. Enabling practical training to foreigners coming to the Republic of Croatia within the Lifelong Learning Programme

Since the Lifelong Learning Programme provides a possibility for the activity of job-related practical training, the Working Group will propose an amendment to the Article 139a of the Act on Foreigners, so that foreigners may carry out practical training without a work permit, or a business permit, respectively, in case they come to Croatia within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.

According to the Plan of Activities for Adoption and Implementation of the *acquis* of the European Union, the amendments to the Act on Foreigners have been planned for the fourth quarter of 2010.

RESULT

Quicker and easier procedure for regulating the first residence permit for the purpose of study by foreigners in the Republic of Croatia. Possibility for practical training of foreigners coming to the Republic of Croatia within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

6. Tuning the health insurance procedure

6.1 Facilitating the procedure of regulating health insurance of foreigners residing in the Republic of Croatia within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme

According to the existing Croatian legislation, foreigners residing in Croatia in the period longer than 90 days should have health insurance in order to regulate their temporary residence in the Republic of Croatia. According to valid regulations, private insurance is not eligible. In case that foreigners come from countries that have concluded bilateral agreement on social security with the Republic of Croatia, they are not obliged to have health insurance of the Republic of Croatia, but need to request from their foreign health insurance provider to issue a certificate on the health insurance benefits (the certificate has been foreseen by a respective agreement). In case that foreigners come from countries that have not concluded bilateral agreement on social security with the Republic of Croatia, one of prerequisites for regulating their residence is the obligation to have health insurance provided by the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance and cover a respective health insurance contribution. According to the Act on Contributions (OJ 84/08, 152/08 and 94/09), a current amount is app. 400 Croatian kuna per month.

In case of certain categories of foreigners such as beneficiaries of the programmes of the European Commission, the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme, this issue should be regulated by a special international agreement, the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and the Republic of Croatia on the participation of the Republic of Croatia in the Youth in Action programme and in the action programme in the field of lifelong learning (2007-2013).

According to the Memorandum of Understanding, foreigners residing in the Republic of Croatia as beneficiaries of the the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme shall be exempt from the fee to be paid by foreigners for compulsory health insurance in Croatia at the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance.

In view of complex international relations in the area of health insurance, prior to their arrival to the Republic of Croatia foreigners should be provided with necessary information in a clear and unambiguous manner. Namely it is necessary to ensure that:

1. The Croatian Institute for Health Insurance posts at its web site in the English language the most important information on bilateral agreements concluded by the Republic of Croatia with other countries, as well as on procedures applied to foreigners in the course of regulation of their temporary residence in Croatia. It is also necessary to post information on exemptions valid for beneficiaries of the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme.
2. International relations offices at higher education institutions, in agreement with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, inform their ERASMUS students timely on the manner of regulating their health insurance in the Republic of Croatia according to provisions of the international agreement, Memorandum of Understanding on the participation of the Republic of Croatia in the Youth in Action programme and in the action programme in the field of lifelong learning (2007-2013).

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is the fourth quarter of 2010.

6.2 Abolishing obligatory payment of an additional contribution for enjoying health insurance by Croatian students residing in the countries that have concluded bilateral agreements on social security with the Republic of Croatia in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme

In case that a Croatian beneficiary of insurance provided by the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance wishes to enjoy his/her health insurance abroad, the beneficiary shall be obliged to cover an additional contribution for this purpose. In the year 2010 it equals 18 Croatian kuna per day spent abroad.

Croatian outgoing students participating in longer study visits abroad may get secured in other manner, especially in cases when foreign higher education institutions require concluding health insurance with a specific insurance company.

The Act on Obligatory Health Insurance (OJ 150/08, 94/09, 153/09 and 71/10) and the Act on Contributions (OJ 84/08, 152/08 and 94/09), stipulate obligations of Croatian beneficiaries of health insurance wishing to enjoy health insurance abroad and charge it to the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance. The Act on Contributions stipulates a prescribed amount of the additional contribution referring to enjoying health insurance abroad, as a percentage of the lowest base for contributions. It has been stipulated by the Act on the Implementation of the 2010 State Budget (OJ 151/2009 and 103/10).

In order to provide Croatian students a position equal to EU students who are not required to pay additional fees in order to enjoy foreign health insurance in the Republic of Croatia, according to bilateral agreements on health insurance, the Working Group proposes to consider a possibility of amending the abovementioned acts in a manner that Croatian students shall be exempt from paying additional contribution for health insurance abroad in

case of countries that have concluded bilateral agreements on health insurance with the Republic of Croatia.

Since the Article 3 of the Act on Amendments to the Act on Obligatory Health Insurance (Official Journal 71/10) changed a provision of Article 60, paragraph 5 of the Act on Obligatory Health Insurance, in a manner that the Institute determines a base and a rate, as well as a manner of calculation and payment of the additional contribution for enjoying health insurance abroad for beneficiaries of the Institute residing abroad for personal reasons, during 2011 the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will enter into additional consultation with the Ministry of Finance and the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance in reference to a possibility of abolishing a requirement for paying additional health insurance contribution referring to enjoying health insurance by Croatian students residing in countries that have concluded bilateral agreement on health insurance with the Republic of Croatia and participate in the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Following the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union, the international agreement regulating participation of the Republic of Croatia in the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme will cease to be valid, and all Croatian beneficiaries will have a possibility to obtain the European health insurance card to be issued by the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance. Preparations for issuing such a card are underway. The European card will enable beneficiaries of the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance to enjoy health insurance during their stay at the territory of EU member states and charge it to the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance, while foreign holders of the European health insurance card from EU member states will be accepted in the Republic of Croatia without fees.

RESULT

Arranged, transparent and fair system of regulating health insurance for the purpose of regulating first temporary residence by foreign citizens residing in the Republic of Croatia in the framework of the the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme, as well as in case of Croatian citizens participating in mobility period abroad in the framework of these programmes.

7. Promoting recognition of international cooperation and mobility as a strategic priority of institutional development

In addition to other goals of the Bologna process, international mobility in education has been taken over as a strategic priority of *the Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010*. Countries participating in the Bologna process have been elaborating the Strategy for Mobility in the framework of the Working Group for Mobility of the *Bologna Follow-Up Group* (BFUG) that includes a representative of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia. The Strategy will be presented at the Ministerial conference in Bucharest in 2012. In their strategic documents some higher education institutions have emphasized international cooperation and mobility as their strategic priority¹⁴.

¹⁴ University of Zagreb: *Outreach* (2001) and *International mission and policy* (2002). Taking into consideration guidelines set out in these documents, following the proposal by the International Cooperation Committee, the Senate of the University of Zagreb adopted *the Strategic Plan for Introducing International Dimension in Courses of Study at the University in Zagreb for the Period 2005-2010* in May 2005. It determines goals for

In the course of elaborating its strategic-programming documents, as well as those referring to the European Social Fund, in addition to the lifelong learning, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will also promote international mobility.

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is 2011.

Higher education institution, as well as other education institutions and organisations should also engage in promoting international cooperation and mobility as institutional priorities.

RESULT

Increased level and scope of understanding importance of international cooperation and mobility, as well as the scope of participation in these activities.

8. Enhancing capacities relating to competencies of education institutions and individuals in the vertical line of the education system

International cooperation of education institutions in the Republic of Croatia is underdeveloped and mainly limited to a few prominent institutions and individuals. Engagement on international projects has not been recognised adequately although in addition to regular workload it often requires substantial additional work. Moreover, at majority of education institutions in the Republic of Croatia administrative capacities and competencies of institutions related to project activities and international cooperation are insufficient.

As a line ministry in the IPA Operational structure for Human Resources Development, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will ensure that capacities referring to competences of education institutions and individuals related to international projects be enhanced additionally through specially designed projects financed by the EU funds (European Social Fund).

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is 2011.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will consider how to regulate secondary legislation i.e. the Regulations on Promotion of Teachers in Primary and Secondary Education (the Official Journal 89/95, 148/99 and 20/05) in order to recognize work on international

introducing international dimension in the abovementioned period. In May 2007, the Senate of the University of Zagreb adopted *the Declaration on Incentives for Joining International Exchange Programmes*, taking into consideration long-term needs of the Croatian society and Croatia, as well as of the overall higher education. In June 2007, the Senate of the University of Zagreb adopted *the Plan of Activities and Measures for Encouraging International Exchange* which defines tasks and responsible bodies. In the course of implementation of measures there were adopted as follows: *the Regulations on Double Doctorates* (2009) and *the Regulations on International Mobility* (2010), (www.unizg.hr);

University of Rijeka: *the Strategy of the University of Rijeka 2007-2013*, (www.uniri.hr);

University of Zadar: *the Guidelines for Development of the University of Zadar for the period 2006-2010* were adopted at the session of the Senate on 17 October, 2005, *the Guidelines for International Cooperation of the University of Zadar* were adopted at the session of the Senate on 29 April 2010 (www.unizd.hr);

University of Dubrovnik: *the Strategy of International Development of the University of Dubrovnik 2009-2015*, (www.unidu.hr).

projects by employees in the education system as an additional engagement, and acknowledge it adequately in the process of their promotion.

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is 2011.

According to their jurisdiction, education institutions will regulate recognition of work by teaching and administrative staff on international projects as an additional engagement, and ensure its adequate acknowledgement for the purpose of their promotion.

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is 2012.

Education institutions will enhance their administrative capacities for elaborating proposals of international projects and their implementation, in terms of enhancing human resources capacities related to project management, as well as increasing workload of staff working on administrative support of international cooperation (elaboration of project proposals, implementation of international projects, elaboration of reports etc.).

This measure will be implemented permanently.

The Education and Teacher Training Agency and the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education and Training shall be obliged to introduce into their regular programme of in-service teacher training, a programme that covers acquiring competencies for project cycle management and cooperation on international projects.

In case that topics of in-service training may be linked to including schools into projects within programmes under the jurisdiction of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, the Education and Teacher Training Agency and the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education and Training will invite employees of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes to participate as trainees at conferences organized by the Education and Teacher Training Agency and the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education and Training.

This measure will be implemented permanently.

RESULT

Increased administrative capacities of institutions, as well as capacities referring to competencies of individuals, referring to work on international projects, thus resulting in more active participation of education institutions in international mobility programmes.

9. Increasing a number of courses held in foreign languages at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia

Lack of courses held in foreign languages has been a barrier for potential incoming foreign students at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia. The University of Zagreb has recognized it and in the 2009/2010 academic year announced a call for elaborating current courses to be held in foreign languages. The University of Zadar has taken over this model as an example of good practice.

In order to be able to attract and host as many foreign students as possible, higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia should include a measure of increasing a number of courses held in foreign languages into their development strategies, planning of the annual university budget, as well as into their programme agreements to be concluded in the future. The aim is to encourage creating offers of their study programmes in foreign languages.

As a line ministry in the IPA Operational structure for Human Resources Development, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will ensure that study programmes be developed and upgraded additionally in foreign languages through specially designed projects financed by the EU funds (Component IV. of the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance: Operational Programme for Human Resources Development, and the European Social Fund).

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is 2011.

RESULT

Higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia provide a sufficient number of courses held in foreign languages thus attracting and enabling incoming student mobility.

10. Increasing availability of information on residence in the Republic of Croatia for the purpose of study at higher education institutions

Foreigners coming to Croatia for the purpose of study cannot obtain all information necessary for organisation and preparation of their stay in the Republic of Croatia in a simple manner, at one place and in the English language. Posting up-to-date information on programmes of study at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia, as well as detailed and practical instructions on venues and a manner of regulating temporary residence in the Republic of Croatia, regulating health insurance or finding accommodation, would ensure necessary support related to informing foreigners coming to the Republic of Croatia for the purpose of study.

In order to inform potential beneficiaries of the education system in the Republic of Croatia on possibilities of study, and residence in the Republic of Croatia for the purpose of study, there will be elaborated a web site *Study in Croatia* with all necessary information available to incoming mobile persons.

The web site will include the following main sections: *Studying in Croatia*, *Living in Croatia*, *About Croatia* and *Learn Croatian*, thus offering up-to-date and relevant information. This project has been developed jointly by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, Agency for Science and Higher Education and the University of Zagreb, while the Institute for the Development of Education (IRO) is the main operational project coordinator. The start-up of the web site has been planned for 15 October 2010.

The Ministry, government agencies responsible for education and higher education institutions participating in the ERASMUS programme, student associations, institutes engaged in education, as well as other relevant institutions will add a link to the *Study in Croatia* portal to their web sites.

Higher education institutions, the Agency for Mobility and Programmes of the European Union and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will publish brochures containing basic information required by foreigners coming to the Republic of Croatia for the purpose of study. An example of good practice is the publication entitled *Guide to entry and residence requirements for foreign students* published by the Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research. Another example of good practice is *A Foreign Researcher's Guide to Croatia* published by the Agency for Mobility and Programmes of the European Union.

RESULT

Web site www.studyincroatia.hr has been set up and operational. All relevant institutions have added a link to the *Study in Croatia* portal to their web sites.

11. Designing the national data base on international student mobility

Although some higher education institutions, agencies, associations and other establishments awarding scholarships have their own manners of keeping data on student mobility, there is no systematic manner of monitoring incoming and outgoing student mobility at the national level. The national data base on student mobility would not only respond to the self-evident need for establishing such monitoring system as a base for setting future goals and measures for accomplishing these goals, but would also represent a mechanism for avoiding double financing, and protection against misuse of student rights.

In their institutional data bases and statistics, higher education institutions will start entering all students participating in student mobility programmes. Implementing this goal is a pre-requisite for the implementation of a long-term goal.

The Ministry will start to desing the national data base on outgoing and incoming student mobility by providing that the National Information System for Higher Education and Science (NISVOZ), with existing links to information systems used by higher education institutions, collects statistics on international student mobility. These activities will be planned and implemented with funding from the European funds.

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is 2012.

RESULT

A system and manner of monitoring incoming and outgoing student mobility has been set up at the national level.

12. Enhanced recognition and acknowledgment of the mobility period and acquired knowledge and skills during the mobility period for the purpose of continuation of study and joining the labour market

12.1. Recognition of ECTS

ECTS or the credit transfer system in higher education is a basic instrument for quantifying results of learning in order to facilitate transfer of results achieved by a student from one higher education institution to another. The credit transfer system is based on trust that all higher education institutions will use equal guidelines and criteria in terms of determining a number of credits assigned to certain courses. In order to secure equal treatment or at least consistency in determining a number of credits in the European Higher Education Area, seminars on the topic of ECTS credits have been held regularly, with participation of higher education institutions from the Republic of Croatia.

In order to enable recognition of student mobility period at foreign higher education institution, acquired ECTS credits must be recognized by the home higher education institution, if it has been agreed prior to the mobility of a respective student. Therefore higher education institutions should ensure that prior to the outgoing mobility, a respective student has a signed *Learning agreement* defining ECTS credits to be recognized upon return. Higher education institutions should use funds awarded for organisation of mobility within the ERASMUS programme, among other things, for exchange of experience with colleagues from EU member states, particularly with higher education institutions from concluded bilateral agreements.

Each integral unit of a higher education institution should appoint its ECTS coordinator responsible for settling difficulties related to determining complementary courses.

A deadline for the implementation of this measure is 2011.

12.2. Application of *Europass* documents

A collection of *Europass*¹⁵ documents includes: *Europass* curriculum vitae, *Europass* Diploma Supplement, *Europass* Certificate Supplement and *Europass* Language Passport. These documents have been designed to unify descriptions of knowledge and skills acquired in the course of education, in order to be measured and compared more easily.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes will encourage application of the *Europass* Certificate Supplement in secondary education in relation to seeking employment, in order to provide assistance to secondary school students who do not continue their education but join the labour market. The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes will raise awareness on existence of these documents and organize seminars on how to apply and fill out these documents.

This measure will be implemented permanently, beginning with the fourth quarter of 2011.

12.3. Application of the *Youthpass* document

By participating in various activities of the Youth in Action Programme, young people acquire knowledge and skills that may help them in the course of seeking employment. The *Youthpass* document¹⁶ has been designed within the Youth in Action Programme. It enables young people an easier entry into the labour market by recognition of informal learning. The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes will promote the application of the *Youthpass* document beginning with 2011 and provide advice on how to fill it out. All young people participating in the activities related to youth volunteering and exchange will be awarded a *Youthpass* document.

This measure will be implemented permanently, beginning with the fourth quarter of 2011.

¹⁵ <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/vernav/Europass+Documents/Europass+CV.csp>

¹⁶ <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/youthpass/>

12.4. Developing the credit transfer system in vocational education and training - ECVET

The idea of applying the credit system in vocational education and training originated from the Copenhagen Process in 2002. The official consent was given by the European Parliament in June 2009. Since then ECVET (the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) has been developed as a joint European tool aimed at easier documentation, assessment and recognition of learning outcomes, better mobility among various countries and education systems, and better harmonization among various European systems of vocational education and training. In 2010 the European Commission established a working group for support to the introduction of ECVET composed of representatives of EU member states, candidate countries participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme and social partners at the European level. The goal is to design technical framework for description of qualifications using learning outcomes, including procedures of assessment, transfer, accumulation and recognition of credits in vocational education by 2012.

The introduction of the ECVET system into vocational education and training in the Republic of Croatia has been stipulated by Article 7 of the Vocational Education Act from March 2009. According to the EU standard, 60 ECVET credits are assigned to learning outcomes achieved in one year of vocational education and training, so the same value will be awarded in the Republic of Croatia.

Representatives of the Republic of Croatia (the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education and Training) will participate in the working group for support to the introduction of ECVET, on activities related to the introduction and elaboration of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training.

This measure will be implemented permanently.

In the action plans for the implementation of the Development Strategy for the System of Vocational Education and Training 2008-2013, the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education and Training has committed to build ECVET credits into the process of developing vocational qualifications and new vocational curricula. New vocational curricula with credits will be introduced permanently into the system of vocational education and training in the Republic of Croatia, and all vocational curricula in the Republic of Croatia will include credits not later than the school year 2013/2014.

III. SINERGY WITH ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCHERS' MOBILITY

In April 2009 the Minister of science, education and sports appointed the Committee for Researchers' Mobility with the aim of elaborating the Mobility Action Plan. Its goal is to identify barriers in researchers' mobility and formulate tasks, measures and proposals for removing these barriers at the national level. Considering possible overlapping in tasks and measures of the Working Group for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility and the Committee for Researchers' Mobility, a representative of the EURAXESS center of the Agency for Mobility and the EU Programmes participates in both bodies thus ensuring a transfer of information and results of activities of both groups.

IV. MANNER OF OPERATION

All members of the Working Group will meet once or twice per year. At meetings of the Working Group, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports will report on activities implemented in the previous period, while members of the Working Group will propose further activities. Minutes of the meetings will be delivered regularly to members of the Working Group, Central Office for Development Strategy and Coordination of EU Funds, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations – Directorate for Coordination and Monitoring of Adaptation to EU Legal System and Monitoring Implementation of Stabilisation and Association Agreement, and Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Croatia. Specific meetings of task groups for respective measures will be organized separately at relevant state authorities. For the purpose of efficiency, majority of communication among members of the Working Group will be in the electronic format. The first report on the activities of the Working Group and the implementation of the Action Plan will be presented at the session of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in December 2011, and the final report in December 2012.

**THE ACTION PLAN FOR REMOVING OBSTACLES AND ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL LEARNING MOBILITY
FOR THE PERIOD 2010-2012**

V. A TABLE WITH AN OVERVIEW OF MEASURES, RESPONSIBLE BODIES AND DEADLINES

| NO. | MEASURE | LEGISLATION | ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES | RESPONSIBLE BODY | IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1. Increasing financial resources for international mobility in education | | | | | |
| 1.1. | Full accession to the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme | adopt the Act on Recognition of the Memorandum of Understanding | | Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES) | first quarter of 2011 |
| 1.2. | Increasing the financial grant amount for ERASMUS student mobility | modify the 2011/2012 ERASMUS guide | | Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMEUP) | third quarter of 2011 |
| 2. Improvement of the national legislation referring to the income tax: tax/tax exemption in case of scholarships and financial grants for continuing education and training abroad | | | | | |
| 2.1. | Improving the system of taxes applying to scholarships | amend the Income Tax Act (OJ 177/04, 73/08 and 80/10) and the Income Tax Regulations (OJ 95/05, 96/06, 68/07, 146/08, 2/09 and 9/09) | determine mechanisms of monitoring and control related to the procedure of awarding scholarships | Tax Administration | fourth quarter of 2010 (amending Regulations); 2011 (determining mechanisms of monitoring and control) |

| NO. | MEASURE | LEGISLATION | ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES | RESPONSIBLE BODY | IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE |
|------|---|---|---|---|-------------------------|
| 2.2. | Harmonisation of calculating funds for implementing mobility activities within EU programmes | amend the Income Tax Act (OJ 177/04, 73/08 and 80/10) and the Income Tax Regulations (OJ 95/05, 96/06, 68/07, 146/08, 2/09 and 9/09) | set up a special expert group to analyse existing tax legislation in Croatia, programme rules of the European Commission, EU financial regulations, as well as practical implementation in other countries beneficiaries of LLP and YiA | MSES | 2011 |
| 3. | Setting up an optimal and the most economical manner of bearing costs, and the accounting treatment of exchange rate changes related to payment of funds from EU programmes | | agreement on the manner of the accounting treatment of exchange rate changes occurring to beneficiaries of the LLP and YiA | AMEUP, Ministry of Finance (MFIN) | fourth quarter |
| 4. | Alignment of foreign students' entitlements with those of Croatian students | amend the Regulations of Subsidized Costs of Student Meals (OJ 51/02), agreement between the ERASMUS student and a respective higher education institution, and the Regulations on Agency Services Related to Providing Jobs to Full-time Students (OJ 16/96, 125/97 and 37/06) | agreement on jurisdiction and procedures related to the entitlement to subsidized meals, accommodation and jobs through the student service center for incoming foreign students, as well as a suspension of the entitlement to subsidized meals and accommodation of outgoing students | MSES, AMEUP, higher education institutions (HEI), student centres | 2010-2012 |

| NO. | MEASURE | LEGISLATION | ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES | RESPONSIBLE BODY | IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| 5. Regulating residence of of foreign citizens in the education system | | | | | |
| 5.1. | Expediting the procedure of regulating first temporary residence for the purpose of study in the Republic of Croatia | amend Article 48 of the Act on Foreigners (OJ 79/07, 36/09) and the Regulations on the Status and Work of Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia (OJ 36/08, 65/10) | determine and formalise MSES procedure for approving the international mobility programme providing bases for incoming students to Croatia; enter into consultations with the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs on adding applications to the IKOS information system | Ministry of Interior (MI), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations (MFAEI), MSES | fourth quarter of 2010 (amending the respective Act, determining the procedure); second quarter of 2011 (amending the respective Regulations); first quarter of 2011 (entering into consultations) |
| 5.2. | Facilitaing a procedure for regulating temporary residence for the purpose of study in the Republic of Croatia | | agreement on recieving requests for regulating residence at universities; agreement on a possibility of receiving requests in English as well | MI, MFAEI | 2010 2012 |
| 5.3. | Enabling practical training to foreigners coming to the Republic of Croatia within LLP | amend Art. 139.a of the Act on Foreigners (OJ 79/07, 36/09) | | MI | fourth quarter of 2010 |
| 6. Tuning the health insurance procedure | | | | | |
| 6.1. | Facilitating the procedure of regulating health insurance of foreigners residing in | adopt the Act on Recognition of the Memorandum of Understanding | post basic information in English at web sites of responsible institutions | Croatian Institute for Health | fourth quarter of 2010 |

| NO. | MEASURE | LEGISLATION | ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES | RESPONSIBLE BODY | IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE |
|------|--|--|---|---|---|
| | the Republic of Croatia within the framework of LLP and YiA | | | Insurance (CIHI), HEI, MSES | |
| 6.2. | Abolishing obligatory payment of an additional contribution for enjoying health insurance by Croatian students residing in the countries that have concluded bilateral agreements on social security with the Republic of Croatia, in the framework of LLP | enter into consultations on possible amendments to the Act on Contributions (OJ 84/08, 152/08 and 94/09) | | MSES, MFIN, CIHI | 2011 |
| 7. | Promoting recognition of international cooperation and mobility as a strategic priority of institutional development | | promote international mobility in addition to lifelong learning | MSES, education institutions | 2011 2012 |
| 8. | Enhancing capacities relating to competencies of education institutions and individuals in the vertical line of the education system | amend the Regulations on Promotion of Teachers in Primary and Secondary Education (OJ 89/95, 148/99 and 20/05); regulate recognition of work on international projects by teaching staff for the purpose of | encourage training of teaching and non-teaching staff in the area of project cycle management; Education and Teacher Training Agency (ETTA) and the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education and Training | MSES, education institutions, ETTA, AVAET | 2011. (Regulations) 2012. g. (recognition of work on international projects) Kontinuirano (other activities) |

| NO. | MEASURE | LEGISLATION | ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES | RESPONSIBLE BODY | IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE |
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| | | their promotion | (AVAET) will introduce into their regular programme of in-service teacher training, a programme covering acquiring competencies for project cycle management and cooperation on international projects | | |
| 9. | Increasing a number of courses held in foreign languages at higher education institutions in Croatia | | HEI should encourage creating offers of their study programmes in foreign languages; MSES will ensure that study programmes in foreign languages be developed and upgraded additionally through projects financed by the EU funds | MSES, HEIs | 2011 |
| 10. | Increasing availability of information on residence in Croatia for the purpose of study at HEI | | elaborate a web site <i>Study in Croatia</i> – deadline set for the start-up of the web site is 15 October, 2010 | MSES, AMEUP, ASHE, University of Zagreb, Institute for the Development of Education | fourth quarter of 2010 |
| 11. | Designing the national data base on international | | foresee collecting statistical data on international student | MSES, HEIs | 2012 |

| NO. | MEASURE | LEGISLATION | ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES | RESPONSIBLE BODY | IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE |
|--|---|-------------|--|------------------|--|
| | student mobility | | mobility within the National Information System for Higher Education and Science, linked to information systems of higher education institutions | | |
| 12. Enhanced recognition and acknowledgment of the mobility period and acquired knowledge and skills during the mobility period for the purpose of continuation of study and joining the labour market | | | | | |
| 12.1. | Recognition of ECTS | | ensure that a student has a signed <i>Learning Agreement</i> prior to the outgoing mobility; appoint an ECTS coordinator at each integral unit of the university or at each HEI, respectively; further training and exchange of experience among ECTS coordinators | HEIs | 2011 |
| 12.2. | Application of <i>Europass</i> documents in the course of mobility for the purpose of learning | | organise information days and workshops to promote the application of <i>Europass</i> documents | AMEUP | permanently, beginning with the fourth quarter of 2011 |
| 12.3. | Application of <i>Youthpass</i> documents in the course of mobility for the purpose of learning | | organise information days and workshops to promote the application of <i>Youthpass</i> documents | AMEUP | permanently, beginning with the fourth quarter of 2011 |
| 12.4. | Developing the credit transfer system in | | participate in the working group for support to the introduction | MSES, | permanent measure |

| NO. | MEASURE | LEGISLATION | ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES | RESPONSIBLE BODY | IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE |
|-----|---|-------------|--|------------------|-------------------------|
| | vocational education and training - ECVET | | <p>of ECVET, on activities related to the introduction and elaboration of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training;</p> <p>permanent introduction of new vocational curricula with credits into the system of vocational education and training in the Republic of Croatia</p> | AVAET | permanent measure |