

National Qualification Framework and Quality Assurance in Education

A newsletter published by 'national Qualification Framework and Quality Assurance in Education'
– a project funded by European Union's IPA programme for Montenegro



**Slavoljub Stijepović,
Minister of Education
and Science**

The clear determination of Montenegro to continue on the path to joining the EU, is illustrated through the further development and adaptation of systems

affecting all aspects of society, including education. The project "National Qualification Framework and Quality Assurance in Education" has, for the last 12 months, given support to the education system in establishing the Montenegrin Qualification Framework and in the development of the quality assurance system in the area of higher education. It is an example of a project that supports the implementation of goals set in the strategic documents of the Government of Montenegro, which will assist our further approach to the family of European countries.

Expert support, exchange of experiences, development of methodologies, support to the preparation of the legal basis for the establishment and functioning of the Montenegrin Qualification Framework, defining the indicators for quality monitoring in the area of higher education and capacity building of employees, are only some of the activities that have been implemented within this Project; to the great satisfaction of the Montenegrin participants.

Therefore, in this first issue of the Newsletter, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the company WYG International and the Strathclyde University from Scotland for their efforts and for the accomplished results. I would also like to thank all the Montenegrin experts who have been involved in the implementation of this project. Through their professional attitude, efforts, energy and willingness we are working to build a system that will enable the

evaluation of knowledge, skills and competences, regardless of the place or mode of their acquisition. Quality will be the main determinant, without which one cannot imagine the education system of the 21st century.

**Janet Swainger
Project team leader**

I am delighted to introduce our first project newsletter which is being published to mark the completion of the first 12 months of the project.

In this newsletter we have tried to give a flavor of the nature and extent of the project's activities, the current stage of progress and the approach in the coming months. Of course it is not possible to cover everything but we have tried to highlight the main developments and actions - more information can be provided on request.

On behalf of all the members of the project team I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to reaching this point. We look forward to continuing this work over the coming months.



In this Newsletter:

- **First Phase Development of the Montenegrin Qualification Framework (MQF) reaches its conclusion**
- **Next steps with the Montenegrin Qualification Framework – making it a reality!**
- **A Quality Assurance Strategy for the University of Montenegro**
- **Encouraging networking amongst all those involved in higher education in Montenegro**
- **Forthcoming events (provisional)**



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First phase development of the Montenegrin Qualification Framework (MQF) reaches its conclusion



Montenegro Qualification Framework visual identity

The last 10 months have been very hectic for those engaged in the development of the MQF. In September last year, a working group was established to review the existing "Strategy for the Establishment of a National Qualifications Framework in

Montenegro" and to make further proposals about its structure and format. Members of the group represent a range of governmental, employer and employee interests. The first stage of their work is almost complete; the main elements have been developed and a Law on MQF has been drafted.



NCF Working Group seminar in Pobori – March 2010.

Some of the key milestones in the development of the MQF include:

- completion of the consultation phase on the level descriptors for the MQF;
- development of concrete proposals about the other elements of the MQF system: the Montenegrin Credit Transfer System; the types of qualifications and types of award that will be included within the Framework and the institutions that will support it;
- production of a set of 6 methodologies that will support the implementation of the MQF - these include guidelines about how to level existing and new qualifications, how to apply the Montenegrin Credit system to new qualifications, how to specify new qualifications and units for inclusion within the MQF and how to recognize non-formal and informal learning;
- An analysis of the training needs of those who will be the main players in the development and implementation of the MQF;
- around 15 meetings, training activities and consultations with members of the NCF working group and key agencies;
- establishment of two of the planned Sectoral Commissions for Qualifications that will play a key role in ensuring that qualifications developed are relevant and well-designed.

The MQF is a long-term development – it is not just an IPA project activity. Its development will require a change to the way in which qualifications are developed and described. More emphasis will be placed on the results of learning rather than on how and where the learning happened. In the past months, fifteen separate events and meetings have been organized for a variety of organizations to help raise awareness about the MQF concept and the changes it will bring. These have focused on explaining the overall concept, its importance and expected benefits and how its development will affect existing systems and work practices.



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Montenegro Qualification Framework - Leaflet

A unique visual identity has been prepared for the MQF, including a special logo, templates and other visual elements. Promotional tools are being developed and a user-friendly leaflet about the MQF will be in circulation in September. Work has started on a web-based system that will allow much improved access to information about qualifications, assessment and learning opportunities across all the qualifications in the MQF.

Next steps with the Montenegrin Qualification Framework – making it a reality!

The main implementation phase of the MQF will begin in September. This phase has three main parts:

- training and support for those who will be involved in making the MQF a reality – in particular those in the VET Centre, the Bureau for Education Services, the Examination Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science;
- alignment of the qualifications that are currently being offered alongside the MQF ie giving them a level equivalence – this will apply to all qualifications throughout the 8 levels of the Framework;
- reviewing the match between the current qualifications and the needs of the labour market in

construction and tourism and making proposals for new and revised qualifications to meet those needs.

The process of implementation will take some time, years rather than months but it is important that a start is made. A programme of training and support has been developed for the main implementing agencies. This will combine training with the application of the MQF methodologies to existing and new qualifications as appropriate.



NQF Working Group members – seminar in Pobori

The Sectoral Commissions for Qualifications have been established by the Ministry of Education and Science for the sector of Tourism and Hospitality and for Construction and Architecture. A Sectoral Commission for Agriculture and Veterinary will be established before September. In the autumn, these new Commissions will start their work (see forthcoming events) of reviewing the Framework of Qualifications within their sector and making proposals about improvements. Their role is critical to ensuring that qualifications are appropriate and that there is a full range of qualifications to enable recognition of the outcomes all levels of learning related to the sector, from the most basic to the most advanced.



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Awareness Rising Sessions About the MQF

A new web-based system to help make it easier for everyone to access information about the MQF will be piloted in the autumn. By accessing the website www.cko.edu.me it will be possible to find information about all types and levels of qualifications. It will also be possible to find details of approved providers and information about timing and arrangements for assessment. This should remove the need to access numerous individual websites to locate information about qualifications and training.

A Quality Assurance Strategy for the University of Montenegro



The project team has also been working closely with the University of Montenegro to help them develop their quality assurance strategy. This

is an important activity as the University serves over 20,000 students and provides the largest proportion of higher education graduates to the labour market. Strategic planning for quality assurance is essential to

embedding a quality culture and a commitment to continuous improvement across all parts of the University.

An enthusiastic group of people from the University and from social partners has taken part in a challenging programme of meetings, training activities and workshops including:

- 5 days of meetings, discussion and practical activities for the QA strategy working group;
- 4 training seminars on key topics for QA for the whole working group
- 5 workshops (on QA procedures, Performance indicators, Financing for quality and on staff development for innovation) for specialist sub-groups;



QA Strategy for the University of Montenegro Working Group members - seminar in Milocer

The starting point was to consider how far the University's systems currently address the recommendations in the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area". Discussions have helped to review and clarify the mission, vision and goals of the University and to start to establish priorities and revised procedures for quality assurance and quality improvement which will reflect European Guidelines for good practice more closely.



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Members of the working group are now starting to prepare the first draft of the Strategy. Five further workshops will be held in September to review the emerging outcomes and bring the different elements of the strategy together. A period of wider consultation with staff from faculties and central services will then follow and a further draft will be prepared. It is anticipated that the Strategy will be published in January 2011. This work is complementary to activities being supported by WUS Austria who are also providing assistance to the development of the University's QA systems and procedures.



QA Strategy for the University of Montenegro Working Group seminar in Milocer – February 2010

Encouraging networking amongst all those involved in higher education in Montenegro

The number of organisations licensed to offer higher education in Montenegro is increasing. Equally, the number of people studying for higher education qualifications is rising. The project has initiated the establishment of a network of people with quality assurance responsibilities in all faculties and universities in Montenegro. The main purposes of this network are to help share good practice and raise standards.

A national conference on the Standards and guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education

Areas was held for network members on 21 June. The Deputy Minister for Higher Education (Scientific Research and innovation) gave the opening speech during which he highlighted the importance of quality assurance activities to the ongoing improvement of the quality of higher education in Montenegro.



The project team's QA consultant expert provided an overview of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA and, in the afternoon, participants had the opportunity to map current QA practice in their institutions against these Guidelines.

An on-line forum for sharing materials, guidance and views has been established and a series of documents about quality assurance have been added; providing members of the Network with ready access to European documentation. Presentations used during the project's work on QA in the past months have also been included together with the Frequently Asked Questions. Materials tailored to Montenegro higher education will be added in the coming months.

A varied programme of activities and services has been planned. These include a series of seminars led by internationally-recognised Higher Education professionals, on topics including:

- Criteria for effective quality assurance systems;
- Higher education arrangements for qualification design and approval;
- The use of learning outcomes in HE programmes;
- University/higher education faculty policies on student assessment;
- Higher education arrangements for programme review
- A set of Guidelines covering the above topics and including examples of good practice is being prepared.



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Forthcoming events (provisional)

3rd September	Sub-group drafting meeting for University of Montenegro QA Strategy – section on QA procedures
10th September	Sub-group drafting meeting for QA strategy – section on quality monitoring and feedback
13 th September	Bureau for Education Services workshop on MQF
15 th September	Initial meeting and awareness raising for Sectoral Commissions for Qualifications in Tourism, Construction and Agriculture
17th September	Sub-group meeting for QA Strategy – section on Staff development for quality
20 th September	Bureau for Education Services workshop 2 on MQF- provisional
21 st September	NQF working group meeting
24th September	Examination Centre workshop on MQF
24 th September	QA working group meeting to review first draft of strategy
27 th September	Bureau for Education Services workshop 3 on MQF- provisional
28 September	Second meeting for the Sectoral Commission for Construction and Architecture
29 September	Second meeting for the Sectoral Commission for Tourism and Hospitality
30 September	Second meeting for the Sectoral Commission for Agriculture and Veterinary
6 October	Conference on QA for student representatives
12 October	Full-day meeting for MoES Higher Education departments and HE Council members
19 th October	Provisional date – Employer conference on MQF
27 th October	Third meeting of Sectoral Commission for Qualifications in Tourism and Hospitality
28 th October	Third meeting of Sectoral Commission for Qualifications in Construction and Architecture

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