

Ministry of Science, Education and Sports

EQIBELT

1st coordination meeting
9-10 December 2005, Zagreb

As Croatia has started the road to full European Union membership, we have to be mindful of common goals and objectives when forming our national strategies and policies. One of the most important policy initiatives is the Lisbon strategy, started in 2000, which aims to reform the European economy so as to become the most competitive economy in the world by 2010. One of the ten priority areas of the strategy is life long learning, with particular emphasis on increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems. Among many ways to achieve this objective is also the ensuring access to ICTs for everyone, and it is within this framework that the development and integration of e-learning will have an important role in the development and support of life long learning.

The government of the Republic of Croatia has recognized the importance of e-learning and had started the *e-Croatia 2007 Program* that encompasses the efforts of the Government to transform Croatian society into information society. An integral part of the program is the informatisation of the Croatian education system as part of the overall modernization of education, and the development of a system of educational programs over the Internet for a wider use and for life long learning.

According to the *Operational plan of the e-Croatia 2007 Program for 2004* the activities of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports were:

- Implementation of the information system of higher education institutions (ISVU)
- Furnishing of higher education institutions with computer equipment
- Continuation of the project of networking student residencies
- GigaCARNet project –continuing to develop technologically advanced network infrastructure
- Teacher portal project
- Starting the Information system of primary and secondary education project
- Furnishing primary and secondary schools with computer equipment
- Education of teaching staff in primary and secondary schools for the application of ICT (ECDL)
- Introduction of computer science as a requisite course in primary and secondary schools

Some of the projects in the area of higher education financed by the Ministry are:

ISVU (Informacijski sustav visokih učilišta) - a system of informatisation of the work of student services at higher education institutions. The project was already implemented by a dozen higher education institutions, and another 30 have started the implementation.

iProjects - The information and communication technology (ICT) development and application as a support to the teaching process and the research activity, as well as to the creation of the quality digital services of the information society beneficial for the general public is financed by the information technology application projects

NISKA (Nacionalni informacijski sustav knjižnica) – a project that organizes the design of the national library information system which shall connect all libraries in Croatia, irrespective of their type (school, university, scientific and city libraries).

Program support to universities and public research institutes - The Ministry finances the procurement of program support for universities and public research institutes to be applied in teaching and scientific research. Program support is bought with the academic discount and cannot be used commercially. The Ministry finances the operation of Documentation of Reference Center which distributes the procured program support and provides assistance to users.

As you can see, all of these projects are mostly intended to provide the necessary infrastructure for further development and use of ICT in the education sector. Therefore, we are very pleased to be involved in the EQIBELT project that will add a different, and needed, component to quality of higher education and opportunities for students and teachers.