# Virtual Universities –

*Croatian Perspectives and Current Challenges*
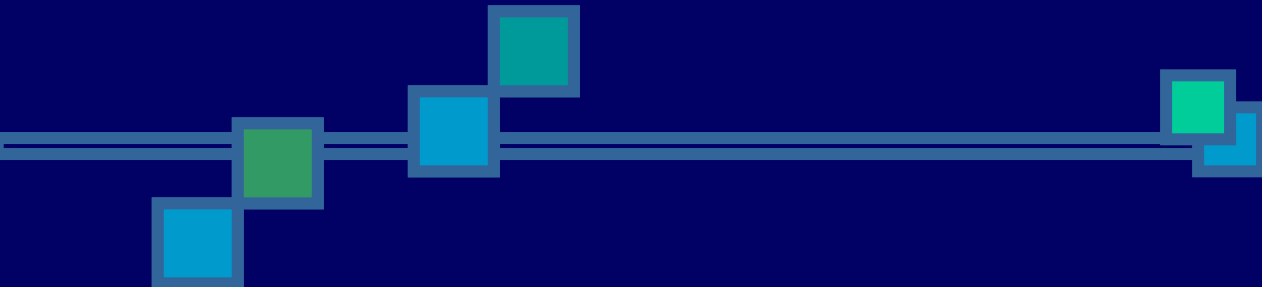
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# Neccessity for immediate action

- Existing elaborated strategies – basis for implementation (Croatia in 21$^{st}$ Century, E-Croatia)
- Initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Science and Technology (Virtual University), CARNet projects, various pilot projects...
- Still no adequate actions undertaken by the relevant institution managements

# EU and Croatia – virtual neighbours or partners?

- European Union – recognition of and dealing with virtualisation of education space, leads to strategies, endorsed by implementation schemes through projects and investments
- The results and the products of virtual education – determine and define the new economy and industrial capacity
- Croatian implementation lacks organisation and support from all relevant factors (budgetary and capital investments, inputs from the enterprenurial and private sector
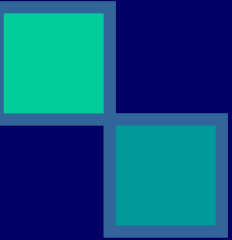- How can the pace of Croatian development be continued?

# Achieving the actual decision-making "shift"

- To open the academic rigidity in Croatian education arena to new incentives, including enhancement of contents through application in virtual media

- To bring together academic and political decision makers on an expert, open-minded and creative understanding
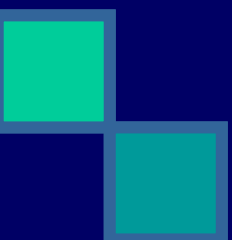
# Risks of inactive approach

- Neighbours that are recognising and seizing the opportunities in the region (UNIADRION virtual university)
- Croatian participants in European projects – individual experts, not institutions
- Not taking into consideration the achievements and standards of Europeisation and internationalisation – further knowledge institutional isolation

# Examples of good institutional practice

- ACA ([Academic Cooperation Association](#)) with staff of 8 leads and organises gatherings, research and publishes about topics such as "virtual mobility and cooperation"

- EAIE ([European Association for International Education](#))

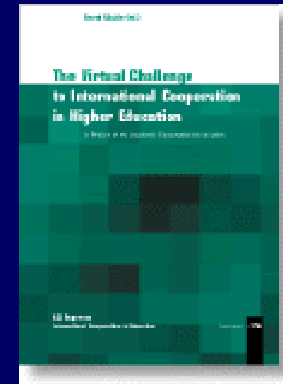# Advantages of encouraging virtual education activities

- Presence in the virtual education community – recognition and credit
- Avoiding "brain-drain" symptoms – more proper HR management
- Enabling a healthier and more competitive market in Croatia

# Some actual operational suggestions

- Forming "ad hoc" task force groups at universities with the goal to provide institutional framework and planning
- Using existing IT HR to develop the ideas of virtual education in concrete areas (i.ex. CARNet, IT department staff…)
- To provide all university subsidiaries with necessary know-how

# Recommendations

- No need to explore the already tested (substantial literature, publications, websites, research results...)

- Teachers are today generally facilitators, not Masters, a lot of incentives being realised depends on the good will of decision-makers

# Concluding remarks

- The future of Croatia depends on how Croatians will utilise the existing European and international experiences of IT for their benefit

- Virtual education is an important imperative for the necessary bridgeing of Croatian technological "backwardness"

# Further contact:

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