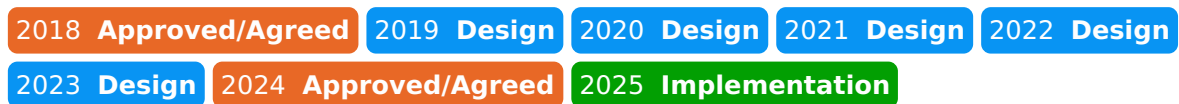


Validation arrangements



Timeline



ID number 28790

Background

The Croatian Qualifications Framework Act, adopted in 2013, along with its Amendments from 2018, and the 2021 Law on Adult Education, provide for a regulation for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning up to CROQF/EQF level 5. Taking into account the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, the validation system for prior learning also aligns with the objectives of the National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027, as well as the National Development Strategy for Croatia until 2030.

Objectives

This policy development aims to develop a system of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in Croatia.

Description

Adopted in 2024, the Regulation on the application and procedure for the validation of prior learning governs the validation of prior learning for qualifications at NQF/EQF levels 2–5 (excluding higher education qualifications), which involves the recognition of units of learning outcomes based on the assessment of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Validation is conducted in accordance with validation programmes defined as formal adult education programmes for validating prior learning against the standards of learning outcome units from the Croatian Qualification Framework (CROQF) register. The Agency for VET and Adult Education (ASOO) published the methodology for developing validation programmes, and adult education providers are responsible for creating the programmes. ASOO is also responsible for verifying the alignment of validation programmes with qualification/learning outcomes standards from the CROQF register. Providers are required to continuously align validation programmes with any updates to the standards in the CROQF register.

Adult education providers will be authorised to perform validation if they meet the following criteria:

- (a) high or very high quality in an external evaluation conducted by ASOO;
- (b) positive opinion from ASOO on the alignment of validation programmes with CROQF standards and formal education programmes;
- (c) ministry approval for the validation programmes;
- (d) ministry approval for adult education programmes encompassing all learning outcomes that are the subject of validation, as well as the experience teaching those programmes to at least two cohorts of learners.

Validation programmes define the requirements for accessing validation for acquiring micro-credentials (referred to as micro-qualifications in the national context, consisting of units of learning outcomes) and partial qualifications at NQF/EQF levels 2–5, or full qualifications at NQF/EQF level 2 (generally awarded upon completion of short training programmes). If candidates apply for validation to acquire additional full qualifications at NQF/EQF levels 3 or 4 (which are otherwise awarded upon completion of formal IVET programmes), they must have previously completed formal education for qualifications at the same level or higher. Similarly, for full qualifications at level 5 (awarded upon completion of VET specialist development programmes), the requirement is prior formal education completed at least at NQF/EQF level 4.

Before candidates apply for validation programmes, adult education providers may suggest that they complete an initial self-assessment questionnaire (an optional step) to determine whether they possess the competences defined by the validation programmes. After formally applying for validation, candidates undergo an initial assessment performed by adult education providers, which involves an interview and the submission of a portfolio containing proof of acquired competences (e.g., certificates from non-formal training, employment contracts, employer recommendations or certificates, volunteering or social security certificates, etc.). The education provider appoints a validation committee that decides whether candidates possess the competences and meet the requirements to access the validation programme. Based on a positive decision from the validation committee, candidates enroll in the validation programme by signing a contract with the adult education provider, which also stipulates the costs and financing of the validation process. The assessment of skills and competences is conducted either in classroom and practical training settings or at the candidates' workplace or company. Candidates who demonstrate all the competences required by the validation programme are awarded formal certificates equivalent to those earned through formal education. Statements of partial acquisition of learning outcomes may be awarded to those who demonstrate only a portion of the competences specified in the validation programme. These statements can be used as proof of competences in subsequent validation processes or for enrolment in adult education programmes (for example, to waive portions of course requirements for which candidates have validated skills and competences).

2018 Approved/Agreed

In 2018, the National Council for the Development of Human Potential adopted recommendations with a conceptual framework for further development of the recognition and validation system.

2019 Design

The regulation on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is under preparation.

2020 Design

The validation of non-formal and informal learning concerning VET (NQF/EQF levels 2-5) will be regulated through the upcoming Law on Adult Education.

2021 Design

A new Law on Adult Education was adopted at the end of 2021, providing a legal basis for validation of non-formal and informal learning at NQF/EQF levels 2-5.

2022 Design

The development of the framework for the validation of prior learning was initiated through the project Establishing a validation system of prior non-formal and informal learning in Croatia, carried out in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the ministry responsible for education, and the Agency for VET and Adult Education, with support from the DG REFORM of the European Commission. This project, running from 2022 to 2024, is unfolded in three phases:

- (a) reviewing existing practices in national and international contexts;
- (b) developing recommendations for designing the policy framework for validation in Croatia;
- (c) drafting policy documents in accordance with the Law on Adult Education, specifically the regulation and methodology for the validation of prior learning, as well as a guide for adult education providers on the validation of prior learning.

OECD published Croatian experiences with recognition of prior learning in 2022.

2023 Design

The regulation and methodology for the validation of prior learning were being drafted. OECD Input to the methodology was also published.

2024 Approved/Agreed

The project, Establishing a validation system of prior non-formal and informal learning in Croatia, concluded with a final conference with key stakeholders in adult education and international experts in March 2024. The conference presented the key outputs, including the main elements of the forthcoming regulation and methodology for the validation of prior learning. OECD published Implementation Guidelines for Practitioners.

In July 2024, Croatia adopted the Regulation on the application and procedure for the validation of prior learning.

In October 2024, the Agency for VET and Adult Education published the Methodology for developing programmes for the validation of prior learning for acquiring micro-qualifications, partial qualifications and full qualifications. The methodology outlines the format and mandatory content of validation programmes, providing examples and guidelines for structuring these programmes based on approved education programmes and CROQF standards. The structure of the validation programmes involves:

- (a) General information:
 - (i) sector, title, and type of programme, education provider
 - (ii) link to occupational and qualification standards from the CROQF register
 - (iii) units of learning outcomes from the CROQF register, including level and volume
 - (iv) quality assurance mechanisms for validation programmes
 - (v) requirements for accessing validation programmes
 - (vi) requirements for completing validation programmes
- (b) Validation programme:
 - (i) programme description with tasks and activities for which validation of prior learning is performed
 - (ii) modules and learning outcomes
 - (iii) assessment method, with descriptions of assessment task(s)
 - (iv) detailed assessment elements and criteria for each learning outcome
 - (v) assessment accommodations for candidates with disabilities
- (c) Programme prerequisites:

- (i) required qualifications for members of the validation committee at the education provider
- (ii) required resources and environment for performing validation programmes

Alongside the methodology, the Agency for VET and Adult Education also published the Guide for adult education providers: Validation of prior learning. The guide provides detailed instructions on obtaining approval for validation programmes, examples of validation programmes, mandatory contract elements between education providers and candidates participating in the validation process, and guidance on candidates' initial self-assessment, interviews, and assessment. It is designed to facilitate the development and delivery of validation programmes for education providers and to support candidates throughout the validation process.

The upcoming prerequisite for validation of prior learning to become operational involve the development of individual validation programmes by adult education providers. No programmes have been developed in 2024.

2025 Implementation

No validation programmes have been developed in 2025.

In September 2025, the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO) conducted a survey among institutions that achieved a very high or high level of quality in external evaluation, with the aim of determining the reasons why these institutions have not yet undertaken the development of validation programmes. The survey pointed to several key obstacles, in line with challenges observed in European practice. These include:

- (a) insufficient professional and administrative capacity within institutions;
- (b) limited resources and time for developing high-quality programmes;
- (c) current primary focus of the institutions is on developing and adapting formal education programmes financed through vouchers, which limits the possibility of simultaneously developing validation programmes;
- (d) insufficient awareness among candidates and stakeholders about the possibilities and benefits of validating prior learning.

As the national body responsible for quality in the adult education system, the ASOO is planning activities aimed at mitigating these challenges and strengthening provider capacities. In December 2025, ASOO will organise training to enhance provider competences for developing validation programmes, with a particular emphasis on methodology and examples of good practice.

In 2026, ASOO plans to develop tools and model examples that will help institutions create validation programmes. Workshops on standardising validation procedures are also planned. Benefits of validating prior learning will be promoted in the annual Lifelong learning week, in cooperation with key stakeholders, including the ministries responsible for education and labour, as well as the public employment service.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Science, Education and Youth (MZOM)
- Agency for VET and Adult Education (ASOO)

Target group

Learners

Adult learners

Education professionals

School leaders

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Croatian Qualifications Framework Act, \(Official Gazette, No 22/2013\)](#)

[Amendments to Croatian Qualifications Framework Act, \(Official Gazette, No 64/2018\)](#)

[Regulation on the application and procedure for the validation of prior learning \[Pravilnik o nacinu prijave i provodenju vrednovanja prethodnog ucenja\], \(Official Gazette, No 79/2024\)](#)

[Agency for VET and Adult Education \(2024\). Methodology for validating prior learning for micro-qualifications and qualifications. \[Metodologija za vrednovanje prethodnog ucenja za mikrokvalifikacije i kvalifikacije\].](#)

[Agency for VET and Adult Education \(2024\). Guide for adult education providers: Validation of prior learning \[Vodic ustanovama za obrazovanje odraslih: Vrednovanje prethodnog ucenja\]. Zagreb: Agency for VET and Adult Education.](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027

In response to the challenges affecting VET, the National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 proposes a number of measures, building on key reform initiatives from the previous strategic period. The specific measures related to VET (Area 3 of the Plan) include:

 CROATIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

The Law on Adult Education

The 2021 Law on Adult Education provided guidelines for the development of a comprehensive quality assurance system and allowed for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

 CROATIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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