

Incentives for SMEs and learners to participate in apprenticeship

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 CROATIA

Timeline

2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation	2018 Implementation
2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation	2021 Implementation
2022 Implementation	2023 Implementation	2024 Implementation

ID number 28267

Background

Apprenticeships in Croatia (programmes for crafts, nationally referred to as the Unified model of education, JMO) are under the remit of the ministries responsible for education and economy. The enrolment in JMO halved in the period from 2013 to 2018, though these qualifications are in continuous demand on the labour market. Thanks to intensive promotional efforts, enrolment in JMO has started recovering since 2018 and increased by 30% by 2023. To encourage enrolment in JMO and uptake of apprentices by employers, the ministry responsible for economy also proposes several incentives for learners and employers alike.

Objectives

This policy development aims to support the uptake of JMO by companies and learners through grants for SMEs, scholarships for students and the promotion of VET for crafts.

Description

In the period from 2016 to 2018, the ministry responsible for economy awarded grants to Croatian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that offered apprenticeships to VET students in craft and trade occupations. In 2016, 34 grants were awarded (total budget of EUR 283 966). The focus was on rare craft and trade occupations. In 2017, the scope was expanded to SMEs offering apprenticeships in all craft and trade occupations (a total budget of EUR 742 999 was awarded for 98 grants, joint financing expenditures for student awards and mentor allowances). The action reached full-scale implementation in 2017-18. The Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts (HOK) was involved in the initiative. Although some lack of motivation of entrepreneurs to participate in the grant scheme could be noted in previous years, the trend was reversed thanks to intensive and targeted promotional efforts, as well as better timing in the call for applications launched by the ministry responsible for economy. In result, Croatian SMEs demonstrated significant interest in participating in the grant scheme in 2018. Over EUR 1.4 million was awarded to 188 grants to SMEs offering apprenticeships.

The Erasmus+ project Strengthening the capacities of the chambers and partners to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to engage in apprenticeship (Cap4App) started in October 2016 and ended in September 2018. It was coordinated by the Croatian Chamber of Economy (HGK) and run in cooperation with major national stakeholders and the Austrian Federal Chamber of Economy. It had a total budget of around EUR 500 000. The project aimed to train apprenticeship advisors, make apprenticeship programmes more attractive and facilitate their implementation by SMEs, improve public perception of VET and promote work-based learning in companies. Through the project, apprenticeship advisors were trained in HGK county chambers to provide administrative assistance and counselling services to SMEs and VET schools for the introduction of apprenticeship schemes. Project results included toolkits for apprenticeship advisors, a guidebook for the introduction of apprenticeships, a training programme for in-company mentors and a database of SMEs interested in participating in the implementation of apprenticeships.

During 2016-18, the ministry responsible for economy continued the project Scholarships for students in craft occupations. In 2016, a total project budget of EUR 1 853 585 was granted and 1 522 students in rare craft occupations received a scholarship. In 2017, the total project budget of EUR 2 844 534 was granted for 2 342 scholarships to students in rare craft occupations. In 2018, the total budget of almost EUR 3.6 million was granted for 2 957 scholarships.

In the period from 2015 to 2018, the ministry responsible for economy also implemented the grant scheme Lifelong learning for crafts, which supported SMEs and natural persons in acquiring skills for crafts, as well as professional certification and licensing for employment or self-employment in regulated crafts. In this period, EUR 1.1 million was awarded to 3 268 beneficiaries.

The grants jointly financed 80 % of eligible costs of training, examination or licensing for regulated crafts. The eligible activities included:

- (a) preparing for and taking a master craftsman examination;
- (b) preparing for and taking a vocational training examination;
- (c) retraining for a qualification in regulated crafts, delivered in line with JMO;
- (d) taking a journeyman examination;
- (e) licencing for JMO delivery.

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

Grants to SMEs offering apprenticeships

Over EUR 3.8 million was awarded for 425 grants to SMEs offering apprenticeships. The funds available increased significantly (by almost 400%) from EUR 2.3 million in 2016-18 to EUR 9.26 million in 2019-20. Grants to SMEs cover 80% of apprentices' awards for the current school year, as well as mentors' fees. In 2019, the procurement of necessary equipment for the education of apprentices was also included among eligible costs. In 2019, the maximum grant to SMEs increased from EUR 19 660 to EUR 65 530.

Promotion of entrepreneurship

During 2019 and 2020, the ministry responsible for economy implemented the project Promotion of entrepreneurship, under the motto Realise your dreams in Croatia. The initiative aims to improve the perception of entrepreneurship and foster a favourable business environment for entrepreneurs. Within the initiative, intensive promotional efforts specifically target lifelong learning and entrepreneurial learning, innovative entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial success. The campaign for the promotion of lifelong learning and entrepreneurial learning from June and July 2019 promoted the value of VET and encouraged enrolment in rare craft professions.

Scholarships for students in craft occupations

In 2019, EUR 9.9 million was granted for scholarships to 4 165 students in rare craft occupations. The annual amount for scholarships increased from EUR 1 180 to EUR 2 360. The number of awarded scholarships also increased to at least 1 200. Overall, the available funds for scholarships increased significantly (by 242%) from almost EUR 8.3 million in the period 2016-18 to EUR 20.7 million in the period 2019-20.

Grants for lifelong learning for crafts

The grant scheme continued in 2019 with a total budget of EUR 265 216 and 765 beneficiaries. Grants are planned for 2020 as well.

2020 Implementation

Grants to SMEs offering apprenticeships: implementation continued in 2020 with a total budget of EUR 5.46 million for 571 grants.

Scholarships for students in craft occupations: implementation continued in 2020 with a total budget of EUR 10.8 million for 4 561 scholarships.

Grants for lifelong learning for crafts: in 2020, a total budget of EUR 247 986 was allocated to 749 beneficiaries.

Promotion of apprenticeships: also funded by the European Social Fund, a nationwide promotional campaign accompanied grants to SMEs and scholarships for learners in apprenticeships. Its focus was on encouraging enrollment in apprenticeship programmes (JMO) in shortage occupations.

2021 Implementation

No funding was awarded in 2021.

2022 Implementation

Lifelong learning for crafts grants continued: in 2022, a total budget of EUR 265 252 was allocated to 815 beneficiaries.

2023 Implementation

Grants to SMEs offering apprenticeships: implementation continued in 2023 with a total budget of EUR 2.09 million allocated to 215 grants. The availability and level of funding for grants depends on the funds allocated from the ESF. After the end of the 2014-2020 financing period (covering grants up to 2023), the funding from the ESF was less stable and depended on the remaining ESF and national funds. Funding for grants to SMEs, scholarships for crafts and lifelong learning for crafts is planned within the next programming period from the ESF+ and the national funds. 12 614 IVET learners were enrolled in apprenticeship (JMO) programmes in 2023/24 (increase by 1.9% from 2022/23).

Lifelong learning for crafts grants also continued: in 2023, a total budget of EUR 140 282 was allocated to 455 beneficiaries.

2024 Implementation

Lifelong learning for crafts grants continued: in 2024, a total budget of EUR 131 915 was allocated to 431 beneficiaries.

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funds. 12 948 IVET learners were enrolled in apprenticeship (JMO) programmes in 2024/25 (increase by 2.6% from 2023/24).

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Economy (MINGO)
- Croatian Chamber of Economy (CCE)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)

Entities providing VET

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Grants to SMEs and scholarships for students in craft occupations](#)

[Lifelong learning for crafts](#)

[Promotion of apprenticeships](#)

Related policy developments

2024 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:

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Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Approved/Agreed

Amendments to the Crafts Act

The amendments to the Crafts Act from December 2019, which entered into force as of January 2020, introduced a shift in governance that transferred more responsibility to the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts (HOK), in particular, and the ministry responsible for economy (MINGO).

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28267>

