

Regional centres of competences

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 CROATIA

Timeline

2018 Approved/Agreed

2019 Design

2020 Design

2021 Design

2022 Implementation

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 28264

Background

In line with the priorities of the 2014 Strategy for education, science and technology and the VET system development programme 2016-20, VET Act amendments from 2018 formally foresaw introduction of regional competence centres in VET.

Objectives

Regional centres of competences (RCK) in VET are expected to connect education with the labour market, act as regional focal points, and establish cooperation with other VET schools and stakeholders within the same sector. The objectives of RCK include promoting innovative learning models, teaching excellence (including mentors), high-quality infrastructure and technology, constructive and creative cooperation with social partners, public sector, businesses, research and higher education institutions, as well as with similar centres of VET excellence across Europe.

Description

In July 2018, following a public call procedure, the ministry responsible for education appointed 25 VET schools as the future regional centres of competences in Croatia. Selection criteria included:

- (a) the quality of VET provision;
- (b) the number of students in sectors;
- (c) regional distribution of schools;
- (d) balanced geographic representation of the future centres.

The centres were appointed in five priority sectors:

- (a) tourism and hospitality;
- (b) mechanical engineering;
- (c) electrical engineering and ICT;
- (d) health care;

(e) agriculture.

As hubs of excellence, the centres aim to offer regular VET programmes to students, career guidance and lifelong learning, as well as other forms of formal and non-formal education (WBL, student competitions, knowledge and skills presentations). IVET and CVET programmes are foreseen for students, adults (employed and unemployed), teachers and trainers, workplace mentors, as well as persons with disabilities and students with learning difficulties (tailor-made programmes). Over EUR 130 million are invested in state-of-the-art equipment for the centres, the latest technological advancements, and the infrastructure of the centres in the period from 2020-2023. The centres are also expected to promote a successful transition of VET graduates to the labour market. The regional centres of competences are introducing the latest technology in Croatian schools and nurturing advanced VET student skills. The initiative is in its starting phase. Monitoring is ensured through the management and control system of the European Structural and Investment Funds in Croatia (European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund) from which the centres are funded. The ministry responsible for education specifies the conditions for reaccreditation of the centres after five years.

2018 Approved/Agreed

2019 Design

In July 2019, calls for project proposals were announced for funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), directed at investment in human resources, development and modernisation of programmes, and other relevant activities for the establishment of regional competence centres. Under the calls, the ESF and the State budget funding will be used for the development of programmes and human resources to provide relevant practical skills to adults and students in VET through work-based learning, so increasing their labour market prospects. The evaluation of project applications is under way and the signing of funding agreements is expected by May 2020. A complementary call for financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), under the Operational programme 2014-20, is also under way. The grants would finance reconstruction, restoration, upgrading and adaptation of designated regional competence centres and partner institutions in VET, as well as procurement of specialised equipment. The first contracts under this call have already been signed and the process is expected to be completed by May 2020. The plan for the future is to expand the network of regional centres of competences to other sectors based on the evaluation of the performance of the centres appointed thus far.

2020 Design

Up to now, most activities have concerned strengthening organisational capacities, recruitment of personnel, preparation of technical documentation (for infrastructure investments), and preparation of occupational standards. Measures for alleviating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have had an impact on the dynamics of establishing regional centres of competences. Each centre runs two projects, one supporting infrastructure investments and the purchase of equipment jointly financed by the ERDF, and the other directed at strengthening human resources, development of programmes, organisational and strategic planning, networking (jointly financed by ESIF). Recently, the ministry responsible for education has organised two cycles of supporting meetings with centres on the CROQF methodology for developing occupational/qualification standards in line with the core activities of the centres' aiming to modernise VET programmes. The ministry will monitor and assess how successful centres have been in the first year of project implementation through online questionnaires. The final evaluation will be conducted in 2023 when the ministry and the national agency in charge of external evaluation will perform reaccreditation of the centres, appointed in 2018 for five years, based on the evaluation of the quality of VET provision.

2021 Design

During 2021, the work of the centres was planned. In addition to the infrastructural

works, specialised equipment was procured, and workshops, seminars and professional trips were conducted.

Other activities carried out in the framework of ESF aimed to strengthen the competences of educators and mentors employed by partner organisations, to promote vocational occupations and the work of the centres, plus study trips and workshops, seminars, competitions and reviews, and curriculum development (occupational standards, qualification standards and vocational curricula, adult education programs).

231 partner organisations and 68 partner schools participated in project activities alongside the project managers (designated schools, centres of competence). A significant portion of the funds is directed at improving the quality of VET provision and teaching at the centres, whose project activities will involve more than 1 200 teachers and non-teaching staff and more than 3 000 students in the next few years.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, the focus was on setting up the regional centres of competences through investments, supported by projects financed through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The infrastructural investments focused on upgrading VET provider facilities, equipment, and technology, specifically to increase the quality of work-based learning. Examples include investing in practical training workshops, laboratories and facilities simulating real work environments (e.g. restaurants in regional centres of competences in tourism and hospitality sector or hospital facilities in healthcare, workshops for automotive mechatronics, etc.). As the centres are expected to act as knowledge hubs providing education services to IVET and CVET learners in the broader region, investments also concerned accommodation units for visiting teachers, trainers and learners and adjustments for learners with disabilities. Investments extended to VET providers partnering with regional centres of competences, which is expected to multiply the effects of funding and improve the quality of teaching and learning in other VET providers in Croatia, beyond the 25 regional centres of competences. At the same time, investments were made for improving the quality of VET provision, specifically through enhancing teaching competences through training for teachers and trainers, strengthening quality assurance and guidance mechanisms, updating curricula and programmes, improving work-based learning in IVET and CVET, strengthening international cooperation and staff mobility, and increasing opportunities and support for learners with disabilities.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, the initial investment of EUR 260 million from the ESIF in the establishment of 25 regional centres of competence was completed. The funded projects were implemented in partnership with other VET providers across Croatia, amplifying the impact of the investment by supporting the purchase of equipment, (re)construction of facilities, and the creation of authentic WBL environments. Specifically investments were made in infrastructure and equipment, reconstruction, renovation and adaptation of the spatial conditions of regional centres of competences and their partner schools; reconstruction, extension and construction of new accommodation in 7 centres (5 practical learning academies and 2 accommodation facilities); equipping of 13 partner schools; reconstruction, adaptation and equipping of 29 laboratories; reconstruction, adaptation and equipping of 70 work-based learning facilities; and equipping specialised classrooms of the centres and partners.

The investments additionally supported teacher training, QA and guidance, curriculum development, WBL, international cooperation and mobility, as well as support for learners with disabilities.

Specifically, regional centres of competences contributed to VET qualification development by drafting 53 occupational standards, 56 qualification standards, 50 vocational curricula, 35 partial qualifications and micro-qualifications, 127 adult education programmes and 100 informal adult education programmes.

In July 2023, the ministry responsible for education reaffirmed the appointment of the regional centres of competence for another 5 years in five priority (sub)sectors: tourism and hospitality, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and ICT, agriculture and healthcare, with the mission to ensure innovative and excellent teaching and learning, top-quality infrastructure and cooperation with companies in WBL.

2024 Implementation

In line with the National Development Strategy for Croatia until 2030, the National Education System Development Plan 2022-2027 and the Programme Efficient Human Resources 2021-2027 foresee continued support for the further development of the regional centres of competence in the upcoming period, aimed at strengthening teacher competences, networking with partner institutions and companies, enhancing VET and adult education provision, and connecting the regional centres of competence with the European platform for centres of excellence in VET.

2025 Implementation

EUR 6 million has been allocated from the ESF+ for support for further development of regional centres of competence by 2029. A call for proposals of the regional centres of competence to apply for the funds is planned for 2025 but has not been published by October 2025.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Science, Education and Youth (MZOM)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET infrastructure

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training

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

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

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

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

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Decision on the establishment of a network of regional competence centres in VET \[Odluka o donosenju mreze regionalnih centara kompetentnosti u strukovnom obrazovanju\]](#), Official Gazette No 45/2018

[Decision on project financing](#)

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

2023 Completed

VET system development programme 2016-20

The VET system development programme 2016-20 provides the strategic framework for VET development and reform. The programme was adopted by the Croatian Government in September 2016 and a related action plan was adopted two months later by the ministry responsible for education.

 CROATIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2018 Completed

Amendments to the VET Act

The amendments aligned the curricular framework for VET to the Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF).

 CROATIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28264>