

Strategic framework and investment priorities for labour and employment up to 2027

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN** CROATIA

Timeline

2021 Approved/Agreed**2022 Implementation****2023 Implementation****2024 Implementation****ID number 47803**

Background

The National Plan for Labour, Occupational Safety and Employment 2021-27 serves as the strategic framework for labour market policy in Croatia. It aligns with the National Development Strategy until 2030 and provides the foundation for the Efficient Human Resources Programme 2021-27, which outlines the financing priorities for the ESF+. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026 underpins the interventions outlined in the National Plan for Labour, Occupational Safety and Employment 2021-2027, particularly in the area of active labour market policy, guidance, and vouchers for adult learning.

Objectives

The National Plan for Labour, Occupational Safety and Employment 2021-27 outlines the strategic priorities and measures for labour market policy up to 2027, including specific actions for upskilling, guidance, and aligning education with labour market needs. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-26 acts complementary to the National Plan for Labour, Occupational Safety and Employment 2021-27, allocating additional targeted support for employment and upskilling.

Description

The National Plan for Labour, Occupational Safety and Employment 2021-2027, under the objective Strengthening workforce competences, defines the following measures relevant for VET:

- (a) mapping skills relevant to the labour market as a basis for developing educational programmes and awarding vouchers;
- (b) identifying workforce skills to support lifelong guidance and career development;
- (c) developing occupational standards in line with the Croatian Qualifications Framework to align education with labour market needs and support the validation of prior learning;
- (d) awarding vouchers for green and digital upskilling for the unemployed and the

employed;

- (e) enhancing analytical tools and mechanisms for labour market monitoring to inform skills policies, forecasting, and evidence-based policymaking in employment, education, guidance, and lifelong learning;
- (f) monitoring the employment outcomes of graduates and improving the methodology for developing recommendations on enrolment policy;
- (g) increasing access to lifelong guidance services to support career decisions and enrolment in education programmes aligned with labour market needs.

Under the objective Improving access to the labour market for the unemployed and inactive workforce, the National Plan outlines additional measures related to the external factors of VET, including:

- (a) active labour market policy (ALMP) measures, supported by dedicated promotional activities and individualised guidance for vulnerable groups and based on enhanced self-assessment and profiling tools, along with improved mechanisms for planning and monitoring ALMP outcomes.
- (b) developing support systems to integrate the inactive workforce into the labour market, with a specific focus on NEETs. This includes advancing the methodology for mapping NEETs and providing support through the Youth Guarantee and lifelong career guidance centres (CISOK).

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026 allocated an additional EUR 145 million to active labour market policy interventions, specifically targeting (self-)employment and internships in green and digital jobs. The plan also supports tailored guidance for vulnerable groups, including expanding support for NEETs through CISOK, and allocated nearly EUR 40 million to vouchers for green and digital upskilling. From 2022 to 2026, the voucher scheme aims to engage 30,000 employed and unemployed individuals in upskilling, including at least 12,000 long-term unemployed, inactive individuals, and NEETs. Vouchers are exclusively awarded for adult education programmes (often micro-credentials) based on new occupational and qualification standards and skills mapping, ensuring that the upskilling policy aligns with labour market needs. The ministry in charge of labour (MROSP) governs the interventions at the policy level and the Public employment service (HZZ) is responsible for service-provision to end-users (guidance activities, ALMP, awarding vouchers, etc.).

2021 Approved/Agreed

The adoption of the 2021 Law on Adult Education established the legal foundation for awarding vouchers. To set up the voucher scheme, skills mapping was conducted to identify priority green and digital skills eligible for financing through vouchers, based on occupational standards from the Croatian Qualifications Framework and ESCO. This skills mapping informed the Catalogue of digital and green skills, which is integrated into the application for awarding vouchers. The catalogue features digital and green skills linked to upskilling programmes that qualify for financing. Additionally, assessment tools were developed to support guidance and help match adult learners with the appropriate upskilling programmes.

2022 Implementation

Intensive promotional efforts drove significant interest in lifelong learning supported by vouchers: 4 234 individuals enrolled and/or completed education programmes with the support of vouchers. Furthermore, 31 482 individuals were supported through the active labour market policy interventions for employment and education.

2023 Implementation

10 014 individuals enrolled in and/or completed education programmes using vouchers in 2023. Furthermore, 37 226 individuals were supported through active labour market policy interventions (about half of these focused on employment and the other half on education).

2024 Implementation

By October 2024, 8 389 individuals enrolled in and/or completed education programmes using vouchers. Furthermore, 27 438 individuals were supported through active labour market policy interventions (about half of these focused on employment and the other half on education).

A project proposal has been prepared for advancing lifelong career guidance services with the support from the ESF+. The project focuses on:

- (a) development of a methodology in line with current and future labour market needs;
- (b) improving e-services;
- (c) improving continuous training of lifelong career guidance service providers;
- (d) establishment of a quality assurance system.

The project entitled Advancing lifelong professional guidance and career development in Croatia is planned for the period 2025-28 with the budget of EUR 3 000 000.

A funding proposal under ESF+ is in preparation responding to the following objectives of the National Plan for Labour, Occupational Safety and Employment 2021-27:

- (a) enhancing analytical tools and mechanisms for labour market monitoring to inform skills policies, forecasting, and evidence-based policymaking in employment, education, guidance, and lifelong learning;
- (b) monitoring the employment outcomes of graduates and improving the methodology for developing recommendations on enrolment policy.
- (c) developing occupational standards in line with the Croatian Qualifications Framework to align education with labour market needs and support the validation of prior learning;
- (d) mapping skills relevant to the labour market as a basis for developing educational programmes and awarding vouchers.

The project entitled Strengthening the links between education and labour market is planned for the period 2025-29 with the budget of EUR 3 250 000.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy (MROSP)
- Public employment service (HZZ)

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

Adult learners

Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)

Unemployed and jobseekers

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Education professionals

Guidance practitioners

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies
Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Using EU transparency tools (EQF, Europass, ESCO, ECTS, ECVET principles)
Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies
Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs
Lifelong guidance

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Government of the Republic of Croatia \(2023\). Decision on the National Plan for Labour, Occupational Safety and Employment 2021-27 and Action Plan for 2021-24. Official Gazette No. 131/2021](#)

[Government of the Republic of Croatia \(2021\). National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-26 \[Nacionalni plan oporavka i otpornosti 2021.-2026.\]](#)

[Catalogue of digital and green skills](#)

[Application for awarding vouchers](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

Mapping NEETs

In 2016, the ministry in charge of labour (MROSP) launched an initiative to develop a mapping system for young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEETs).



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

Development of occupational standards

From March 2015 until June 2016, HZZ developed and conducted occupational standards survey for 50 occupations. The results were used as an analytical basis for the development of occupational standards and disseminated through 60 workshops throughout Croatia.



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

Labour market data monitoring

In 2018, the ministry in charge of labour (MROSP) produced the CROQF web portal (currently: portal for advanced labour market monitoring), the central portal of labour market and education indicators.



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Lifelong career guidance centres

Since 2016, Lifelong career guidance centres have been continuously signing cooperation agreements with local-level partners so as to identify the needs of specific groups and offer tailored career guidance services.



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2020 Implementation

Lifelong career guidance strategy 2016-2020

The strategy was adopted in 2015. It was developed by the Lifelong Career Guidance Forum (LLCG forum), a national body for stakeholder cooperation, with the aim to establish a systemic approach to lifelong career guidance and career development and its integration in education and training.



CROATIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). Strategic framework and investment priorities for labour and employment up to 2027: Croatia. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/47803>