

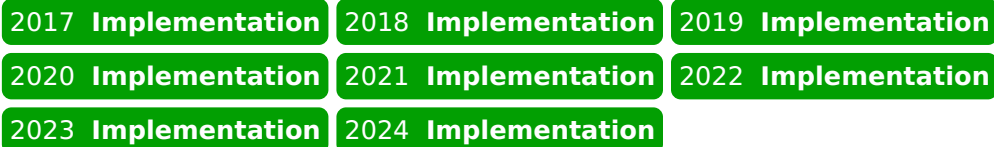
# VET curricula reform

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE**

 CROATIA

## Timeline



**ID number 47793**

## Background

The reform of VET curricula is one of the key priorities of the VET System Development Programme 2016-2020. Specifically, it addresses Priority 1: Improving the relevance of VET in relation to labour market needs, with Goal 1.1 focused on aligning VET with labour market demands. Measure 1.2 involves the development and adoption of sector-specific curricula and/or curricula for attaining VET qualifications.

## Objectives

The VET curricula reform aimed to enhance the attractiveness, innovation, and relevance of VET by restructuring and developing new, outcome-based, modular curricula. The specific objectives were to:

- (a) Develop innovative and flexible sector and vocational curricula based on occupational and qualification standards, aligned with labour market needs;
- (b) Strengthen teacher competences for the implementation of the new VET curricula.

## Description

The most comprehensive update of VET curricula in over two decades in Croatia began in 2018 with the adoption of the National Curriculum for VET and continued within the framework of the project Modernisation of the VET System, supported by EUR 17.7 million from the European Social Fund (ESF) and implemented by the Agency for VET and Adult Education from 2017 to 2023. The central features of the VET reform in Croatia include a modular structure of VET curricula and a strong focus on skills development. After 30 years, the new curricula in VET have replaced outdated teaching and learning programmes, introducing new qualifications, and merging existing ones to achieve more comprehensive qualification profiles. The reform introduced several key innovations to curricula development in Croatia. First, it shifted from subject-based towards modular curricula based on occupational and qualification standards, aligning VET qualifications to labour market needs. New curricula share some common modules at the (sub)sector level in the first year of education, allowing for specialisation in the subsequent years. The modular structure of the curricula promotes problem-based teaching and learning, integrating

theory and practice, while the introduction of CSVET points in VET is set to enhance learner accountability and overall progress. In modular curricula, CSVET points (Croatian Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) are linked to learning assessment: based on the assessment criteria, learners are awarded CSVET points that correspond to the demonstrated level of learning outcomes. Secondly, it introduced VET provider curriculum to encourage VET provider autonomy, innovation and flexibility, allowing considerable customisation through optional modules, considering the local context and individual learner needs. Thirdly, sector curricula allowed for broadening qualifications and prolonged period for choosing VET specialisation, which facilitated permeability and expanded labour market perspectives for learners. The focus was on strengthening work-based learning in various forms, in accordance with the National Curriculum for VET.

Effective stakeholder coordination was key to the success of the curricula reform, which fostered a bottom-up approach, mobilising a wide network of stakeholders. Moreover, the bottom-up approach of the curricula reform ensured relevance based on stakeholder input and generated support for the reform from the target groups. In total, 195 working groups with 805 participants contributed to the development of occupational and qualification standards and curricula. Working groups members represented VET teachers, school directors and labour stakeholders. The main target groups were VET teachers and VET school directors. In the reform process, VET schools received close support for implementing the new approach to teaching and learning, through training, teaching resources and the promotion of flexibility and school autonomy. Targeted promotion also fostered strong public support for the reform. Promotional campaigns accompanied the process to raise support for the reform, primarily among prospective learners and parents, as well as among employers, who were invited to contribute to the development of occupational standards.

The second stage of the VET curricula reform focuses on supporting VET providers in introducing new curricula through teacher training, mobile team visits to VET schools, and conferences. Additionally, standards and curricula will be revised based on public consultation outcomes and in accordance with the Croatian Qualifications Framework Act, which mandates a five-year revision cycle to ensure the relevance of qualifications. This stage of the reform began in 2024 and will continue until 2029. A total of EUR 17 million from the ESF+ has been allocated to the project Further Implementation of the VET Curricula Reform, led by the Agency for VET and Adult Education.

### **2017 Implementation**

The Agency for VET and Adult Education launched the project Modernisation of the VET System, funded by EUR 17.7 million from the European Social Fund (ESF), which marked the start of activities related to the VET curricula reform.

### **2018 Implementation**

In 2018, the National Curriculum for VET was adopted, which provided the main framework for curriculum development in VET and restructured VET qualifications by introducing modular components. The National Curriculum for VET specified the proportions of general education, vocational education, and WBL for VET qualifications at EQF levels 2-5. For the first time, it introduced VET qualifications above NQF/EQF level 4, offering advanced specialisation at EQF level 5. The curriculum also increased the shares of WBL and elective modules, promoting practical skills development and enhancing VET providers' autonomy.

The Strategic expert group for VET reform was established in 2018 to develop the methodology for creating sector and vocational curricula, reach stakeholder agreement and build commitment to the key directions of the reform. The group consisted of key policymakers and stakeholders in VET, involving representatives from education and labour sectors. Members included the ministries responsible for education and labour, university representatives, the Agency for VET and Adult Education, the Education and Teacher Training Agency, the Croatian Chamber of Economy, the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, the Croatian Employers' Association, the Croatian Academic and Research Network, and the Independent Union

of Employees in Secondary Schools of Croatia.

### **2019 Implementation**

In 2019, the ministry responsible for labour published the Methodology for developing occupational standards and units of competences, marking the beginning of the process of developing, evaluating, and adopting occupational standards in line with the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) Act, which governs the procedure for registering standards in the CROQF register. The ministry also provided skills intelligence for the development of occupational standards (see related policy development: CROQF portal), conducted evaluation, and entered the standards into the CROQF register.

Additionally, 19 expert groups at the sub-sector level, along with an expert group for learners with disabilities, were established to support the reform process. These groups involved 120 teachers and VET provider directors who identified priority occupations, evaluated qualification standards, and guided the overall process of developing occupational standards, qualification standards, and curricula in VET.

The work on developing the methodology for sector, vocational, and VET provider curricula also started in order to provide guidelines and instructions for curriculum development in VET.

### **2020 Implementation**

By 2020, 66 working groups were established to contribute to the development of occupational standards, involving 265 VET teachers, employers, and workers. The development process began by sampling and engaging employers in occupational standards surveys to identify the key activities and competences required for specific occupations from the employers' perspective. Thanks to an intensive promotional campaign, over 660 employers and 740 employees from 900 business entities contributed to 1,400 surveys. The e-qualification database was upgraded and used to support expert work on the development of occupational and qualification standards. The process of registering occupational standards in the CROQF register began in 2020.

### **2021 Implementation**

Based on the occupational standards, the development of 142 qualification standards began in 2021. The Methodology for developing sector curriculum, vocational curriculum, and VET provider curriculum was drafted and has been continuously revised throughout the reform process. In September 2021, 165 VET provider directors were updated on the progress of the reform during the annual conference for VET provider directors.

### **2022 Implementation**

By 2022, ASOO had finalized 108 proposals for occupational standards, while the ministry responsible for labour coordinated the development of an additional 100 occupational standards. Work also began on the development of 14 sector curricula, along with 132 new vocational curricula at NQF/EQF levels 2-5, and 31 general education curricula and modules for VET. Additionally, the development of teacher manuals for 13 VET sectors commenced in 2022, providing guidance for implementing the new vocational curricula for VET teachers and schools. The progress of the reform and new developments were disseminated to target groups during two events: a conference for VET teachers and VET provider directors in April 2022, attended by over 400 teachers and 160 VET provider directors, and a conference for VET provider directors in September 2022, which attracted over 200 participants.

### **2023 Implementation**

The initial phase of the VET curriculum reform was completed in 2023. The process of

entering occupational and qualification standards into the CROQF register was finalised, and sector, vocational, and general education curricula and modules were completed. Accordingly, the Methodology for developing sector curricula, vocational curricula and VET provider curricula was revised and published. An e-curriculum database was developed, linking new vocational curricula to the occupational and qualification standards from the CROQF register and creating an interface for VET providers to develop individual curricula based on the guidelines from the methodology. Teaching and learning resources were also developed to facilitate the implementation of the new curricula for VET providers, including 13 teacher manuals and 2 525 teaching and learning materials. Finally, intensive training commenced to prepare VET teachers and directors for the upcoming reform rollout. In 2023, ASOO organised 50 workshops and 41 regional conferences across the country, presenting the final curricula, VET provider curriculum, and the new modular concept. Furthermore, the final results of the reform and plans for its rollout were shared with target groups at two events in 2023: a conference for VET provider directors in September, attended by nearly 300 participants, and the VET Teacher Days and conference in March, attended by 400 VET teachers and 180 VET provider directors.

## 2024 Implementation

148 new curricula in VET underwent public consultation in May and June 2024, and in August 2024, the ministry responsible for education published reports responding to the comments received during the consultation. This marked the first step towards introducing the new curricula in VET schools planned for the 2025/2026 academic year. Based on the outcomes of the public consultation, all curricula underwent revision in 2024. During the public consultation stage, stakeholders generally supported the reform, citing its relevance to contemporary labour market needs, the integration of theoretical and practical teaching and learning, enhanced coherence between learning outcomes taught in different modules, and opportunities for choosing vocational specialisations after the first or second year of study, facilitating permeability. However, there were also concerns regarding the effects of reducing and integrating general education content into vocational modules. General education content was harmonised across all qualifications, proportionally to the shares prescribed by the National Curriculum for VET, adopted in 2018. This involved integrating Biology, Chemistry and Physics into vocational modules, while History, Political Science and Economics, and Geography remained individual subjects. The instruction of general education remained strongly represented in four-year IVET programmes to prepare learners for taking the State Matura exam as many learners from this VET track traditionally continue onto higher education.

In 2023/2024, modular curricula were piloted in the 1st year of 10 programmes in 9 VET schools across the country. In 2024/2025, the piloting expanded to 16 programmes in 13 VET schools. The 2023/24 pilot was evaluated in June 2024, involving surveys and focus groups with 98 teachers, 115 learners, and 5 employers. Overall, teacher satisfaction with the pilot was rated 4.6 (on a scale of 1-5), while learner satisfaction was rated at 4.4. In the area of planning teaching and learning, all teachers were satisfied with the comprehensibility of the curriculum content, but they were least satisfied with the mechanisms for planning activities for gifted learners. Learners expressed the highest satisfaction with their teachers' engagement and the planning of teaching and learning. In terms of teaching and support for learning, all teachers were very satisfied with the opportunities for independence and openness in selecting content, methods, and activities, while most learners enjoyed the work-based learning (WBL) activities. Regarding assessment, teachers were most satisfied with the measurability of learning outcomes, and learners felt fully informed about assessment methods and criteria. Teachers were least satisfied with their preparedness to teach according to the new curricula, the quality of teacher training, and system support. Learners found WBL facilities, equipment, and safety to be adequate. Teachers reported high satisfaction with communication and collaboration with learners in implementing the new curricula. The evaluation highlighted the need for ongoing system-level teacher support (training and resources) over the next five years. Conference for 290 VET provider directors and teacher training for over 350 participants had taken place. Mobile support teams conducted over 500 visits to all VET providers in Croatia to prepare teachers for introducing the new curricula.

---

## Bodies responsible

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

## Target group

### Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

### Education professionals

Teachers  
Trainers  
School leaders

### Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

## Thematic categories

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Developing and updating learning resources and materials

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

### Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

## 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

### Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

## Further reading

## 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:

 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

### 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.

 CROATIA

### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

### Subsystem

IVET

---

2018 **Approved/Agreed**

## National curriculum for VET

The National curriculum for VET (*Nacionalni kurikulum za strukovno obrazovanje*) was adopted in July 2018, as the common framework for the development of VET curricula (at CROQF/EQF levels 2-5) in Croatia.

 CROATIA

### Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

### 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

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). VET curricula reform: 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/47793>