

National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 CROATIA

Timeline

2023 Approved/Agreed

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 47757

Background

The National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 represents the main strategic framework for education. It is aligned with the National Development Strategy for Croatia until 2030 and serves as the basis for the National Implementation Plan for achieving the goals of the Osnabrück Declaration and the 2020 Council Recommendation on VET, as well as the Programme Efficient Human Resources 2021-2027, which defines the financing priorities for ESF+.

The National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 identified the following specific challenges for VET, which contribute to labour market imbalances and skills mismatches:

- (a) low enrolment and limited attractiveness of three-year IVET programs (NQF 4.1/EQF 4, especially JMO programmes/apprenticeships), coupled with surplus enrolment in certain four-year IVET tracks (NQF 4.2/EQF 4);
- (b) insufficient opportunities for practical training in companies, low involvement of companies, and inadequate support for in-company trainers;
- (c) underdeveloped mechanisms for skills anticipation and graduate tracking;
- (d) VET provider network, programme offer at the regional level, flexibility in VET provision, and enrolment planning that do not respond to labour market needs;
- (e) limited relevance of VET programmes for the labour market demands;
- (f) limited participation of VET teachers and trainers in CPD, inadequate support and evaluation mechanisms for teachers
- (g) incongruity of quality assurance mechanisms.

In the area of adult education, the National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 identified the following challenges affecting lifelong learning and contributing to workforce skills obsolescence:

- (a) low participation in lifelong learning (particularly among low-skilled individuals, the elderly, rural populations, and the long-term unemployed);
- (b) limited employer involvement in anticipating skill needs, developing programmes, and assessing outcomes; uneven quality and availability of adult learning programmes;
- (c) introducing new mechanisms for quality assurance;
- (d) developing mechanisms for the validation of prior learning;
- (e) insufficient awareness of available lifelong learning opportunities;
- (f) low participation of adult education teachers in CPD, with limited availability of training opportunities and materials.

The National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 builds on several system-level initiatives undertaken in line with the previous strategic framework, the VET System Development Programme 2016-2020. These include:

- (a) VET reform aligning curricula with labour market needs, based on the development of occupational and qualification standards;
- (b) an outcome-based approach and modular structure of curricula;
- (c) the establishment of regional centres of competence;
- (d) a reformed model of CPD for VET teachers;
- (e) the adoption of a training programme for in-company trainers to develop basic teaching skills;
- (f) incentives for apprentices and companies providing apprenticeships;
- (g) promotion of VET attractiveness through WorldSkills Croatia competitions for IVET learners.

In adult education, Croatia also made significant progress by

- (a) aligning the Law on Adult Education with the Croatian Qualifications Framework in 2021 (including a methodology for developing adult education programmes, published in 2022)
- (b) introducing micro-credentials as of 2022
- (c) establishing a comprehensive quality assurance system (in the period 2019-2023)
- (d) designing a system for validating prior learning, finalised in 2024

Objectives

The National Education System Development Plan defines the strategic priorities and measures for education at all levels for the period up to 2027, including specific measures for IVET and adult education, based on the analysis of development needs and challenges for each priority.

Description

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:

- 3.1. Continuing the VET curricula reform and introducing new modular, outcome-oriented curricula to VET providers.
- 3.2. Supporting VET providers in implementing new curricula, programme profiling, and aligning educational offer with the needs of learners and the economy, specifically by strengthening the autonomy and flexibility of VET providers, improving access for learners with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, and investing in infrastructure.
- 3.3. Continuing support for regional centres of competence in VET by strengthening teacher competences, enhancing networking with partner institutions and companies, promoting excellence in education provision, and international cooperation.
- 3.4. Establishing a system of financial incentives for learners to encourage enrolment in programmes for in-demand qualifications, especially in tourism.
- 3.5. Strengthening work-based learning (WBL), particularly in companies, by expanding the network of companies offering WBL in VET, providing incentives for learners and companies, supporting in-company mentors with teaching methodology and resources, and enhancing the quality of WBL in companies.
- 3.6. Providing training for VET teachers and trainers in line with the reformed CPD model for VET teachers and designing a model for introducing hybrid teachers in VET.

3.7. Promoting the attractiveness of VET, particularly through the WorldSkills Croatia state competitions.

3.8. Supporting the internationalisation of VET through Erasmus+ mobility for learners and teachers, transnational cooperation of VET schools, and the participation of Croatian competitors in WorldSkills and EuroSkills competitions.

3.9. Establishing a comprehensive quality assurance system in VET, including quality indicators, enhancing self-assessment of VET providers, linking self-assessment to external evaluation, and incorporating graduate tracking and skills anticipation mechanisms.

Measures related to adult education (Area 4 of the Plan) include:

4.1. Developing adult learning programmes and validation programmes to introduce the validation of prior learning.

4.2. Supporting the implementation of new quality mechanisms in adult education.

4.3. Supporting the CPD of adult education (andrologic) teachers.

4.4. Promoting the use of skills assessment, self-assessment tools, and guidance mechanisms.

4.5. Promoting lifelong learning, including through Master craftsmen schools.

4.6. Providing incentives for learners in basic skills programmes (digital, numerical, and literacy skills).

4.7. Supporting the internationalisation of adult education, specifically through Erasmus+ mobility for learners and teachers, as well as transnational cooperation of VET schools.

2023 Approved/Agreed

The National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 was adopted in 2023.

2024 Implementation

Progress in implementing the measures of the National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 is described in the following related policy developments:

- (a) VET curricula reform (measure 3.1., measure 3.2.).
- (b) Regional centres of competences (measure 3.3.).
- (c) Incentives for SMEs and learners to participate in apprenticeship (measure 3.5).
- (d) Modernising the VET teacher CPD system (measure 3.6.).
- (e) Reformed model of skills competitions (measure 3.7.).
- (f) Reformed model of skills competitions (measure 3.8.).
- (g) Improving VET school self-assessment (measure 3.9.).
- (h) VET graduate tracking (measure 3.9.).
- (i) Validation arrangements (measure 4.1.).
- (j) The Law on Adult Education (measure 4.1.).
- (k) Development of a quality assurance system in adult education (measure 4.2.).
- (l) Promotion of lifelong learning (measure 4.3.).

2025 Implementation

Progress in implementing the measures of the National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 is described in the following related policy developments:

- (a) VET curricula reform (measure 3.1., measure 3.2.).
- (b) Regional centres of competences (measure 3.3.).

- (c) Incentives for SMEs and learners to participate in apprenticeship (measure 3.5).
- (d) Modernising the VET teacher CPD system (measure 3.6.).
- (e) Reformed model of skills competitions (measure 3.7.).
- (f) Reformed model of skills competitions (measure 3.8.).
- (g) Internationalisation of VET (measure 3.8).
- (h) Improving VET school self-assessment (measure 3.9.).
- (i) VET graduate tracking (measure 3.9.).
- (j) Validation arrangements (measure 4.1.).
- (k) The Law on Adult Education (measure 4.1.).
- (l) Development of a quality assurance system in adult education (measure 4.2.).
- (m) Promotion of lifelong learning (measure 4.3.).

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Science, Education and Youth (MZOM)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Learners with disabilities

Adult learners

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

Adult educators

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET infrastructure

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Acquiring key competences

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

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

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

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European and international dimensions of VET

Mobility of learners and staff

EU and international skills competitions

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 underpinned by a culture of quality assurance

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

European Education and Training Area and international VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Government of the Republic of Croatia \(2023\). Decision on the National Education System Development Plan up to 2027 and Action Plan for its implementation up to 2024. Official Gazette No. 33/2023.](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Internationalisation of VET

Internationalisation of VET involves supporting international mobility for educational staff and learners, as well as transnational cooperation among VET providers, particularly through the Erasmus+ programme.

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

VET curricula reform

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

 CROATIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Development of a quality assurance system in adult education

The project Development of a quality assurance system in adult education is financed under ESF Operational programme Effective human resources 2014-20. The implementation period of the project is 40 months beginning from January 2019.

 CROATIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

2025 Implementation**Improving quality assurance mechanisms in IVET**

The Agency for VET and Adult Education (ASOO) conducted continuous monitoring of the self-assessment of VET schools and analysing existing self-assessment mechanisms.

**Type of development**

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation**Reformed model of skills competitions**

In January 2017, an initiative on Promoting student competences and VET through skills competitions and fairs was launched to modernise VET student skills competitions in Croatia and encourage participation in national and international skills competitions.

**Type of development**

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation**Promotion of lifelong learning**

The Agency for VET and Adult Education (ASOO) conducted an ESF-funded project Promotion of lifelong learning from 2016 until 2019.

**Type of development**

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Validation arrangements

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

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Modernising the VET teacher CPD system

The project Modernisation of the continuing professional development (CPD) system for VET teachers started in June 2017 and lasted until 2021.

 CROATIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Incentives for SMEs and learners to participate in apprenticeship

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).

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Regional centres of competences

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:

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027: Croatia. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/47757>