

# European Inventory on NQF 2012

## CROATIA

### Introduction

Croatia has developed a comprehensive, learning outcomes based NQF, the Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF). It will link and coordinate different education and training subsystems; it will also be the basis for validating non-formal and informal learning and incorporate credit systems.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport has prepared a draft act on the CROQF, which was subject to public consultation in autumn 2012 ( <sup>1</sup>). Adoption by Parliament is expected by late 2012.

### Main policy objectives

Apart from offering transparency, the CROQF is seen as an important tool for reforming national education and training. It builds on the reforms under way since 2005, e.g. developing new educational standards and national curricula for general education, as well as introducing the State matura. In 2006, and as part of this process, a total of 13 sector councils were established. These councils were entrusted with defining the necessary vocational qualifications, analysing existing and necessary competences within sectors and subsectors, and developing the contents for parts of the vocational qualification standard, providing the basis for new VET curricula. The draft act on the CROQF envisages expansion to 26 sector councils, taking into consideration different subsystems of education and training (general, vocational and higher education).

Besides helping the link to the EQF (and to the QF-EHEA), thus allowing for international comparability of Croatian qualifications, the framework is seen as reflecting national needs and priorities and as an instrument making it possible to develop new education and training solutions specific to the Croatian context:

- better link education and training with labour market needs;
- improve social inclusion and equity;
- improve pathways between subsystems and between sectors;
- make qualifications transparent and more consistent;
- support lifelong learning and offer a good basis for validating non-formal and informal learning.

Specific CROQF aims include setting up a system for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning, and creating a well-founded quality assurance system (European Commission et al., 2010, Croatia, p. 3) ( <sup>2</sup>).

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(<sup>1</sup>) For more information consult the website of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=3401> [accessed 5.12.2012].

## Stakeholder involvement and framework implementation

Although the idea had been considered earlier, development of the CROQF officially commenced in 2006, when the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports formed the first Committee for the purpose. The National Committee for the Development of the CROQF was set up in 2007 with the aim of ensuring close cooperation and coordination between public authorities, employers, learning providers and other social partners. This committee was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and comprised 27 members representing different ministries, social partners, schools, universities and agencies. In 2010 it was succeeded by a 20-member high level committee, the National Committee for the Implementation of the CROQF. The draft act on the CROQF was finalised by the new ministry's Committee for the CROQF, set up in April this year and consisting of 28 members representing a wide range of different relevant stakeholders.

Setting up an appropriate institutional structure for decision-making and implementation was challenging <sup>(3)</sup>. According to the draft act, the National Council for Human Resource Development and the sectoral councils will take on particular responsibilities for putting the framework in place. The National Council will comprise representatives of national ministries, regional structures, social partners, sectoral councils and national agencies involved in development and award qualifications in different subsystems of education and training. This body oversees policies in education, training, employment and human resource development and monitors and evaluates the impact of the CROQF. The proposed law also defines the responsibilities of various ministries (for education, labour and regional development) involved in coordinating and developing the CROQF, setting up the national register and quality assurance procedures.

## Level descriptors and learning outcomes

The shift to learning outcomes is seen as an essential part of the CROQF development and is supported by all stakeholders. The CROQF is a qualifications and credit framework. It has eight reference levels, in line with the EQF, but with two additional sublevels at levels 4 and 8 to cater for existing qualifications.

Each qualification in the CROQF will be defined in terms of profile (field of work or study), reference level (refers to complexity of acquired competences) and the volume (measured as credit points). Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge (theoretical and factual) and skills (cognitive and practical and social skills are included). A third column

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<sup>(2)</sup> *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2010: country report: Croatia*, p. 3. <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77465.pdf> [accessed 5.12.2012].

<sup>(3)</sup> NCP survey, September 2012.

is defined as responsibility and autonomy. It is emphasised that key competences should be included in each qualification (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2009, p. 47) <sup>(4)</sup>.

The CROQF introduces two classes of qualifications: full and partial. For example, a qualification with the minimum 180 ECVET and/or HROO points <sup>(5)</sup> (from which a minimum 120 ECVET and/or HROO points are acquired on the fourth reference level or higher) will be referenced to level 4.1. For a qualification at level 4.2, a minimum 240 ECVET and/or HROO points are required (of them a minimum 150 ECVET and/or HROO points on the fourth reference level or higher).

The VET reform agenda includes a move towards an outcomes-based approach in standards and curricula; pilot occupational standards and outcomes-based curricula are being developed. A new approach to evaluating school outputs introduces a system of common final exams (State matura) for grammar schools and other four-year secondary schools in Croatian language, mathematics, the first foreign language, and the mother tongue for ethnic minority pupils.

Higher education has undergone extensive change during the last decade, including the use of learning outcomes. The decision (in 2001) to take part in the Bologna process has made it necessary for Croatia to adjust significantly its higher education system. The introduction of undergraduate (first cycle) and integrated (second cycle) programmes started in 2005. The change of curricula seeks development of competences needed on the labour market, but the functional link between higher education institutions and the labour market, and the social community in particular, has not yet been well established.

One of the explicit aims of CROQF is to set up a system for validating non-formal and informal learning. However, in practice this is a new concept and validation of learning outcomes acquired outside formal education and training is still rare (European Commission et al., Croatia, 2010, p. 3) <sup>(6)</sup>.

The CROQF is supported by a new register bringing together subregisters of occupational standards, qualifications standards, units of learning outcomes and including both programmes and awarding bodies.

## Referencing to the EQF

Croatia referenced its national qualifications levels to the EQF and self-certified to QF-EHEA in March 2012, preparing one comprehensive report.

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<sup>(4)</sup> *Hrvatski kvalifikacijski okvir, Uvod u kvalifikacije [Croatian qualifications framework, introduction into qualifications]*. [http://personal.unizd.hr/~mdzela/hko/HKO\\_Prirucnik.pdf](http://personal.unizd.hr/~mdzela/hko/HKO_Prirucnik.pdf) [accessed 26.11.2012].

<sup>(5)</sup> Croatian credit system for general education.

<sup>(6)</sup> *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2010: country report: Croatia*. <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77465.pdf> [accessed 26.11.2012].

Table **Level correspondence established between the Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF) and the EQF**

<b>CROQF</b>	1	2	3	4.1	4.2	5	6	7	8.1	8.2.
<b>EQF</b>	1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	

## Important lessons and the way forward

The relatively rapid development of the CROQF illustrates the importance of stimulating active and broad participation throughout the entire process. If complemented by targeted support to, and training of, stakeholders, this can support genuine partnerships. Progressive, step-by-step development is emphasised. It has, so far, been a very inclusive process with more than 200 meetings, workshops and conferences, and consultations with different groups of stakeholders, including more than 10 000 individuals.

However, much needs to be done in developing or redefining qualifications so they can be aligned to the CROQF levels.

### Main sources of information

The EQF national coordination point for Croatia is the Directorate for International Cooperation and European Integration at the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2428> [accessed 6.12.2012].