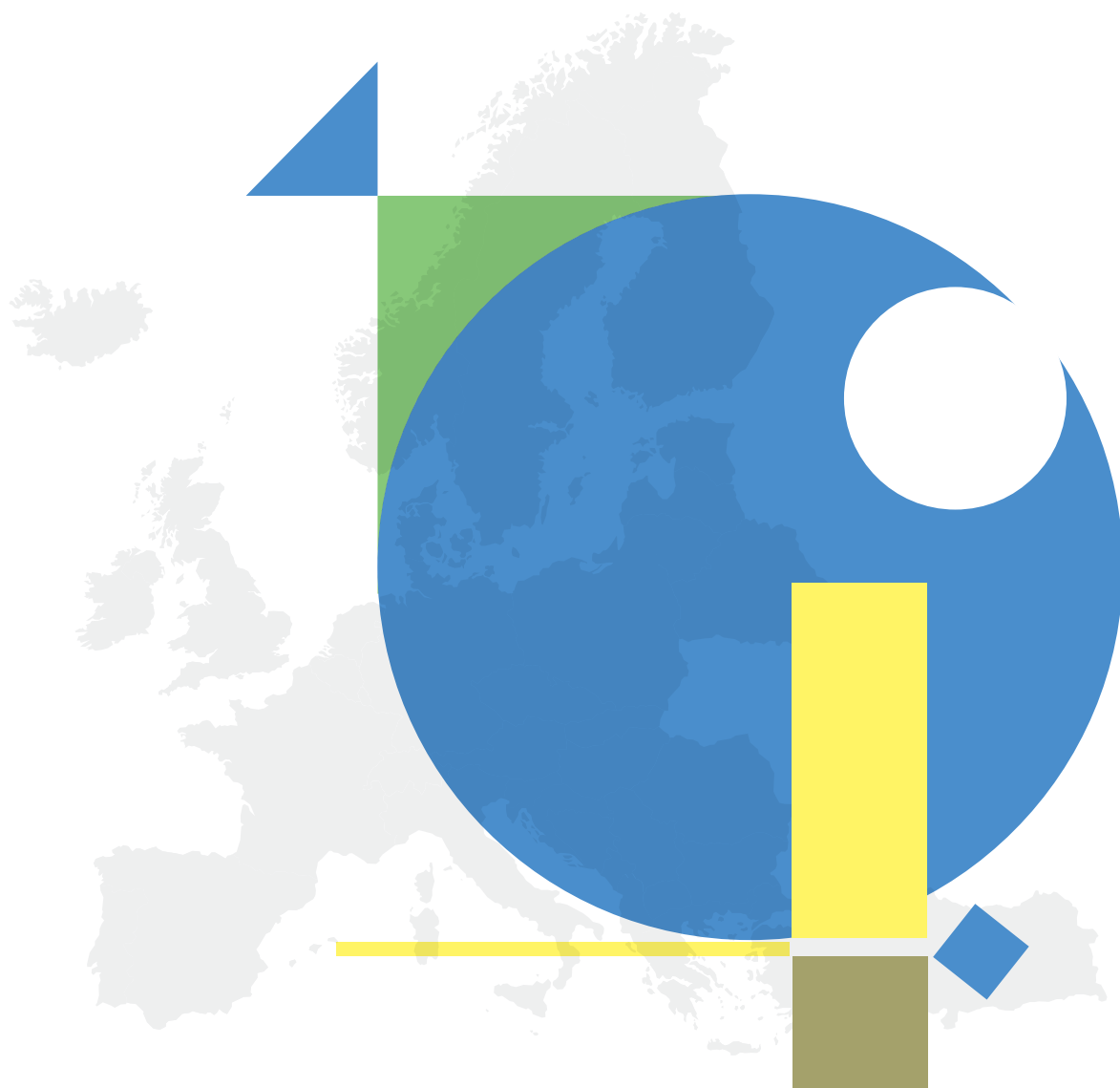




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EUROPEAN
INVENTORY
OF NQFs 2020
CROATIA

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CROATIA

European inventory of NQFs 2020

Introduction and context

Croatia has the lowest rate of early school leaving in the EU (3.0% in 2019, compared with the EU average of 10.2%) ⁽¹⁾. The quality and relevance of education and training, however, is a challenge (European Commission, 2019). A major reform is being implemented in general and vocational education and training (VET). Curricular reform, including related teacher training, was piloted in 2018/19 at primary and secondary levels of general education and also in general subjects in VET. It is being mainstreamed as of 2019/20. New legislation has set the ground for reforms in VET and a modernisation project was initiated in 2019, focusing on redesigning VET curricula in line with sectoral needs, use of learning outcomes, work-based learning and updated teaching materials (Cedefop and Refernet, 2019). Participation in VET at upper secondary level is among the highest in the EU, while the share of learners in three-year VET programmes and in apprenticeships has decreased significantly due to demographic changes (Cedefop, 2020). The employment rate of recent VET graduates increased sharply from 45.7% in 2015 to 73.9% in 2019 ⁽²⁾; many VET students go on to higher education. Regional centres of competence aim to promote excellence in VET and a pilot programme for dual VET, launched in 2018 to reduce skills mismatch, is being expanded. The country faces challenges in terms of basic skill levels, especially in maths and science, participation in early childhood education and care (81.0% in 2018) and in adult lifelong learning (3.5% in 2019) ⁽³⁾. The revision of the Adult Education Act has been discussed, but not yet adopted. Tertiary education attainment in higher education is relatively low (33.1% in 2019 compared to the EU average of 40.3%) ⁽⁴⁾ and so is student mobility (European Commission, 2019). Development of teachers and trainers, and mobility and ‘brain circulation’ were among the priorities of the Croatian presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2020 (Cedefop, 2020).

The Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF) is seen as an important tool for tackling current challenges and aligning education and training with the needs

⁽¹⁾ Data from European Commission, 2020.

⁽²⁾ Idem.

⁽³⁾ Idem.

⁽⁴⁾ Idem.

of the labour market, society and further education. Its development started in 2006, aiming to modernise secondary VET, higher education and adult education, and to address existing and foreseen skill shortages. The CROQF Act, adopted by the Croatian Parliament in 2013 and subsequently amended in 2016, 2018 and 2020, set out the legislative and institutional framework for its development and implementation. It is a comprehensive framework with eight levels and sublevels at levels 4, 7 and 8 ⁽⁵⁾, described in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and level of autonomy and responsibility. It also incorporates credit systems. It includes qualifications from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training (general education, VET and higher education) and forms the basis for developing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The framework was taken into account while creating the comprehensive curriculum reform for primary and secondary education and in the amended Act on VET, in force since March 2018 ⁽⁶⁾. It is also referred to in the Crafts Act ⁽⁷⁾, the Labour Market Law ⁽⁸⁾ and in ordinances on Teachers' Assistants and on the Advancement of Teachers. It is also linked to planned developments in higher and adult education (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018). A CROQF register has been put in place, consisting of three sub-registers: one for occupational standards; one for qualification standards; and one for units of learning outcomes.

The CROQF was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and self-certified against the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in 2012.

Policy objectives

While the CROQF development process started in response to the two European qualifications frameworks (EQF and QF-EHEA), its aims are closely linked to the Croatian context. Besides allowing for comparability of Croatian qualifications at European level and internationally, the framework is an instrument for developing new education and training solutions reflecting national needs and priorities.

The CROQF development aims to: enable better communication and coordination between stakeholders in the qualifications system; provide a

⁽⁵⁾ Initially, the CROQF had sublevels at levels 4 (4.1 and 4.2) and 8 (8.1 and 8.2). Sublevels at level 7 (7.1 and 7.2) were introduced in 2018 with the amended CROQF Act.

⁽⁶⁾ The text of the amended Act on VET is available at:
<https://www.zakon.hr/z/383/Zakon-o-strukovnom-obrazovanju> (in Croatian).

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.zakon.hr/z/297/Zakon-o-obrtu>

⁽⁸⁾ <https://www.zakon.hr/z/1751/Zakon-o-tr%C5%BEi%C5%A1tu-rada>

classification of the existing system as a basis for transparency of qualifications, including description of old qualifications and facilitation of recognition of foreign qualifications; and act as a tool for reforming national education and training, promoting the use of learning outcomes, the development of quality assurance systems and of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Agency for Science and Higher Education, 2014).

Objectives for the development of the CROQF and principles guiding its implementation include (Act on Amendments of the CROQF Act (OG 64/2018)):

- (a) ensuring the conditions for quality education and learning in line with personal, social and economic needs and social inclusion; for access to lifelong learning; for horizontal and vertical mobility; and for acquisition and recognition of qualifications;
- (b) developing personal and social responsibility;
- (c) strengthening the role of key competences for lifelong learning;
- (d) use of learning outcomes in the development and classification of qualifications into different types;
- (e) understanding inter-relationships between qualifications;
- (f) supporting partnerships among stakeholders in the qualifications system;
- (g) supporting employability, individual and economic competitiveness and social development;
- (h) establishing a coordinated quality assurance system for existing and new qualifications.

In the framework of the *Strategy for education, science and technology* (Croatian Parliament, 2014), the CROQF was mentioned as a basis for establishing a quality assurance system at all levels of education and training by driving the development of necessary elements and instruments. It is also seen as a central instrument for improving and expanding work-based learning. The comprehensive curriculum reform for primary and secondary education aims to modernise education to respond better to learners' age and interests, preparing them for work, further education and contemporary life challenges. It takes the CROQF into account, seeking to define learning outcomes and develop competences for lifelong learning (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018). The role of the CROQF in improving education quality is also emphasised in the *Strategy for lifelong career guidance and career development* ⁽⁹⁾, which establishes links between career guidance development, recognition of prior

⁽⁹⁾ http://www.hzz.hr/UserDocImages/Strategija_CPU_i_razvoja_karijere_u_RH_2016-2020_EN.pdf

learning and the CROQF and in the 2016-20 VET Development Programme ⁽¹⁰⁾ (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

The CROQF is a qualifications and credit framework. Each qualification in the framework is defined in terms of profile (field of work or study), reference level (complexity of acquired competences) and volume/workload (credit points) ⁽¹¹⁾. The CROQF covers full and partial qualifications ⁽¹²⁾ from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training (general education, VET and higher education), and is a basis for developing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. It has eight reference levels, in line with the EQF, but with additional sublevels at levels 4, 7 and 8. Partial qualifications can be awarded at levels 2 to 7. Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge (theoretical and factual), skills (cognitive, practical and social skills) and responsibility and autonomy.

Sublevels for levels 4 and 8 were introduced from the beginning, to cater for existing qualifications of different workload and complexity. For example, a qualification with a minimum of 180 ECVET and/or HROO points is referenced to level 4.1. For a qualification at level 4.2, a minimum of 240 ECVET and/or HROO points are required. Sublevels of level 7 were introduced with the amendment of the CROQF Act in 2018. Level 7 is now divided into sublevel 7.1, which covers graduate university studies (professional and academic master diplomas) and integrated undergraduate and graduate university studies, and sublevel 7.2, which includes post-master specialist university studies (*poslijediplomski specijalistički studiji*). While keeping academic and professional qualification types at the same level (7.1), this amendment limits access to doctoral programmes for graduates of professional studies. The conditions for admission and for acquiring a qualification, and workload requirements at each level and sublevel, are outlined in the CROQF

⁽¹⁰⁾ https://www.asoo.hr/UserDocsImages/Program%20SOO_HR.pdf

⁽¹¹⁾ Three credit systems are used to measure the volume of qualifications and of learning outcomes: the Croatian credit system for general education (HROO), the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET), and the European credit transfer and accumulation system for higher education (ECTS).

⁽¹²⁾ A partial qualification does not independently meet the conditions for access to the labour market or further education. It can enable access only in conjunction with one full qualification or one or more other appropriate partial qualifications, which together meet a full qualification standard.

Act. The types of qualifications in the CROQF are additionally regulated by specific regulations.

The CROQF plays a central role in developing and implementing the learning outcomes approach in all subsystems of education and training, building on the reforms so far. Learning outcomes are the main element of any qualification and they are organised in units of learning outcomes. Occupational standards are developed through research-based analysis of labour market needs, particularly the Occupational standard survey, a questionnaire initially completed by expert groups and then confirmed by employers and employees. They are then the basis for developing qualifications standards for qualifications aimed at the labour market. Qualifications standards entered in the CROQF register (10 included so far) are the basis for developing and redesigning education and training programmes. At present, aligning programmes with qualifications standards in the CROQF register is not mandatory but is a mark of programme quality, transparency and relevance, leading to a qualification with an assigned CROQF/EQF level. Competence-based occupational standards and learning-outcomes-based qualifications standards are being developed, mostly through ESF projects.

The learning outcomes approach has been gradually introduced in VET since 2006. The amended Act on Vocational Education and Training ⁽¹³⁾, in force since March 2018, defines occupational and qualifications standards in compliance with the CROQF Act. VET curricula are being developed according to occupational and qualifications standards ⁽¹⁴⁾. Full transition to a new, learning-outcomes-oriented VET system linked to the labour market is foreseen by 2022/23 (Cedefop, 2020).

Higher education has undergone extensive change in the last decade, including strengthening the learning outcomes dimension. Croatia adjusted its higher education system to the Bologna three-cycle system. Change in curricula is intended to develop competences needed on the labour market. The CROQF is thought to be the main instrument for bridging higher education and the labour market (European Commission, 2017). Calls for ESF funding have been launched to fund programme reform in higher education, VET and adult education in line with NQF standards.

⁽¹³⁾ The amended Act on VET is available at: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/383/Zakon-o-strukovnom-obrazovanju> (in Croatian).

⁽¹⁴⁾ A schematic view of the process of qualification and curricula development in VET is available in Cedefop (2020), p. 52.

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

Major stakeholders from education and training and the labour market (government representatives, learning providers, employers, students and other social partners) were involved in all phases of CROQF development. Public debate and discussions with the broader public were held in the initial phase of drafting of the CROQF Act (Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2013). The Act ⁽¹⁵⁾ was subsequently amended in 2016, 2018 and 2020; it sets up the institutional framework for CROQF implementation, defining the involvement, roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders.

The National Council for Development of Human Potential was appointed by the Croatian Parliament in June 2014 as the strategic body for developing and implementing the CROQF. It comprises 25 representatives of national ministries, regional structures, social partners, education providers and national agencies involved in developing and awarding qualifications in different subsystems of education and training ⁽¹⁶⁾. Its first five-year term of office has expired and representatives for the second term are in the process of being appointed. The council oversees policies in education, training, employment and human resource development and monitors and evaluates the CROQF's impact and the work of sectoral councils. The variety of stakeholders actively involved in the national council is both the strength of the current governance arrangement, as it ensures wide consensus on matters regarding the CROQF, and also its weakness, as decision-making may take a long time.

On a technical and policy level, the Ministry of Science and Education coordinates CROQF development and implementation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Pension System. The main tasks of the Ministry of Science and Education include: setting up and maintaining the national CROQF register,

⁽¹⁵⁾ The initial CROQF document (Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2013) is available in English at:

<http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2017-09/The%20CROQF%20Act.pdf>

The consolidated text of the amended CROQF Act is available in Croatian at:

<https://www.zakon.hr/z/566/Zakon-o-Hrvatskom-kvalifikacijskom-okviru>

⁽¹⁶⁾ The National Council for Development of Human Potential consists of representatives of the following institutions: Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Regional Development, regional structures, associations of unions, associations of employers, civil society organisations, the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Trades and Crafts, the sectoral councils, higher education institutions, adult education institutions, the Agency for Education and Teacher Training, the Agency for Vocational Education, the Agency for Science and Higher Education and the Croatian employment service.

establishing and coordinating the sectoral councils, providing support to the National Council for Development of Human Potential, developing procedures related to qualification standards, developing a system of validation of non-formal learning and informing the public about the CROQF. The main tasks of the Ministry of Labour and Pension System include managing the sub-register of occupational standards and developing procedures related to them. Cooperation between the two ministries is ensured through regular coordination meetings.

The Department for the Croatian Qualifications Framework within the Ministry of Science and Education is the EQF national coordination point (NCP). Permanent human and financial resources are available for the running of the NQF. Additional human and financial resources are available from Erasmus+ and ESF projects (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Twenty-five sectoral councils have been established as advisory and professional bodies working on the development of human potential in line with labour market needs in their respective sectors. Each has a president and 10 members (representing the ministry of the respective sector, the Croatian employment service, the agency for quality assurance and sectoral experts), who are appointed by the Minister of Science and Education. Their role includes assessing proposals for occupational standards, qualifications standards and units of learning outcomes.

External quality assurance of education and training programmes is the remit of three different agencies: the teacher training and education agency (for general education), the agency for VET and adult education (for VET and adult learning) and the agency for science and higher education (for higher education).

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways ⁽¹⁷⁾

While there is not yet a formal national consensus in Croatia on how validation is to be implemented, it has been incorporated in several strategic documents ⁽¹⁸⁾. Developments in the past five years have been slowly, but steadily, setting the scene for a national validation framework. The *Strategy for education, science and technology* (Croatian Parliament, 2014) recognised validation as an essential part

⁽¹⁷⁾ This section draws mainly on input from the 2018 update to the *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning* (Pavkov, M., 2019).

⁽¹⁸⁾ The *Strategy for education, science and technology*, the *Strategy for lifelong career guidance and career development 2016-20*; the *Strategic plan 2017-19* of the Ministry of Science and Education; and the *Strategic framework for the promotion of lifelong learning in the Republic of Croatia 2017-20*.

of lifelong learning, helping to remove barriers between the formal education system and other forms of learning, with adults as the main target group; it pointed out the need for consensus among key stakeholders.

One explicit aim of the CROQF is to set up a recognition and validation system at national level, based on units of learning outcomes ⁽¹⁹⁾. The development of qualifications standards, units of learning outcomes and occupational standards, as well as the CROQF itself and the CROQF register, were seen as prerequisites of the validation system. The register is seen as the main quality assurance tool for validation and most education and training efforts have been focused on CROQF-related developments in recent years. Two key methodologies were developed: one for developing occupational standards and one for qualifications standards.

The CROQF Act foresees the creation of an Ordinance on recognition and validation of prior learning at CROQF levels 1 to 5; this will specify the procedure in detail and establish a closer link to the CROQF. Recognition of prior learning for CROQF at levels 6 and above shall be in the competence of higher education institutions. The National Council for Development of Human Potential has developed Recommendations for strategic development of validation of prior learning ⁽²⁰⁾ as a basis for developing the ordinance. This set of 15 recommendations concerns the revision of legal acts in adult ⁽²¹⁾ and higher education, the fundamental principles, operationalisation and financing of the validation system development and suggestions for a model for validation of competences. Draft national guidelines for validation and recognition of prior learning in higher education have been developed within the Erasmus+ project *Social and International Dimension of Education and Recognition of Acquired Learning*.

In practice, validation of learning outcomes acquired outside formal education and training is still rare; in principle, no access to formal qualifications can be currently granted without formal learning. Validation arrangements are in place for

⁽¹⁹⁾ The 2018 amendments to the CROQF Act define recognition and validation of prior learning in a broader sense (compared to the initial stipulation in the 2013 CROQF Act, which referred to validation of non-formal and informal learning).

⁽²⁰⁾ National Council for Human Resources Development (2018). *Recommendations for strategic development of recognition and validation of prior learning*. Available in Croatian at: <http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2018-05/Preporuke%20NVRLJP-a%20za%20strateški%20razvoj%20priznavanja%20i%20vrednovanja%20prethodnog%20učenja.pdf>

⁽²¹⁾ An update to the Adult Education Act is foreseen and should take into account developments related to the CROQF.

adult education on a sectoral level and for crafts occupations. For instance, a master craftsperson exam can validate and recognise non-formally acquired knowledge and competences. The examination can be taken by a person having passed a journeyman exam (secondary level) in the desired occupation and having two years of work experience in it, or some other secondary level diploma and three years of work experience in the occupation. Some providers in higher education have developed internal guidelines for recognising prior learning for specific purposes, such as admission to certain higher education programmes or allocation of ECTS credits in the framework of accredited study programmes.

NQF implementation and impact

The CROQF has reached activation stage; steps are being taken towards the operational stage. In principle, all types of qualifications can be included in the framework, regardless of the way in which they were acquired, provided they comply with quality assurance requirements. The revised CROQF Act (2018) introduced definitions for types of qualifications at all levels, clarified the types of qualification that can be placed at sublevels of level 7, redefined entry requirements for level 8.2 and redefined recognition and validation of prior learning. Governance and implementation structures have been put in place. The ordinance on the CROQF register adopted in 2014 ⁽²²⁾ stipulates the content and management of the register, procedures for requests, assessment and entry of qualifications into the register, the areas of activity of sectoral councils, criteria for selection of new council members and their operational activities, as well as the internal and external quality assurance systems. All 25 sectoral councils foreseen have been established and trained in preparation and evaluation of occupational and qualification standards for inclusion into the register.

The information system of the CROQF register has been created. It consists of three sub-registers: one for occupational standards; one for qualifications standards; and one for units of learning outcomes ⁽²³⁾. Ten qualifications standards and 44 occupational standards have been entered in the register so far (November 2020) and an increase to over 200 is expected within the next year. Over 400 more occupational and qualifications standards are being developed through ESF

⁽²²⁾ The text of the ordinance on the CROQF register (*Pravilnik o Registru Hrvatskog kvalifikacijskog okvira*) is available in English at:
<http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2017-09/Ordinance%20on%20the%20CROQF%20Register.pdf>

⁽²³⁾ The CROQF register is available at: <https://hko.srce.hr/registar/>

projects ⁽²⁴⁾. The competent agency for quality assurance in higher education is finalising the procedure for evaluation of programmes according to CROQF criteria, and the Ministry of Science and Education will put in place a procedure for evaluation of programmes according to CROQF criteria for other levels of education (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

The NQF is starting to have an influence on the design of qualifications and curricula. The learning outcomes approach has been applied in the curricular reform in general education and VET. To be included in the CROQF register, qualifications and programmes need to be in line with CROQF standards and procedures. However, within the current legal framework, alignment to the CROQF is voluntary; creating education programmes in line with the CROQF represents a mark of quality. Defining qualifications in units of learning outcomes is seen as increasing transparency and comparability of qualifications and having a positive impact on quality. Several guiding documents have been developed to support the implementation of the framework ⁽²⁵⁾. New methodology for development of

⁽²⁴⁾ Since 2017, the Agency for Vocational Education and Training has been implementing the five-year project *Modernisation of the system of vocational education and training*, aiming to develop innovative and flexible sectoral and vocational curricula based on labour market needs and to strengthen educators' competences for the introduction and implementation of curricula; 108 occupational standards and 195 qualification standards are being developed. In 2019, 26 projects began within the call *Implementation of the CROQF at the level of higher education* aimed at improving the quality, relevance and efficiency of higher education; the occupational and qualification standards developed will be the basis for educational programmes, quality assurance tools and improvement of the relevance of teaching in higher education. In 2019, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy signed a grant agreement for the project *Implementation of the CROQF and development of tools in connecting education and the labour market*; it aims to connect the labour market and the education system through occupational standards and envisages the development of 200 occupational standards for vocational and adult education. Standards will also be developed through projects of regional competence centres.

⁽²⁵⁾ Methodology for developing occupational standards:

<http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2019-06/Metodologija%20za%20izradu%20standarda%20zanimanja.pdf>

Methodology for developing qualification standards:

<http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2019-08/Smjernice%20za%20razvoj%20standarda%20kvalifikacija.pdf>

Guidelines for developing and updating study programmes in line with CROQF standards: <http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2019-08/Smjernice%20za%20uskla%C4%91ivanje%20studijskih%20programa%20sa%20standardima%20kvalifikacija%20i%20izradu%20novih%20studijskih%20programa%20uskla%C4%91enih%20s%20hrvatskim%20kvalifikacijskim%20okvirom.pdf>

Guidelines for evaluating proposals of occupational standards by Sector Councils:

<http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2020-06/Smjernice%20za%20vrednovanje%20prijedloga%20standarda%20zanimanja.pdf>

occupational standards was adopted and the guidelines for developing qualification standards were revised in 2019 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

In addition to being used by education and training providers, some employers also use NQF levels in job descriptions and vacancies, and guidance and counselling practitioners use levels in their work. ENIC NARIC uses NQF levels to compare and interpret foreign qualifications. The Ministry of Science and Education has promoted the use of levels in legislation pertaining to regulated professions in various fields. Quality assurance agencies, especially the agency for higher education, have been integrating level descriptors and levels into processes for reviewing study programmes, and it is currently developing a specific procedure for programme evaluation, as mentioned above. Job seekers sometimes use NQF and EQF levels to describe their qualifications, especially when using the Europass documents; students and learners often contact the NQF Department to receive information on NQF levels of programmes they have completed, or plan to complete (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

NQF and EQF levels are not yet included on qualification documents from general education and VET. NQF levels are indicated in the CROQF register and there are plans to also include EQF levels. An evaluation of the information system of the CROQF register is planned for 2021; an evaluation of the NQF will be carried out when the referencing report is updated, in 2021 or 2022.

Referencing to the EQF

Croatia referenced its national qualifications framework to the EQF and self-certified to QF-EHEA in March 2012; a joint report was published in 2014 (Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Agency for Science and Higher Education, 2014). An updated referencing report may be presented to the EQF advisory group in 2021 or 2022, covering the first qualification standards included in the CROQF register, the development of the system for validation of prior learning and the integration of the NQF in the education and training system (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

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, complemented by targeted support for, and training of, stakeholders. Progressive,

step-by-step development has been emphasised. Agreement on key concepts among stakeholders was reached and the framework is now firmly grounded in legislation, with links to adopted or planned legal acts regulating the different education and training subsystems, and to strategic documents.

The main benefits derived from NQF implementation so far are thought to be a better response of the education and training sector to labour market needs and more adequate quality assurance mechanisms in the education system. The NQF has created a platform for dialogue and cooperation among key stakeholders. There has been increased cooperation between education and training providers who need to reach agreement on learning outcomes and qualification standards, enabling them to align the outcomes and the quality of their programmes. There are also excellent examples of cooperation between education and training institutions (including higher education institutions) and labour market stakeholders in developing standards and curricula; sectoral councils include representatives of labour market stakeholders (employers and unions) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Ambitious procedures are being implemented for the development and evaluation of occupational and qualification standards and this work will remain a priority. Occupational and qualifications standards aligned to the CROQF are being developed and included in the register. Guidelines on development and use of occupational and qualifications standards for specific education sectors are to be developed, and promotional and educational activities for project teams will be carried out by the Education and Labour ministries. Calls for ESF funding have been launched to fund programme reform in higher education, VET and adult education. The information system of the CROQF register has been developed and will undergo evaluation. Current challenges are related to the introduction of changes in legislation to simplify NQF tools and procedures, in particular procedures concerning the development and evaluation of occupational and qualifications standards and of programmes in line with the standards, which are currently lengthy. Planned legislative changes in higher and adult education need to be taken forward. The Ordinance on recognition and validation of prior learning is to be finalised and adopted. Visibility of the NQF is to be enhanced in the future through the inclusion of NQF/EQF levels on all public qualification documents, once programmes are developed in line with CROQF standards and included in the register.

Main sources of information

- The EQF NCP for Croatia is the section for the Croatian qualifications framework at the Ministry of Science and Education: <https://mzo.gov.hr/en>
- CROQF website: <http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/en>
- The CROQF register is available at: <https://hko.srce.hr/registar/>
- Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Agency for Science and Higher Education (2014). *Referencing and self-certification report*. <https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf>

Croatian national qualifications framework (CROQF)

CROQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8.2	Doctoral diploma (<i>poslijediplomski (sveučilišni) doktorski studiji; obrana doktorske disertacije izvan studija</i>)	8
8.1	Postgraduate research master of science diploma (<i>poslijediplomski znanstveni magistarski studiji</i>)	
7.2	Post-master specialist university studies (<i>poslijediplomski specijalistički studiji</i>)	7
7.1	Master diploma – graduate university studies (<i>sveučilišni diplomski studiji</i>)	
	Integrated undergraduate and graduate university studies Professional master diploma – specialist graduate professional studies (<i>specijalistički diplomski stručni studiji</i>)	
6	Bachelor diploma – undergraduate university studies (<i>sveučilišni preddiplomski studiji</i>)	6
	Professional bachelor diploma – undergraduate professional studies (<i>stručni preddiplomski studiji</i>)	
5	Professional higher education diploma – short cycle (<i>kratki stručni studiji</i>)	5
	VET post-secondary development and training certificate (<i>strukovno specijalističko usavršavanje i osposobljavanje</i>)	
	Master craftsman diploma (<i>programi za majstore uz najmanje dvije godine vrednovanog radnog iskustva</i>)	

CROQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
4.2	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (<i>Gimnazijsko srednjoškolsko obrazovanje</i>)	4
	Upper secondary VET certificate – four years / Upper secondary VET certificate – five years (<i>Četverogodišnje i petogodišnje strukovno srednjoškolsko obrazovanje</i>)	
4.1	Upper secondary VET – three years (<i>Trogodišnje strukovno obrazovanje</i>)	3
3	Upper secondary VET certificate – two years / Upper secondary VET certificate – one year (<i>Jednogodišnje i dvogodišnje srednjoškolsko strukovno obrazovanje</i>)	
2	Vocational training certificate (<i>Strukovno osposobljavanje</i>)	2
1	Primary education certificate – eight years (<i>Osnovno obrazovanje</i>) (*)	1

(*) The first eight years of schooling are called primary education. This refers to both ISCED 1 and 2 (primary and lower secondary education).

Source: Adapted from the amended Croatian Qualifications Framework Act, article 7.

Acronyms

CROQF	Croatian national qualifications framework
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system for higher education
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European social fund
HROO	Croatian credit system for general education
IPA	instrument for pre-accession assistance
NCP	national coordination point
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework in the European higher education area
VET	vocational education and training

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