

The Concept of the Croatian Qualifications Framework

The **Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF)** is a reform instrument for regulating the system of qualifications at all levels in the Republic of Croatia.

The core of the CROQF are qualifications standards, based on learning outcomes, which follow the needs of the labour market, individuals and society.

While the same qualification can be acquired at different educational institutions and through different educational programmes, it is important that certain minimum learning outcomes be acquired regardless of the institution or the programme. That is why the CROQF introduces **qualifications standards**, which should define all the **learning outcomes** necessary for a specific qualification. Different educational programmes leading to the acquisition of a particular qualification should be based on the relevant qualification standard and result in the acquisition of the defined minimum learning outcomes.

Along with qualifications standards, the CROQF also introduces **occupational standards**, which contain clearly defined **competences** required to perform a certain occupation, and serve as a basis for development of qualifications standards, providing a link to the actual needs of the labour market.

Qualifications standards, units of learning outcomes and occupational standards, after being positively validated by experts in sectoral councils, will become the backbone on the CROQF database - the **CROQF Register**.

Qualifications in line with the standards in the CROQF Register will be assigned one of the **eight levels** of the CROQF, their place in the framework being defined according to the level of the belonging learning outcomes. The placement of qualifications at respective levels will not only enable their mutual comparison and linking, but also linking Croatian qualifications' levels to the levels of the European Qualifications Framework

and the levels of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, that way contributing to the visibility of qualifications acquired in Croatia on both the Croatian and the European labour market.

By introducing qualifications standards, the CROQF lays the basis for the development of the system of validation and recognition of **non-formal and informal learning**, since the focus is put on a learning outcome and not on the manner of its acquisition.

Development and implementation of the CROQF is regulated by two key documents:

- **The CROQF Act (2013)** and
- **The Ordinance on the CROQF Register (2014)**.

Coordination of development and implementation of the CROQF is performed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Pension System.

Further information can be found at the [CROQF website](#).



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Sectoral Councils

Sectoral councils are advisory and professional bodies responsible for ensuring the development of human potential in line with labour market needs within respective sectors, appointed by the minister responsible for education and science.

Their basic role being expert **validation** of proposals of occupational standards, qualifications standards and units of learning outcomes before their entry into the CROQF Register, sectoral councils are essential for the development of the CROQF and their recommendations will have significant influence on the further economic development of the Republic of Croatia.

According to the CROQF Act, each sectoral council consists of **three members appointed by competent institutions** and **eight sectoral experts** selected on grounds of a public call. The selection is done by the Committee for Selection of Members of Sectoral Councils after assessment of experts' applications and interviews, taking into account the proportional inclusion of experts representing educational institutions and the labour market.

Out of **25 sectoral councils** whose establishment is prescribed by the Ordinance on the CROQF Register, by September 2016 the following **eight sectoral councils have been appointed** by the minister responsible for education and science:

- I. Agriculture, food and veterinary medicine
- II. Forestry and wood technology
- VI. Mechanical engineering, shipbuilding and metallurgy
- VII. Electrical engineering and computing
- IX. Economy and trade
- X. Tourism and hospitality
- XI. Transport and logistics
- XXI. Education and sports



Fourth meeting of Sectoral council XXI Education and sports, December 2015



Second coordination meeting of presidents of sectoral councils, April 2016

All the appointed sectoral councils have started with their activities, which include individual work, meetings, coordination meetings of presidents, consultation workshops for project beneficiaries and participation of members in educational events organized by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and Pension System. While the sectoral councils are currently working on their proposals for improvements in the National Classification of Occupations, the aim of the educational events they attend is adequate preparation and training for validation of proposals of occupational standards, qualifications standards and units of learning outcomes. The quality of validation done by sectoral councils is going to have significant influence on the quality of standards which will enter the CROQF Register, which is why their education is of utmost importance.



Workshop on validation of standards, March 2016



Workshop on validation of units of learning outcomes, July 2016

National Council for Development of Human Potential

The **National Council for Development of Human Potential** is the central strategic body for the development of the CROQF in the Republic of Croatia.

Its roles are to assess, validate and coordinate public policies, such as educational policy, employment policy, lifelong professional guidance policy and regional policy, from the perspective of their influence on the development of human potential and contribution to the achievement of Croatia's strategic goals and competitiveness. In line with the development strategy of the Republic of Croatia, the National Council gives recommendations on the process of planning and developing human potential. Moreover, the National Council monitors and validates the impact of the CROQF and respective qualifications, as well as gives recommendations on adjusting education to the needs of the labour market. Also, it monitors and validates the work of sectoral councils and gives its opinion to the minister responsible for education and science on sectoral councils' recommendations referring to admission policy, admission quota and financing of qualifications from public sources.

According to the CROQF Act, the National Council consists of **25 members**, including the President and 24 members nominated by various relevant institutions. The President and members of the National Council were appointed in 2014 by the Croatian Parliament, following the proposal of the Government. By September 2016 the National Council has held 16 regular meetings, as well as numerous meetings of the five smaller **thematic working groups** formed within the National Council, focused on different aspects of the National Council's work:



Fifteenth meeting of the National Council for Development of Human Potential, June 2016

TWG 1: **Education programmes**

TWG 2: **Analyses**

TWG 3: **Removing obstacles**

TWG 4: **Visibility**

TWG 5: **Monitoring, assessment and recommendations**

The National Council works according to annual work plans, and has so far produced various documents and recommendations. Moreover, the National Council has organised several events, such as the conference entitled *CROQF: Knowledge and Creativity* held in October 2015 and the round table on *Skills of the Future for the Development of Croatian Economy* held in April 2016.



Last years' conference, *CROQF: Knowledge and Creativity*, October 2015



Round table on *Skills of the Future for the Development of Croatian Economy*, April 2016

Following last years' positive experience and a high number of participants representing various stakeholders, one of the numerous activities planned in 2016 is the **conference** entitled *CROQF Qualifications – for the Market, Society or an Individual?*, which is to be held on 27 and 28 October 2016 in Zagreb. The conference will be focused on the potential of vocational and higher education in meeting the current and future needs of the labour market and the contemporary social challenges.

The CROQF Register

The CROQF Register is a national **database** containing data related to the development and implementation of the CROQF, in particular the data on occupational standards, units of learning outcomes, qualifications standards, programmes and institutions.

It comprises three sub-registers:

- **Occupational standards sub-register**
- **Qualifications standards sub-register**
- **Sub-register of units of learning outcomes**

The procedure of entry into the CROQF Register can start at the request of any legal entity or a natural person, as well as at the request of national authorities providing that their interest has reasonable grounds.

The content of the CROQF Register will be kept in an **IT system** and available online to all interested parties. The system is currently being developed in cooperation with the **University Computing Centre**.

Within the first stage of its development, which was finished in November 2015, three different applications were developed:

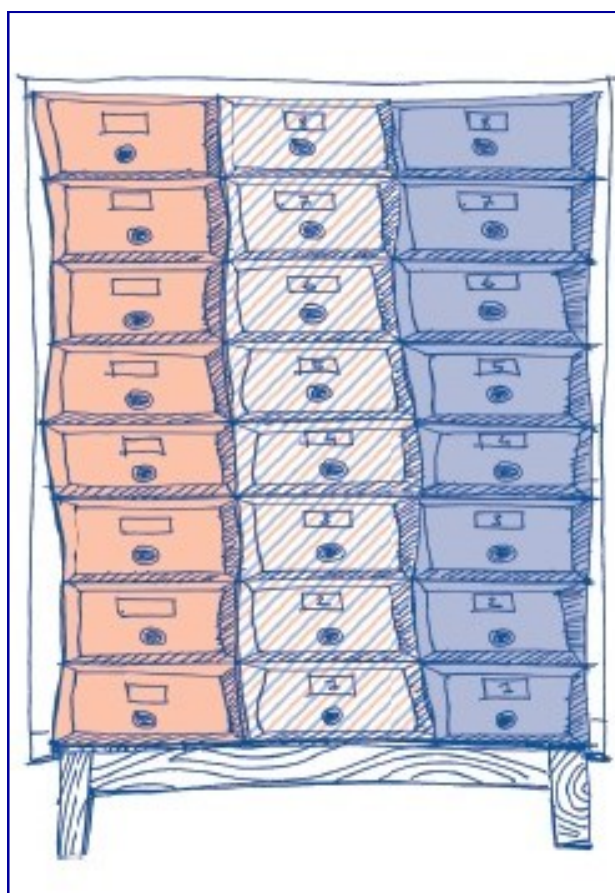
- **Requests for entry** (for submission of requests for entry into the CROQF Register),
- **Administrators** (to be used by administrators at the ministries in the process of formal validation of requests),
- **Sectoral councils** (to be used by sectoral councils in the process of expert validation of requests).

The system became fully functional as far as the following is concerned:

- submission of requests for entry of **occupational standards**,
- submission of requests for entry of **units of competences**,
- submission of requests for entry of **qualifications standards** and
- submission of requests for entry of **units of learning outcomes**.

The procedures of formal and expert **validation** were enabled as well.

In September 2016, within the second stage of its development, the CROQF Register also reached full functionality as far as submission of requests for entry of **programmes** (for acquisition of qualifications, for acquisition and validation of units of learning outcomes, for validation of units of learning outcomes) is concerned.



Graphical representation of the CROQF Register with its three sub-registers

The development of the IT system of the CROQF Register has been supported by European Commission's grants for the development of national qualifications databases within the Erasmus+ programme.

The CROQF Pioneers

Since 2013 the development of the CROQF has been supported by the implementation of IPA and ESF cofinanced projects, selected within open calls for proposals, in the area of higher and adult education.

While eight projects were implemented from 2013 to 2015 within IPA Component IV, currently **30 projects in higher education** and **25 projects in adult education** are being implemented within the ESF.

The aim of the projects is to support the development and implementation of the CROQF by **developing occupational standards and qualifications standards**, as well as designing or redesigning education programmes in line with the proposed standards.

In other words, the projects represent the actual implementation of the paradigm shift from knowledge transfer towards learning outcomes and new teaching methods focused on the learner, with assured measurable outcomes and quality of education.

Moreover, within the implementation of the projects, learners, teachers and stakeholders involved, as well as the general public, are given an opportunity to gain insight into the aims and benefits of the implementation of the CROQF, such as increased transparency and quality of the entire system of education and linking education with the labour market demand.

The standards developed within the projects may be the first ones to enter the CROQF Register after being positively validated by a relevant sectoral council.

In order to support project beneficiaries in the development of proposals of standards, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System has developed **Guidelines for development of occupational standards**, whereas the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has developed **Guidelines for development of occupational standards**. Both methodologies have been presented to project beneficiaries in form of **workshops**.



Workshop on the development of occupational standards and qualifications standards, October 2015

Moreover, project beneficiaries are given guidance and an opportunity to consult with the representatives of the ministries and the members of sectoral councils on how to improve their proposals of standards before officially submitting their requests for entry into the CROQF Register and validation by sectoral councils. The first **consultation workshop** of that type was held in July 2016 and additional two in September 2016 for project beneficiaries developing proposals of standards in higher and adult education in the sector of Economy and trade, and the same type of guidance will continue being given to other interested project beneficiaries.



Consultation workshop July 2016

Twinning Project in Macedonia

In a consortium with the Polish Institute of Education and the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports takes part in the implementation of a twinning project in Macedonia.

'Further improvement of the system for the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)', a 2,250,000 euro worth project, will be implemented in Macedonia over the course of 18 months, with the aim of supporting the process of further improvement of the Macedonian NQF and its implementation, as well as strengthening the national capacities for its efficient functioning.

The Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports is responsible for the implementation of activities within Component 1, which includes the analysis of existing legal and legislative solutions related to the NQF and recommendations for their improvement, work on by-laws necessary for the implementation of the NQF, as well as raising awareness of the public and all interested stakeholders.

As part of the twinning project, the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports organised a study visit for the representatives of the Macedonian delegation in May 2016. The members of the delegation were given an insight into procedures, tools, bodies and stakeholders involved in the process of development and implementation of the CROQF, with the aim of supporting the development of the Macedonian NQF.



Study visit of the Macedonian delegation, May 2016

Regional Cooperation

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, as the national coordination point for the development of the CROQF, fosters cooperation with other countries of the South East European region in order to share experience and present the tools and procedures developed to support the implementation of the CROQF.

In 2015 and 2016 the Ministry hosted delegations from Kosovo, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Moldova. Moreover, in January 2016, representatives of the Ministry visited Bulgaria. Also, in September 2016, representatives of the Ministry visited Moldova within the implementation of the Danube Strategy to present achievements in the development of the CROQF at a workshop on qualifications frameworks and curriculum development in line with labour market needs.



Study visit of the Moldovan delegation, May 2016