



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.

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CROQF news

January - September 2017

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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.

First standard included in the CROQF Register

The first standard was included in the CROQF Register in September 2017, pursuant to a positive expert opinion obtained from Sectoral Council IX. Economy and Trade and a decision issued by the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System.

The occupational standard for the *Forensic Accountant* was proposed by the Forensic Sciences Department of Split University. In keeping with the procedure set forth by the Ordinance on the CROQF Register, the relevant sectoral council, namely Sectoral Council IX. Economy and Trade, validated all elements of the occupational standard proposal, including the assessment of its strategic, sectoral and analytical justification, occupation description, key tasks and competences, units of competences, working conditions and justification for inclusion, and – at its 4th session, held in July 2017 – issued a positive expert opinion on its inclusion in the CROQF Register. Based on the positive expert opinion of the relevant sectoral council, the labour and pension

system minister issued the Decision to include the occupational standard for the *Forensic Accountant* in the CROQF Register.

Occupational standards provide the basis to develop qualifications standards aligned with labour market needs, serving as the basis for improvement and development of educational and study programmes. Therefore, the inclusion of the first occupational standard in the CROQF Register constitutes a milestone in the efforts to implement the CROQF and develop an education system relevant with respect to labour market needs.

Since the request submission procedure is underway for the inclusion of more than 40 occupational standards and respective qualifications standards, they are also expected to be validated soon by the relevant sectoral councils and included in the CROQF Register.



4th session of Sectoral Council IX – Economy and Trade

Sectoral approach of the CROQF

Sectoral councils are advisory and professional bodies responsible for ensuring the development of human potential in line with labour market needs. They are established pursuant to the CROQF Act and the Ordinance on the CROQF Register.

Their core task is to validate proposals for occupational standards, units of learning outcomes and qualifications standards, i.e. requests for their inclusion in the CROQF Register. Since the CROQF methodology provides that educational and study programmes shall be aligned with the standards included in the CROQF Register, sectoral councils play an important role in the education system reform.

Appointment of presidents and members of 14 sectoral councils

In June 2017, adding to the previously appointed eight sectoral councils, presidents and members were appointed to another 14 out of the total of 25 sectoral councils to be formed as part of establishing the Croatian Qualifications Framework, which is in turn a prerequisite for its successful application.

The newly appointed sectoral councils cover the following sectors:

III. Mining, Geology and Chemical Technology

IV. Textiles and Leather

V. Graphic Technology

VIII. Construction and Geodesy

XII. Health

XIII. Personal and Other Services

XIV. Art

XV. Mathematics, Physics, Geography, Geophysics, Chemistry and Biology

XVI. Basic Technical Sciences

XVII. Aviation, Rocket and Space Technology

XVIII. Information and Communication

XX. Psychology, Educational Rehabilitation, Speech Pathology and Social Work

XXII. Philosophy, Theology and Religious Sciences

XXIV. Security and Defence.

Since an understanding of present and future labour market needs constitutes the basis for improving Croatia's education system, sectoral councils bring together sectoral experts representing both the education sector and the economic sector. By establishing sectoral councils, external evaluation of the education system at all levels is being introduced, while educational and employment policies made by the ministries responsible for education and labour, respectively, can systematically rely on expert opinions and recommendations coming from each sector.

The appointment of sectoral councils is part of the process aimed at achieving the objectives set forth in the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, including efforts to implement the curricular reform of vocational education by applying the CROQF, improve the quality of higher education in keeping with European quality assurance and enhancement standards, and offer better adult education services via re-training and professional training programmes in order to improve labour market prospects for adult participants.

Conference to mark the establishment of 14 sectoral councils

On 11 and 12 July 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education organised a conference at Zagreb University's Faculty of Forestry to mark the establishment of 14 sectoral councils.

The conference provided an opportunity to introduce the members of sectoral councils and other participants to the CROQF, its tools and mechanisms, its role in closing the gap between education and the labour market, and the role and activities of sectoral councils in its implementation. The conference also included workshops organised to provide the members of sectoral councils with a hands-on demonstration of their key role, namely, validating proposals for occupational standards and qualifications standards.



Conference to mark the establishment of 14 sectoral councils



Workshop for sectoral councils within the conference

Inaugural sessions of 14 sectoral councils

In September 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education hosted the inaugural sessions of 14 newly established sectoral councils.

The inaugural sessions provided a platform to inform sectoral council members about their roles and tasks under the CROQF Act, as well as the Sectoral Councils Framework Activity Plan for 2017 pursuant to those tasks. In that context, special emphasis was placed on a continuous training programme run by the Ministry of Science and Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System, for all sectoral council members as a condition for discharging their key task – validating proposals for occupational standards and qualifications standards. With submission of requests for inclusion in the CROQF Register underway for more than 40 proposals for occupational standards and qualifications standards in different sectors, the sound preparation of sectoral councils for their validation is of crucial importance. Therefore, the first workshops announced to that effect for the newly established sectoral councils were announced to be held as early as October 2017.

Furthermore, the inaugural sessions provided an opportunity to brief sectoral council members about the principles of work under the Sectoral Councils Rules of Procedure, and the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System also presented them with their first task: making recommendations for changes and improvements in the National Classification of Occupations.



Inaugural session of Sectoral Council III. Mining, Geology and Chemical Technology



Inaugural session of Sectoral Council VIII. Construction and Geodesy



Inaugural session of Sectoral Council XX. Psychology, Educational Rehabilitation, Speech Pathology and Social Work



Inaugural session of Sectoral Council XXIV. Security and Defence

Workshops for members of 8 sectoral councils: simulating validation of proposals for occupational and qualifications standards

On 8-9 and 29-30 May 2017, a series of two-day workshops for the members of the eight previously established sectoral councils was held at Zagreb University's Computing Centre.

Members of the following sectoral councils participated in the workshops:

- 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.

The first day of each workshop was dedicated to the simulation of validation of proposals for **occupational standards**, with the second day being reserved for the simulation of validation of proposals for **qualifications standard**. Following introductory presentations by representatives from the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System, Ministry of Science and Education and Zagreb University's Computing Centre, the sectoral council members benefited from both days working in groups to simulate the validation process end-to-end, using concrete proposals for occupational and qualifications standards and the elements of their validation developed by the relevant ministries.

From the establishment of sectoral councils, the relevant ministries support them in their efforts. Accordingly, they provide them with continuous training to prepare their members for the effective performance of their tasks as stipulated under the CROQF Act. Since the key purpose of sectoral councils is precisely the expert validation of proposals for occupational and qualifications standards, the eight sectoral councils have participated in a number of workshops organised as part of their continuous training in order to gradually prepare them for the validation exercise, with workshops dedicated to the simulated validation of concrete proposals for standards as the final stage of their preparation before engaging in the validation of actual requests for inclusion of standards in the CROQF Register. Since a positive opinion from the relevant sectoral council is a prerequisite for inclusion of any standard in the CROQF Register, sectoral councils will have a direct bearing on the quality of standards included therein. Therefore, their preparation for validation is of utmost importance.



Workshop: simulation of validation of proposals for occupational standards



Workshop: simulation of validation of proposals for qualifications standards

Consultation workshops

2017 saw continued efforts to organise consultation workshops for applicants proposing occupational and qualifications standards and representatives from relevant sectoral councils.

Such consultation workshops are held at the request of applicants proposing occupational and qualifications standards, as part of support provided by the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System and the Ministry of Science and Education for applicants in their efforts to prepare and improve proposals for standards, as well as that provided for sectoral councils to prepare them for their validation.

Consultation workshops provide applicants proposing standards with an opportunity to present their proposals to the members of the relevant sectoral councils and representatives from the competent ministries in order to obtain their improvement guidelines as a basis to upgrade their proposals before they submit their requests for inclusion in the CROQF Register and before the subsequent validation by the relevant sectoral councils. On the other hand, consultation workshops are also part of a comprehensive preparation of sectoral council members for the best possible validation of the proposed standards as their key role. Indeed, both aspects will eventually bear on the quality of standards included in the CROQF Register.

In 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education has so far hosted five consultation workshops, as follows:

Sectoral Council XXI. Education and Sports was presented with proposals for the qualifications standards for the **BA in Early Childhood and Preschool Education**, **MA in Early Childhood and Preschool Education** and **MA in Primary Education**, as prepared within the project “Qualifications Standards and Quality Improvement in Study Programmes for Preschool and Primary School Teachers” (co-financed by the ESF),

which was implemented by Rijeka University's Faculty of Teacher Education;



Sectoral Council XXI. Education and Sports was presented with proposals for the occupational standard for the **Physical Education Teacher** and the qualification standard for the **MA in Kinesiological Education**, while Sectoral Council XXI. Education and Sports and Sectoral Council IX. Economy and Trade were presented with proposals for the occupational standard for the **Sports Manager** and the qualification standard for the **MA in Sports Management**, as prepared within the project “Developing Occupational Standards, Qualifications Standards and Graduate Study Programmes in Kinesiology” (co-financed by the ESF), which was implemented by the Split University's Faculty of Kinesiology;



Sectoral Council IX – Economy and Trade was presented with a proposal for the occupational standard for the **Forensic Accountant**, as prepared by Split University's Forensic Sciences Department;



Sectoral Council VII. Electrical Engineering and Computing and Sectoral Council XXI. Education and Sports were presented with proposals for the occupational standard for the **IT Teacher** and the qualification standard for the **Licensed Primary and Secondary School IT Teacher**, as prepared within the project “Development of Modern Study Programmes to Educate IT, Engineering, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics Teachers based on the Croatian Qualifications Framework” (co-financed by the ESF), which was implemented by the Split University’s Faculty of Science;



Sectoral Council XXI. Education and Sports was presented with proposals for the occupational standard for the **Principal of an Educational Institution** and the qualification standard for the **University Specialist in Leadership and Management of Educational Institutions**, as prepared within the project “Principal: Profession and Qualification rather than Function” (co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF)), which was implemented by the Zadar University;



Sectoral Council XXI. Education and Sports was presented with proposals for the occupational standard for the ***Principal of an Educational Institution*** and the qualification standard based thereon, as prepared by the Expert Working Group for the implementation of Objective 5 under the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology.

The organisation of the conference, workshops and sessions of sectoral councils was made possible as part of the efforts to implement the project “Establishment and Management of the CROQF Register as Support to the Work of Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in the Process of Implementation of the CROQF”, co-financed by the ESF under the Operational Programme “Efficient Human Resources 2014 – 2020” which, as one of its objectives, provides for support to the activities of sectoral councils.

Creative human potential

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

Sessions of the NCDHP

The NCDHP continued holding regular sessions in 2017.

On 2 February 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education hosted the **19th NCDHP session**, at which the NCDHP members were introduced to the CROQF Register's IT system set up to support the submission and validation processes related to requests for inclusion in the CROQF Register and ensure access to public data kept in the Register. Furthermore, they were presented with a proposal for new quality assessment standards for higher education institutions in the process of re-accreditation, which will, once discussed and adopted, apply in the next re-accreditation cycle. Additionally, the Framework Work Programme of the NCDHP for 2017 and the Sectoral Council Work Report for 2016 were proposed and adopted. Participants were also briefed on the content of the National Qualifications Standard Framework for primary and secondary school teachers, which was adopted as a recommendation by the National Education Council.



19th NCDHP session

On 11 April 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education hosted the **20th NCDHP session**, at which the NCDHP discussed options for the development of a CROQF expert certification programme. In order to be able to reach conclusions on strategic issues related to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, the NCDHP agreed to organise a dedicated workshop for its members.

On 8 June 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education hosted the **21st NCDHP session**, at which the NCDHP were introduced to the "EU Skills and Jobs Explorer" project with which Croatia's Algebra University College/IN2data Ltd. team, competing with teams from 22 countries in solving a problem task related to education, lifelong learning, the labour market and employability, won the first "Big Data Hackathon" – an event launched at the initiative of EUROSTAT in cooperation with the European Commission. Furthermore, the NCDHP were briefed about conclusions from the workshop on the recognition and validation of non-formal and

informal learning, held on that same day, with an additional workshop announced to further discuss the same topic. Also, the session agenda included problems in the vocational education system in the context of the Vocational Education and Training System Development Programme.



21st NCDHP session

On 31 August 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education hosted the **22nd NCDHP session**, which involved participation by representatives from Zagreb's Institute of Economics. They briefed the NCDHP members on the "OVI Index (Online Vacancy Index)" – a research project aimed at improving labour market statistics. Furthermore, the NCDHP were presented with an analysis of the number of students enrolled in secondary education programmes and those admitted to study programmes specified in the Education Enrolment and Scholarship Award Policy Recommendations, prepared by the Croatian Employment Service pursuant to the Government's Regulation on the Monitoring, Analysis and Forecast of Labour Market Needs for Specific Qualifications at the level of regional and local labour markets in order to address structural mismatches between labour supply and demand. Also, the session discussed the proposed concept and programme of the National Council's annual conference scheduled for December 2017.



22nd NCDHP session

Workshops on “Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals of Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning”

During the course of June, July and August 2017, the NCDHP members participated in four workshops entitled “Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals of Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning”.

According to the Draft Action Plan of the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, a possibility is given to the NCDHP to develop a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning based on the CROQF.

The workshop participants defined the following strategic goals of validation of non-formal and informal learning:

1. To facilitate access to higher education for “non-traditional students”: admission to higher years of study based on individualised validation of previously acquired knowledge and skills
2. To enhance flexibility in education and career paths and improve mobility: automatic recognition of a part of a study/education programme when transferring from one CROQF-Registered programme to another.
3. To increase citizens’ employability through formal recognition of competences acquired outside the regular education system based on the procedure of evaluation against the standard.

During the course of the four workshops, the NCDHP members – in consultation with external experts – prepared the Draft Strategic Plan for Recognition of Prior Learning System Development. They agreed that the

NCDHP would finalise and adopt the document at its forthcoming sessions and submit it to the MSE as a proposal for final adoption.

The organisation of the NCDHP's sessions and workshops was made possible as part of the efforts to implement the project "Establishment and Management of the CROQF Register as Support to the Work of Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in the Process of Implementation of the CROQF", co-financed by the ESF under the Operational Programme "Efficient Human Resources 2014 – 2020".





Workshops on “Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals of Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning”

Announcement of a conference on the “Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) – an opportunity for the quality implementation of comprehensive educational reform”

For a third consecutive year, the NCDHP – with support from the Ministry of Science and Education – organises a formal annual conference. This year, the conference will be held on 4 December 2017 in Zagreb, with its topic being **“Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) – an opportunity for the quality implementation of a comprehensive education reform”**.

The conference will provide an opportunity to scrutinize the CROQF as a tool to implement a comprehensive reform of education at all levels, including the curricular reform of vocational education and training, improving the quality of higher education and its quality assurance system, and enhancing the adult education system by applying lifelong learning principles.

Another key topic of the conference will be social investment in human resources, such as improving the social dimension of higher education and developing a system of validation and recognition of prior learning.

An additional attraction of the conference will be a “knowledge café”, which will enable the participants to visit tables offering summary information about ongoing ESF projects and other topics crucial for the CROQF.

The event is being organised with support from the project “Establishment and Management of the CROQF Register as Support to the Work of Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in the Process of Implementation of the CROQF”, co-financed by the ESF under the Operational Programme “Efficient Human Resources 2014 – 2020”, and the European Commission’s grant to support national coordination points for the European Qualifications Framework.

International perspective

Study visit by a high delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 28 March 2017, as part of its study visit to Croatia, the Ministry of Science received a high delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina, composed of representatives from the cantonal ministries in charge of education.

During its visit, the high delegation was provided with detailed information about the mechanisms, procedures, bodies and stakeholders involved in the CROQF development and implementation process, as well as how the CROQF would contribute to improvements in the education system, all with a view to providing support in further efforts to enhance the system for the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the same vein, the delegation was informed of the structure of Croatia's education system, with special focus on the adult education system and the strategic and legislative framework for adult education in Croatia.

Visit by a Mongolian delegation

On 22 May 2017, the Ministry of Science and Education hosted a delegation from Mongolia.

The delegation particularly expressed its interest in the implementation of reforms in the vocational education and training system through the development of the national qualification framework and, especially, the role of sectoral councils as the key bodies in the implementation of the national qualifications framework. Accordingly, representatives from the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System and the Zagreb University's Computing Centre, as the key institutions involved in CROQF development, briefed the delegation about Croatia's vocational education and training system and the CROQF's concept, key mechanisms and tools.



Project “Establishment And Management of CROQF Register as Support to the Work of Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in the Process of Implementation of the CROQF”

The Ministry of Science and Education is the beneficiary of the project entitled “Establishment and Management of the CROQF Register as Support to the Work of Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in the Process of Implementation of the CROQF”, in the total amount of 11,400,000.00 kuna, including a 9,690,000.00 kuna EU grant.

The project is being implemented within the Operational Programme “Efficient Human Resources 2014 – 2020”, in line with the objectives of the Priority Axis 3: Education and Lifelong Learning. The planned duration of the project is 24 months, between July 2016 and July 2018. The aim of the project is to support the establishment and work of the bodies and stakeholders involved in the process of implementation of the CROQF, which includes the development of occupational standards, qualifications standards and educational and study programmes compliant with them. The ultimate aim of the process is to assure the quality and relevance of education, i.e. to develop high-quality educational and study programmes aligned with labour market needs, leading to higher employability and quality of the workforce.

The contract signing ceremony was held at the Ministry of Science and Education in February 2017.



Projekt je sufinancirala Europska unija iz Europskog socijalnog fonda.