

CROQF: News

October - December 2016



CREATIVE HUMAN POTENTIAL

17th and 18th session of NCDHP

Two sessions of the National Council for Development of Human Potential (NCDHP) were held at the premises of the Ministry of Science and Education in October and December 2016.

The NCDHP is a central strategic body at the level of the Republic of Croatia for the development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF). It assesses and evaluates public policies in the fields of education, employment, life-long professional guidance and regional development, monitors and evaluates the work of sectoral councils and puts forward proposals and other measures that provide for planning and development of human potential in Croatia.

At the 17th session, members were presented the *Draft Ordinance on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning* that regulates all the issues regarding application, recognition and validation of previously acquired units of learning outcomes that will be implemented in line with the relevant programmes of validation of units of learning outcomes from the CROQF Register.

At the 18th session, members were presented the project titled "External Evaluation of Education Institutions as Qual-

ity Assurance Mechanism in the Republic of Croatia", implemented by the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education. Furthermore, the state-of-play in terms of implementation of activities from the NCDHP Framework Programme of Work for 2016 was discussed. The following documents were adopted: *Guidelines for Harmonization of Study Programmes with Qualifications Standards and Creation of New Study Programmes in Line with CROQF* (1), *NCDHP Recommendations for Better Implementation of Projects Applying CROQF* (2) and *Questionnaire for NCDHP Members to Collect Information Pertaining to Development of Human Potential* (3).

Since, in accordance with the CROQF Act (OG, 22/13), one of the tasks of the NCDHP is to monitor and evaluate the work of sectoral councils and put forward recommendations for potential improvements, members were informed about a series of implemented and planned activities of the councils. It was agreed that members would take an active part in these activities from then on.

Sessions were organized within the project "Establishment and Management of CROQF Register as Support to Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in Implementation of CROQF", co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) within the Operational programme "Efficient Human Resources" (OPEHR) 2014 – 2020.



17th session of the NCDHP



18th session of the NCDHP

Conference on “CROQF Qualifications - for Market, Society or Individual?”

The conference titled “CROQF Qualifications - for Market, Society or Individual?”, organized by the NCDHP and the Ministry of Science and Education, was held at the Faculty of Forestry on 27 and 28 October 2016.

After Mrs Ružica Beljo Lučić, PhD, NCDHP Chair, opened the conference and introduced the participants to NCDHP responsibilities and activities, the plenary presentation and panel discussion on VET ensued. These sessions involved relevant representatives of economic and education sectors who discussed about challenges, potentials and perspectives of the Croatian VET system, as well as potential solutions to boost competitiveness of the VET sector in Croatia.



Mrs Ružica Beljo Lučić, PhD,
NCDHP Chair



Panel discussion: VET - a chance or a problem?

Renowned experts in higher education and students' representatives encouraged and moderated the discussion on relation and comparison of learning outcomes acquired through university studies as opposed to those acquired through professional studies. Moreover, in a plenary presentation on competences of future, the need to predict new social development trends and harmonize education system with the long-term social needs and constant changes was emphasized.

Results of a dynamic panel discussion on work-based learning (WBL) in higher education system will serve as a basis for future improvement of work placement and traineeship programmes as a part of study programmes and allocation of ESF funds to support development and establishment of an appropriate work placement model at higher education institutions. Participants concluded that interlink between the world of education and work was a prerequisite to increase employability among the youth.



Panel discussion: What does the binarity of higher education mean for the future of Croatian education and economy?



Plenary presentation on competences of the future



Panel discussion: Work-based learning in higher education

Project beneficiaries within the Operational programme “Human Resources Development” 2007 – 2013 that had successfully applied to calls for proposals “Strengthening Capacities of Adult Education Institutions - phase II” and “Improvement of Quality in Higher Education by Applying CROQF” talked about their experience in implementation of CROQF projects in a separate session. They presented significant outputs that they had achieved due to project funding and the knowledge gained throughout project implementation. They also exhibited accompanying posters. In terms of concrete problems encountered during the implementation phase, proposals for more efficient implementation of future CROQF projects were put forward. Participants were able to give their own recommendations on how to improve implementation of future projects and application of the CROQF.



Presentations of project results



Project posters

Encouraging evidence and research-based decision making process for creation of new public policies, the NCDHP gave an opportunity to young researchers to present their works thematically linked to development of qualifications in line with the CROQF, early career development models for young experts, employability and other topics related to the development of human potential in general. Seven research papers and posters were presented on the occasion. The best authors were elected and awarded on the basis of participants' votes and the decision by the NCDHP Selection Committee.



Voting for the best research paper

The workshop on harmonization of study programmes with qualifications standards focused on models of harmonization of the existing study programmes with qualifications standards and creating new programmes based on qualifications standards. Different examples of validation of learning outcomes were addressed. Participants stressed that it was important to set the criteria for determining the compliance of the study programme with the qualification standard and designate institutions in charge of external evaluation of compliance of the study programme with the relevant qualification standard.



Workshop on harmonization of study programmes with qualifications standards

The European strategic context and the current state of development of the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Republic of Croatia were presented during a special workshop on conceptualization of the system of validation and recognition of prior learning (RPL). Participants emphasized that it was important to create a strategic document that would serve as a basis for development of the RPL system. More discussion among relevant stakeholders was necessary to come up with guidelines for establishment of such a system in the country. The conclusion was that key stakeholders have to be reached in order to discuss responsibility of competent bodies that would manage the process of validation and recognition of prior learning and that would issue publicly recognized certificates.



Workshop on conceptualization of the system of validation and recognition of prior learning

Some 150 participants attended this year's conference, marked by the constant interactivity between panelists of the round table discussions, moderators, workshop trainers, young researchers, projects presenters and the public itself. Participants proved to be an important and active element in all sessions this year as well. A separate Q&A session was organized to tackle any remaining issues and encourage additional debate. This was a platform set up to exchange opinions on issues previously raised or those that emerged during the conference.

The event was funded by the EC grant to support national coordination points for the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and project "Establishment and Management of CROQF Register as Support to Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in Implementation of CROQF", co-funded by the ESF within the Operational programme "Efficient Human Resources" (OPEHR) 2014 – 2020.

References to the Conference

"Training Programme for Medical Tourism Managers" was one of the projects presented during the session that focused on the experience in implementation of the CROQF projects. The project beneficiary was Ambitio - adult education institution. Ambitio's employees emphasised that it was "a great honour to take part in the CROQF conference and thus contribute to all the activities to improve the implementation of future CROQF projects".



Representatives of the project team at the conference

Conference Conclusions

In order to ensure development at the individual, economic and social level, it is highly important to predict labour market trends and impact of new technology on employment. It is also crucial to identify the competences that would allow individuals to be creative, innovative and (self) employable.

Certain research and forecasts indicate that some of the skills developed by the education system of today will not be sufficient in the world of tomorrow. In addition, some of these skills are not fit to meet the demands of the current labour market. That being said, it is up to the state administration, relevant agencies, education institutions, employers and other stakeholders (trade unions, chambers etc.) to engage in research and reflection on how to come up with the knowledge and skills that provide for personal development and inclusion in the world of labour.

Work-based learning (WBL) must be developed in education system and this is especially true of the VET system. In other words, the following elements of the WBL must be promoted and developed: well organized and high-quality work placement programmes that would allow individuals to acquire competences to increase their (self)employability, e.g. product design and manufacture, computational thinking (CT), new media literacy, knowledge management (KM), multicultural competences, initiative taking, collaboration in virtual teams, identification of new opportunities, creativity, planning and management, financial literacy, IT literacy etc.

The Croatian VET system is faced with numerous challenges in its attempt to reach these goals. At the same time, the system has great potential in that sense. Mismatch between the knowledge and skills that students completing

VET schools have and competences that are required at the labour market and that employers expect them to have may be bridged by improving the organization and quality of practical classes, also by ensuring appropriately equipped premises and implementation of programmes in highly successful companies, with mentors and teachers that would be engaged in continuous in-service training. Additional effort needs to be made to strengthen communication between employers and the education sector so as to clearly express expectations and needs on the part of employers regarding the required know-how of future employees.

Higher education needs to make students employable, self-employable or prepared to engage in lifelong learning. Employers expect their workers to have advanced knowledge and skills in their area of expertise. Most of the employers think that adaptation and induction of freshly graduated employees in business process is unacceptably long. This may change provided that higher education institutions and employers closely cooperate. In that sense, well-organized work placement programmes for students of university or professional studies play a crucial role. Good practice examples have indicated some successful models that imply active participation of higher education institutions, employers and students. This experience, in combination with results of the research carried out by the Zagreb-based Institute of Economics on participation rates and models of work placement implementation in study programmes, will serve as basis for further advancement of work placement programmes, co-funded by the ESF.

The binary nature of the Croatian system of higher education allows students to acquire qualifications at different

types of studies that may differ according to learning outcomes and their goals, rather than level and quality. University studies have a focus on acquisition of cognitive knowledge. On the other hand, professional studies emphasize skills acquisition. Nonetheless, both types of studies must provide their students with a possibility to acquire competences for personal development and application of the acquired knowledge and skills at an operational level. The Croatian society equally needs both experts that have completed professional studies and those that have completed university studies with fundamental and specific knowledge of scientific type that are well prepared for highly skilled work. Both types of studies must enhance and apply quality assurance procedures in terms of achievement of learning outcomes linked to recognized competences for the needs of the future labour market and the overall society.

The CROQF represents a good tool to create qualifications that would guarantee acquisition of key and specific competences needed at a certain work post, in line with the employer's assessment.

Qualifications standards will allow higher education institutions to align the existing study programmes or create new ones, taking into consideration labour market needs. Red tape and rigidity of procedures and interpretations should be avoided in the process so that, in addition to skills

for employment and self-employment, higher education institutions would be able to include other topics in their study programmes, namely, academic topics, recognized trends in development of research or professional disciplines, competences for active and responsible citizenship, personal growth and development and lifelong learning (further education). Different study programmes could thus be created leading towards the acquisition of the same qualifications. Furthermore, both students and employers would have complete information to make a decision regarding the choice of study or employment of a given expert.

Given the dynamic nature of the labour market, as a concept, the CROQF provides for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which is an important tool in lifelong learning process that improves flexibility and resilience of an individual to sudden changes and enhances his/her employability. Apart from the overall contribution to economic development and prosperity of the Croatian society, acquisition of relevant competences may help individual to raise his/her potential in the personal sphere of life. It can thus be said that the CROQF qualifications provide for unique set of competences for the labour market, society and individual development. One must be aware of all the shortcomings and limitations in terms of economic and social development. Nevertheless, it is equally important to recognize all the opportunities and prospects!

SECTORAL APPROACH OF CROQF

Sectoral councils are advisory and professional bodies responsible for ensuring the development of human potential in line with the labour market needs within relevant sectors. Their main task is to validate proposals of units of learning outcomes, occupational standards and qualifications standards.

Eight out of 25 sectoral councils prescribed by the Ordinance on the CROQF Register (OG, 62/14) have been established up to date. These eight councils have participated in a number of activities from October to December.

Workshops for Members of Sectoral Councils

Two workshops were held within the analysed period (October-December), as a part of the comprehensive training for members of all sectoral councils on tasks set down in the CROQF Act (OG, 22/13).

One workshop on **validation of units of learning outcomes** was held in the Ministry of Science and Education on 29 November 2016. The workshop was organized for members of sectoral councils that had not attended previous workshops covering the same topic or those who wanted to reattend.

One of the basic roles of sectoral councils is to validate proposals of units of learning outcomes that will, as parts of qualifications standards, form the backbone of the CROQF



Workshop on validation of units of learning outcomes

Register. To ensure successful and high-quality validation process, it is crucial that the members of sectoral councils undergo the accompanying training. Therefore, at the workshop, the validation process and elements thereof were presented to the members of sectoral councils, who were also given an opportunity to take an active part in validation process on the basis of some concrete examples.

Since one of the tasks of the NCDHP is to monitor and evaluate the work performed by the sectoral councils, representatives of the NCDHP participated in the workshop as well.



Workshop on the IT system of the CROQF Register

Another workshop, focused on the **IT system of the CROQF Register** (ITCROQFR) was organized in the premises of the University Computing Centre (SRCE) on 14 December 2016.

The ITCROQFR is the central database of the CROQF Register. In accordance with the Ordinance on the CROQF Register (OG, 62/14), the CROQF Register shall contain the data regarding development and implementation of the CROQF, primarily, qualifications standards, units of learning outcomes, occupational standards and units of competences. The Register shall also include information about programmes, institutions and other relevant data. The ITCROQFR includes separate software modules used by applicants to submit requests for inclusion in the CROQF Register and by sectoral councils to validate the requests. Furthermore, it includes the website that allows visitors to see public data held in the CROQF Register. Given the importance of the ITCROQFR as a tool used by all sectoral councils when validating requests for inclusion in the CROQF Register, during the workshop, members of sectoral councils were presented the roles of the ITCROQFR, IT infrastructure, preparation, submission and evaluation processes (in terms of requests for inclusion in the CROQF Register) and software modules (with a particular emphasis on the *Sectoral Councils* module and its use when evaluating requests for inclusion in the CROQF Register).

Consultation Workshops for Members of Sectoral Councils and Applicants of Occupational and Qualifications Standards

Sectoral councils took part in numerous consultation workshops with project teams of CROQF projects co-funded by the ESF within the Operational programme “Human Resources Development” 2007 – 2013 pursuant to the calls for proposals “Improvement of Quality in Higher Education by Applying CROQF” and “Strengthening Capacities of Adult Education Institutions - phase II”. Proposals of occupational and qualifications standards were developed within these projects, and the purpose of consultation workshops was to allow project teams to present their proposals before the relevant sectoral council and the line ministries in order to get guidelines for fine-tuning and additional enhancement of their quality. Moreover, these workshops were a part of the comprehensive training for members of sectoral councils that tries to prepare them to perform their core task - validation of proposed standards before their inclusion in the CROQF Register.

Workshops were held at the premises of the Ministry of Science and Education. Proposals of standards developed within eight projects in the field of higher education and adult education were thus presented to the following sectoral councils:

- To **Sectoral Council no. VI Mechanical Engineering, Shipbuilding and Metallurgy**, the project team of the “**CEE Project: Cooperating in Education towards Employment**” (the lead beneficiary: Libar Open University - adult education institution) presented proposals of the occupational standard for the *welder* and the qualifications standards for the *TIG welder*, *MAG welder* and *MMA welder*.



“CEE: Cooperating in Education towards Employment” project

- To **Sectoral Council no. X Tourism and Hospitality**, the project team of the “**Adria wellness tourism**” project (the lead beneficiary: People’s College - institution for education and culture in Rijeka) presented proposals of the occupational standard and the qualification standard for the *wellness therapist*, whereas the project team of the “**Training Programme for Medical Tourism Managers**” project (the lead beneficiary: Ambitio - adult education institution) presented proposals of the occupational standard and the qualification standard for the *medical tourism manager*.
- To **Sectoral Council no. I Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Medicine** and **Sectoral Council no. X Tourism and Hospitality**, the project team of the “**Development of**



“Adria wellness tourism” project

Professional Study of Sustainable Tourism by Applying CROQF project (the lead beneficiary: Polytechnic of Rijeka) presented proposals of the occupational standard for the *engineer of sustainable agritourism* and the qualification standard for the *professional bachelor - engineer of sustainable agritourism*.



“Development of Professional Study of Sustainable Tourism by Applying CROQF” project

- To **Sectoral Council no. I Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Medicine** the project team of the “**Quality Improvement and Application of CROQF at Undergraduate University Studies of Agriculture**” project (the lead beneficiary: Faculty of Agriculture of the J. J. Strossmayer University in Osijek) presented proposals of the oc-



“Quality Improvement and Application of CROQF at Undergraduate University Studies of Agriculture” project

cupational standards for the *agricultural economist, technologist in animal production, technologist in agricultural energy and waste management and technologist of environmental protection in sustainable agriculture* and the qualifications standards for the *university bachelor - engineer of plant production* and *university bachelor - engineer of horticulture*.

- To **Sectoral Council no. XXI Education and Sports** the project team of the “**Qualifications Standards and Improvement of Quality of Study Programmes for Educators and Teachers**” project (the lead beneficiary: Teacher Training Academy of the University of Rijeka) presented proposals of the occupational standards for the *educator in early childhood (ECE) and preschool education and expert associate – educator in early childhood (ECE) and preschool education*, whereas the project team of the “**Development of Occupational and Qualifications Standards for Experts in Adult Education**” project (the lead beneficiary: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Split) presented proposals of the occupational standards for the *andragogy specialist* and *teacher in adult education* and the qualifications standards for the *master of andragogy* and *teacher in adult education*.



“Qualifications Standards and Improvement of Quality of Study Programmes for Educators and Teachers” project



“Development of Occupational and Qualifications Standards for Experts in Adult Education” project

- To **Sectoral Council no. IX Economy and Trade** the project team of the **“Strengthening Competences for Employment in Drugstores”** project (the lead beneficiary: Callidus - adult education institution) presented proposals of the occupational standard and the qualification standard for the *drugstore shop assistant*.

Quality of final standards as included in the CROQF Register will be improved by providing guidance to the project teams in developing and improving proposals of standards and by preparing members of the sectoral councils for high-quality validation process, both of which is done during consultation workshops.



“Strengthening Competences for Employment in Drugstores” project

Sessions of Sectoral Councils

Sectoral councils continued to convene for sessions.

The **third session of the Sectoral Council no. IX Economy and Trade** was held at the premises of the Ministry of Science and Education on 15 December 2016. Participants continued to work on recommendations for changes and improvements in the National Classification of Occupations in parts pertaining to economy and trade, as part of the task entrusted to it (as well as to all other sectoral councils) by the Ministry of Labour and Pension System.

Workshops and sessions were organized within the project “Establishment and Management of CROQF Register as Support to Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in Implementation of CROQF”, co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) within the Operational programme “Efficient Human Resources” (OPEHR) 2014 – 2020, since one of the project goals is to provide support to activities of the sectoral councils.

E-MODULES “OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS, QUALIFICATIONS STANDARDS AND UNITS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES” PUBLISHED

In cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, the Ministry of Science and Education has developed e-modules with guidelines for preparation of occupational standards, qualifications standards and units of learning outcomes. E-modules were designed as a tool that helps stakeholders in implementation of the CROQF and, in particular, familiarization of potential applicants of occupational and qualifications standards and institutions offering educational programmes with all the

procedures regarding identification of labour market needs and other tools used in development of proposals of occupational standards, as well as the procedures of development of accompanying proposals of qualifications standards and units of learning outcomes.

E-modules are publicly available in the Moodle e-learning system under the section *Occupational Standards, Qualifications Standards and Units of Learning Outcomes* via the following link: <http://mod.srce.hr/>.

PROJECT “ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF CROQF REGISTER AS SUPPORT TO SECTORAL COUNCILS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF CROQF”

The Ministry of Science and Education is the beneficiary of the project titled “Establishment and Management of CROQF Register as Support to Sectoral Councils and Other Stakeholders in Implementation of CROQF” the total value of which stands at HRK 11,400,000.00.

It is being implemented within the Operational programme “Efficient Human Resources” (OPEHR) 2014 – 2020, in line with the objectives of the Priority Axis 3: Education and Lifelong Learning. The overall project duration is 24 months and will be implemented between July 2016 and July 2018.

The goal of the project is to support establishment and work of bodies and stakeholders involved in CROQF implementation, within which occupational standards, qualifications standards and accompanying educational programmes will be developed. The final aim is to assure quality and relevance of available educational programmes, i.e. preparation of high-quality educational programmes that match the needs of the labour market and improve employability and quality of the labour force.