



CROATIA

VET IN EUROPE - COUNTRY REPORT

2014

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CHAPTER 1

1. External factors influencing VET

1.1. Political and socio-economic context

Croatia is a parliamentary democracy and is organised as a unitary republic since 1991, when it declared its independence. The political system of Croatia is based on the principle of the division of power between the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The Croatian Parliament (*Hrvatski sabor*) is the representative body of its citizens and is vested with legislative power. In line with the relevant stipulations of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Parliament has a minimum of 100, and a maximum of 160, members. The Government of the Republic of Croatia exercises executive power. The President of the Republic represents and acts for the Republic of Croatia at home and abroad and is elected pursuant to universal and equal suffrage by direct election for a period of five years.

When it comes to the judicial system of the Republic of Croatia, important structural reforms have recently been shaping all relevant areas with a special emphasis on the territorial and organisational restructuring of the judicial power.

The present administrative territorial division of the country was introduced in 1992 on the basis of the Act on County, Town and Municipal Areas in the Republic of Croatia (*Zakon o područjima županija, gradova i općina u Republici Hrvatskoj*). The basic units of regional self-government are the counties (*županija*), i.e. Croatia is divided administratively into 20 counties and the City of Zagreb. Smaller administrative territorial units within counties are cities/towns in urban areas, and municipalities in other areas. According to the 2006 Act, Croatia has 127 towns/cities and 429 municipalities. For planning and statistical purposes, the new statistical division of Croatia was undertaken in line with the Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) standards, i.e. two NUTS 2 regions entered into force on 1 January 2013. The new model of organization of the NUTS 2 regions system fulfils, both in the case of the Adriatic, as well as of the Continental region, the criteria of population size, whereby the Adriatic region number 1.5 million inhabitants, while the newly created Continental region has 2.5 million inhabitants. The two regions constitute statistical units only, unlike the counties (NUTS 3 level), which are administrative, self-governing units.

On 1 July 2013, Croatia crowned 20-plus years of economic and social progress since declaring independence by becoming the 28th member state of the European Union (EU). The demanding negotiations launched in 2005 were officially concluded in June 2011, followed by the December 2011 signing of the EU accession treaty. The EU accession process provided Croatia with a strong incentive to adopt reforms and harmonize its legislation with the EU *acquis communautaire*. Through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), the EU financing program aimed at supporting the country's preparation for membership, Croatia received more than €1 billion, or about €150 million per year from 2007 to 2013. By using IPA funds, Croatia also built up its capacities and resources for the absorption of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds that have been made available upon accession.

1.2. Population and demographics

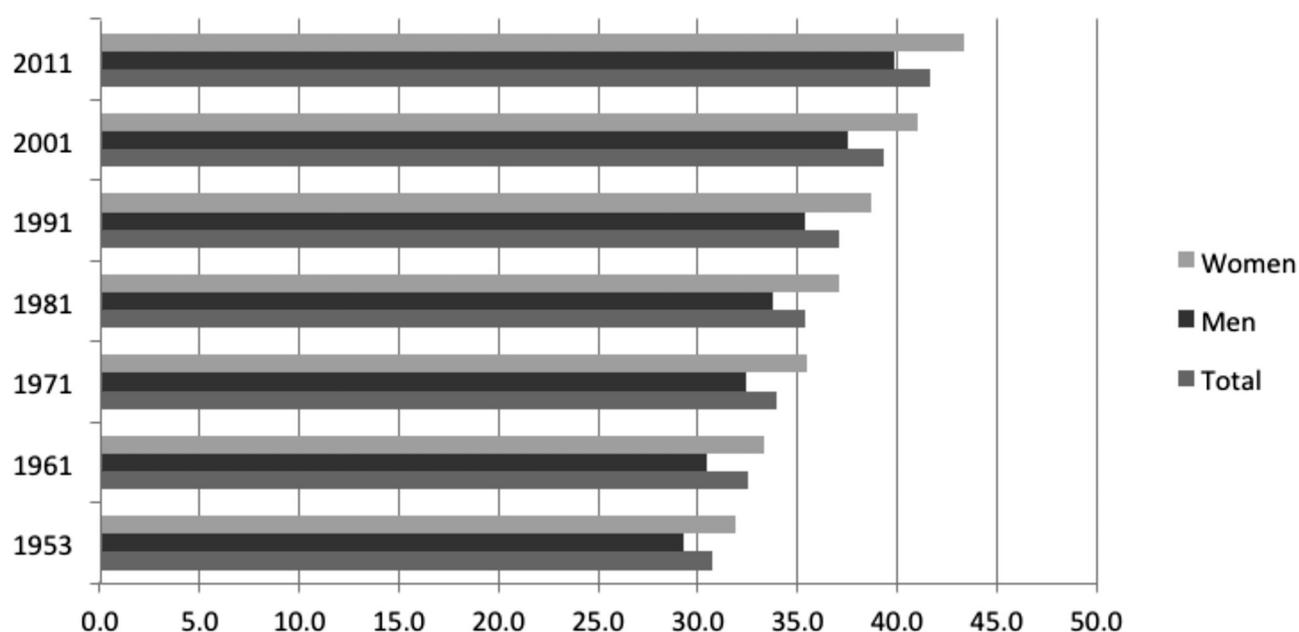
According to the results of the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011 (*Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2011. godine*), the Republic of Croatia has 4 290 612 inhabitants.

Table 1. Croatia in figures 2014, Basic information

Land area, km ²	56 594
Total population, 2011 Census, '000	4 290
Total population, 2013 mid-year estimate, '000	4 256
Population density per km ² , 2011 Census	76.0
Population density per km ² , 2013	75.2
Number of households, 2011 Census, '000	1 519
Average number of persons per household, 2011 Census	2.80

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Date of extraction: 17.11.2014

The data on population is not comparable to the results of the previous 2001 Census, as the methodology has in the meantime been aligned with international standards, i.e. a data comparison would indicate that Croatia lost 146,848 inhabitants, but this is actually the result of the changed statistical definition of the total population. When it comes to describing population growth figures, like many other European countries, Croatia is facing a changing and particularly challenging demographic profile. Projections indicate that the country is aging at one of the fastest rates in Europe. During the last decades, Croatia has been also facing a severe problem of birth-rate decline and demographic aging of the population, while the overall population of Croatia is continuously decreasing. Around 3.9 % of the Croatian population in 2012 was aged 80 or over, well below the EU 27 average (4.9 %), although lower shares were reported for seven other EU 28 Member States. The Graph 1 illustrates relevant aging trends.

Figure 1. Average age of population, 1953 - 2011 censuses

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, accessed on 17.11. 2014

The Croatian Bureau of Statistics (*Državni zavod za statistiku*, DZS) forecasts a further decline of the Croatian population by 700,000 (-16%) by 2050. The share of older people (æ64 years of age) in the total population could increase from 17% in 2005 to 27% in 2050. At the same time, share of youth (15-24 years of age) may drop from 13% to 10%. The working age population (15-64 years of age) could fall by 780,000. Accordingly, if the costs of increased social security transfers and health care spending associated with an ageing population are to be met, a significant increase in the employment rate will be required.

Croatia experienced a long period of regular emigration for a variety of economic reasons, mainly between 1961 and 1981. Officially recorded remittances were 1.222 million USD in 2004, or some 4% of Croatia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Internally, there has been a trend of depopulation of maritime and agricultural areas. Croatia's declaration of independence and the wars in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1991 and 1995 created massive irregular migration and enormous displacement between 2001 and 2011 the number of immigrants to Croatia fell by about two thirds. In 2011 about 8.5 thousand persons immigrated to Croatia, of whom more than half (55 %) were Croatian nationals. Just over one tenth (12 %) were nationals of EU-27 Member States while the remaining share (33 %) were from non-member countries. There has been a significant emigration of highly skilled persons from Croatia since 1990, apparently a brain drain rather than the circulation of skilled labour; there are indications that between 1997 and 2007 some 140,000 highly skilled persons left the country.

1.3. Economic developments and trends

The Croatian economy is considered to be small with GDP in current prices of EUR 45 billion (Gotovac, V. 2011; World Bank 2013; World Bank 2014). In the period 2000 - 2008, it recorded a relatively stable growth path accompanied by low inflation; the average growth rate of real GDP amounted to 4.2%. However, Croatia has been affected quite strongly by the economic crisis/recession since 2008. As a consequence, Croatian economy is in a prolonged slump, with cumulative GDP decline of 12% between 2008 and 2013. The country is heading toward its sixth consecutive year of economic contraction. The beginning of 2014 was marked by relatively favourable economic developments that have in the meantime faded and allowed for the return of recession. Although seasonally adjusted GDP (X11ARIMA method) increased by 0.3 % in the first quarter of 2014 compared to the fourth quarter of 2013, this encouraging upturn was not sufficient to compensate for a 0.7-% drop in the previous quarter. According to the flash estimate, the quarterly GDP for the second quarter of 2014 decreased in the real terms by 0.8% as compared to the same quarter of 2013.

During the recession years, Croatia lost over 12 % of its output as the rate of GDP contraction slowed to 1 % in 2013, with around 0.3 percentage points due to the loss of preferential export status to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) region after the country's July 2013 accession to the EU. Despite weak labour markets and declining real wages, private consumption turned positive. There was a strong increase in personal consumption in the course of the first quarter of 2014, which was, in seasonally adjusted terms, 0.8 % higher compared to the fourth quarter of 2013. In spite of such increase, personal consumption remained 0.5 % below its level from 2013. Annual inflation slowed to 2.2 % in 2013. Public debt is estimated to rise to above 64 % of GDP in 2013 and external debt will be close to 103 % of GDP in the same year.

To conclude, Croatia's economy is yet to show signs of the sustainable recovery from the economic crisis. The privatization of large state-owned enterprise and the availability of EU funds (in net terms about 2 % of GDP per year) should help growth prospects in the medium term. The structural reforms that the Government launched in labour, pension, and social benefits as well as investment climate areas could help stimulate job creation, productivity, and social cohesion. But the outlook for the short term in Croatia remains difficult.

Industrial production in Croatia, until the recession, had an important place in total production (Republic of Croatia, 2014a and 2014 b). According to their total revenues, the leading industrial branches lie the production of food, drinks and tobacco, and these are followed by the chemical and oil industries. Tourism needs to be specially pointed out since it presents an important driver of the economy and generates strong multiplying effects spilling over to other economic fields. In 2013, the share of tourism in the overall economy GDP was estimated at 16.5% with the international receipts totalling EUR 7.2 billion, significantly reducing Croatia's external trade imbalance, accounting for a third of Croatia's exports and two thirds of services exports. Moreover, 12.5 million arrivals and 64.8 million overnight stays were recorded in 2013, while permanent employees in tourism sector numbered 84,200 or 6.3 % of total employment. Construction, up until the beginning of the recession, was one of the most propulsive sectors, especially in road building, housing and commercial construction, but after 2008 construction projects were reduced significantly. After exhibiting a strong growth in January in 2014, which allowed for a 4-percent rise in the first quarter of 2014 compared to the last quarter of 2013, industrial activity started decelerating which has finally resulted in the negative trend. The cumulative year-on-year numbers are still positive but diminishing with every new observation. Consequently, after the first five months of 2014 industrial activity was just 0.4 % higher than in the same period last year.

Small and medium entrepreneurship (SME) has been one of the core drivers of the Croatian economy in the recent period, playing an important role in industrial restructuring, competitiveness and innovation, as well as in generating new employment. The total number of small and business enterprises (SMEs) has been increasing slowly, and in 2011 it reached 99.76% (in EU-15 99.8%) of all registered enterprises. SMEs make up 99.7% of the total number of enterprises in Croatia (92.2% are micro, 6.3% small and 1.2% medium-sized enterprises). The SME sector participates with 68.3% in total employment (1.03 million persons) which is higher than the EU average, generating EUR 20.5 billion of value added (59%), which is at the EU average, and 51% of GDP. and generates 50% of GDP, while it participates in the total export with the share of 41%. The most active sectors are wholesale and retail trade (24.35% of enterprises), with real estate and manufacturing (13.27%) trailing behind. The information on the location of economic activity on the county level, measured in terms of registered businesses, shows that SMEs are concentrated in a few major urban centres (Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, Osijek and the surrounding areas). Despite the progress that has been demonstrated in the SME sector over the last years, there are a number of challenges in terms of SME performance, which need to be overcome if Croatia is to reap the full benefits of the EU membership, and respond effectively to the challenges of the EU and global markets.

1.4. Structure/development of the labour force

Croatia is undergoing a restructuring process which is still characterized by sectoral shifts, privatisation, public sector reform and economic adjustment, which are all likely to influence large numbers of workers. In addition, the new economic crisis aggravates the already existing problems in the labour market, such as low and declining labour force participation, high levels of unemployment, labour shedding and a large informal sector, lack of qualified human capital and skill mismatch (Republic of Croatia, 2014a; Republic of Croatia 2014b)

Croatia's employment rate decreased by about 1.3 - 3.0 percentage points annually from 62.9% in 2008 to 53.9% in 2013, much more severely than in the EU (70.3% down to 68.3%). Employment has most notably declined in construction, wholesale and retail, manufacturing, publishing and media, which all shed more than one sixth of the workforce. The decline was more modest in transport, hospitality and business services, while some employment growth was evident in knowledge-intensive services, in particular IT, health and education. The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia 2020 (*Strategija razvoja turizma Republike Hrvatske do 2020. godine*), enacted by Croatian Parliament in 2013, and The Industrial Strategy of the Republic of Croatia (*Industrijska strategija Republike Hrvatske 2014. - 2020*), enacted by Croatian Parliament in 2014, are estimated to increase the employment rate by up to 5 percentage points by 2020, focusing on medium-high tech manufacturing, communication and IT, in line with the smart specialization framework, and having in mind demands of the growing "green economy". This requires substantial investment in development of curricula, attractiveness and quality of vocational education and apprenticeships, while retaining the human capital of older workers already in employment, as well as a system of coordination and cooperation between the business, education system and scientific research sector.

Table 2. Employment rate, age group 20-64, %, total

geo\time	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU (28 countries)	70,3	69	68,5	68,5	68,4	68,4
EU (27 countries)	70,3	69	68,6	68,6	68,5	68,5
Croatia	62,9	61,7	58,7	57	55,4	57,2 (b)

Source: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 17.11.2014 b=break in time series

The employment rate is not equally unfavourable for all segments of population. Employment rate gap is most prominent among youth below 25 and cohorts over 50, while the population 30-39 is about the EU average. Employment rate of women in 2013 was 49.7% which is well under the EU average (62.5%) and considerably lower than 58.3% employment rate of men. In the final quarter of 2013, employment rate for women in the age group 15-24 stood at 12.5%, 25-54 at 64.4% and 55-64 at 31.5%, significantly lower than in males (17.8%; 69.9%; 42.7% respectively). Employment rate is very low for persons without upper secondary education: 35.7% in 2013, modest for numerous population with upper secondary education (53.8%), and substantially

better for persons with tertiary education (74.2%). This is markedly worse for any given group than EU averages (51.4%, 69.3%, 81.7%), but the employment rate gap is much larger for the population without tertiary education.

Apart from the economic crisis, the labour market participation is being threatened by demographic changes, as the pool of working age population declines (population 55-64 in 2011 stood at 584,000 while their replacement cohort 15-24 numbered only 505,000).

The unemployment rate is steadily increasing from 8.4% in 2008, reaching 17.2% in 2013. A total of 345,112 persons were registered as unemployed. Unemployment figures indicate an improvement in the second quarter of 2014. After a peak in February 2014, the number of registered unemployed has been falling sharply to reach 305,000 in June, which is 7 % less than in May and 4 % less than a year ago. Seasonally adjusted unemployment figures suggest a sharp reversal of negative trends. However, registered employment has not followed such an encouraging trend. Although total employment has been rising since March, this has mostly been due to regular seasonal oscillations. When compared with the level from a year ago it has continued to remain in shortfall by about 2 percent. Moreover, recent increase in employment has been much smaller than a decrease in unemployment, causing reduction in the active population. The active population has been declining ever since February 2013 and in May 2014 it was 2.3 % lower than a year ago and 7 % lower than in May 2008.

Table 3. Working age population, by activity, '000

	I. - III. 2013.	IV. - VI. 2013.	VII. - IX. 2013.	IX. - XII. 2013.	I. - III. 2014. ¹⁾	IV. - VI. 2014.
Total						
Working age population (15+)	3 625	3 624	3 622	3 619	3 617	3 616
Labour force	1 794	1 853	1 869	1 851	1 856	1 878
Persons in employment	1 471	1 542	1 557	1 525	1 509	1 567
Unemployed persons	322	310	312	326	347	311
Inactive population	1 831	1 771	1 753	1 768	1 762	1 738
%						
Activity rate	49,5	51,1	51,6	51,2	51,3	51,9
Employment/population ratio	40,6	42,6	43,0	42,1	41,7	43,3
Unemployment rate	18,0	16,8	16,7	17,6	18,7	16,6
Unemployment rate (15 - 64)	18,2	17,0	17,0	17,9	18,8	16,7
Men						
Working age population (15+)	1 728	1 729	1 728	1 727	1 726	1 726
Labour force	981	996	1 016	995	994	1 005
Persons in employment	802	820	841	821	823	852
Unemployed persons	179	176	175	174	171	153
Inactive population	747	733	712	732	733	721
%						
Activity rate	56,8	57,6	58,8	57,6	57,6	58,2
Employment/population ratio	46,4	47,4	48,7	47,5	47,7	49,4
Unemployment rate	18,3	17,7	17,2	17,5	17,2	15,2
Unemployment rate (15 - 64)	18,5	18,0	17,5	17,9	17,4	15,4

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, Date of extraction: 14.11. 2014

A particular problem is long-term unemployment, which accounted for 11.0% out of active population (two thirds of all unemployed) in 2013. This risk is especially high among unemployed with less than upper secondary education, older unemployed and unemployed persons with no prior employment experience. Education plays a large role in unemployment risk, as within 25-64 age group the unemployment rate stood at 19.6% for persons with primary and lower secondary education, 15.2% for those with upper secondary education and 9.3% for the tertiary educated population. One of the most prominent issues in relation to youth unemployment is lack of working experience - up to 40% of registered unemployed youth in the 15-29 age group have no formal working experience. On the other hand, working experience is precisely the requirement employers regard as crucial. Additionally, youth are more exposed to temporary and precarious employment. Eurostat data for 2013 show that in Croatia 37.7% of employees are accounted for by youth in temporary employment, as compared to the percentage of 31.6% on the EU level, stressing the need for supporting mechanisms for sustainable integration of youth into the labour market. Eurostat reported that in the last quarter of 2013 the proportion of persons available for work, but not seeking one, mainly because they think no work is available, was the highest in Italy (12.3 % of the labour force) followed by Croatia (12.0 %), whereas the EU-28 average was below 4 % (3.9 %).

In Croatia, there have been several attempts to tackle the issue of undeclared work and the underground economy. A comprehensive and systematic approach of strategies, measures and policies based on the in-depth analysis of the situation and gathering of relevant data to measure undeclared work more precisely was not developed and implemented yet. The share of underground economy in the Croatian economy is rather high compared to other EU countries (Croatia 29.8% and EU-27 19%).

1.5. Degree of regulation of access to occupations/professions

Croatia's accession to the European Union on 1st July 2013 signalled the application of the provisions of the Act on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications (*Zakon o reguliranim profesijama i priznavanju inozemnih stručnih kvalifikacija*) that regulate the question of recognition of foreign professional qualifications in the Republic of Croatia for the purpose of establishment and free provision of services on a temporary and occasional basis in Croatia on the basis of foreign professional qualifications.

This Act stipulates that, starting from 1st July 2013, all those who want to provide services within a regulated profession in Croatia (List of regulated professions in the Republic of Croatia - in Croatian), and have acquired their professional qualification abroad, have to contact the competent authority (professional associations (chambers) or competent ministries) which grants access to that regulated profession in Croatia, and apply for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications. In accordance with this Act, the National ENIC/NARIC Office was designated the national contact point for providing various types of information on the recognition of professional qualifications.

The Act has been harmonised with the Directive 2005/36/EC, which guarantees that persons who have acquired their professional qualifications in a Member State have access to the same profession and can pursue it in another Member State with the same rights as nationals.

Regulated professions are listed in the Register/Database of Regulated Professions in the Republic of Croatia.

1.6. Main features of welfare / employment policies relevant to VET

The main welfare/employment policies relevant to vocational education and training (VET) are active labour market policies (*Mjere aktivne politike zapošljavanja*, MAPZ). Responsible line institutions are the Ministry of Labour and Pension System (*Ministarstvo rada i mirovniskog sustava*, MRMS) and Croatian Employment Centre (*Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje*, HZZ). MAPZ are being implemented in line with the European employment incentive strategies and it included: subsidies for employment and self-employment of unemployed persons, subsidies for advancement of newly employed persons and job retention subsidies; financing of labour-market education intended for unemployed persons and vocational training for employment without a work contract; as well as co-financing of employment in public works and job retention programmes.

In 2013-2014, MAPZ were grouped in packages intended for specific target groups of unemployed persons and employed persons threatened by job loss:

- young persons up to 29 years of age;
- long-term unemployed persons;
- persons aged 50+;
- persons with disabilities;
- special groups of unemployed persons such as: single parents, young persons from children's homes, family abuse victims, Croatian war veterans, parents of four or more underage children, parents of children with special needs, asylum seekers, treated addicts, and other groups of unemployed persons facing the threat of social exclusion and long-term unemployment;
- the Roma; and
- employers facing difficulties in efforts to preserve jobs.

As of 2013, employers from the field of tourism are also eligible to seek subsidies for employment and permanent seasonal workers are eligible to seek financial assistance during the period of the year when they are unemployed.

As mentioned above, Croatia faces significant rise of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET). In 2013 (Ministry of Labour and Pension System of the Republic of Croatia, 2014), 20.9% of Croatian youth was in NEET status, which is significantly above the European average of 15.9%. Interestingly, Croatia exhibits higher NEET figures for the subgroup of 25-29 (amounting to 26.3%), than the EU prioritised group of 15-24 (18.6%). If not integrated, NEETs lose skills and qualifications, while postponing transition to social adulthood, which calls for targeted action. Subsequently, strong emphasis has been put on youth related employment policies starting with 2012.

The adoption of Employment Promotion Act (*Zakon o poticanju zapošljavanja, ZPZ*) in 2012 for the first time allowed employers in the private sector to take on youth in a form of traineeship called "Occupational training without commencing employment" (*Stručno osposobljavanje za rad bez zasnivanja radnog odnosa*). This institute was previously available for a narrow population of youth for a limited period (12 months) and only employers from the public and government sector were allowed to conclude a contract on occupational training with an unemployed young person with an obligation to secure a mentor and their pension insurance, with no mandatory remuneration for the intern, but with all other non-material benefits. ZPZ now states that every person, with no regard to their age and with less than 12 months of experience in their respective occupation can take part under this scheme. This way, an employer, who can now be from private sector, is reimbursed costs for obligatory contributions. A young person is compensated with 1.600,00 KN (about 210 EUR) in the amount of non-taxable scholarship and transportation costs to promote inter-city mobility. This kind of internship scheme can last as long as it is required by rules of a respective profession - usually for 12 month, but not more than 36 months (which is only possible for specific crafts to gain access to master's exam, after which a young person is highly employable), but it can now be done for a 12 month period just for the sake of gaining first work experience. Accompanying measure "Work after occupational training" (*Rad nakon stručnog osposobljavanja*) was developed for all employers who are willing to hire a person aged 15 up to 30 trained under this scheme (work contract) to level out the odds for those young people trained in public and government sector where there is no obligation to resume contract. This traineeship was frowned upon at first, but the results on the course of 2011 - 2013 showed promising results, as over 50% of those covered by this scheme found employment within a year of their training.

Taking into account the stated issues, as well as the EU initiatives targeting youth, Croatia (i.e. MRMS together 17 different stakeholders) has elaborated the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (*Plan implementacije garancije za mlade, PIGZM*), encompassing reforms, initiatives and measures focusing on:

- Early intervention and activation - reforms and measures that prevent early school leaving and support activation of inactive young people;
- Labour market integration - reforms and measures aimed at youth activation in the LM through strengthening job creation, strengthening employers to offer high quality schemes of the work based learning, encouraging youth entrepreneurship etc.

PIGZM constitutes a comprehensive scheme of youth directed activities that are being or are to be financed from national, EU and other sources. PIGZM focuses its efforts on youth under 30 years old and as regards the group of unemployed youth, on rapid reaction, i.e. to persons registered with the HZZ for less than 4 months. It contains stronger involvement of the education system, in particular with respect to apprenticeships, linkages between education system and employers and establishing VET curricula

In cooperation with youth representatives, as well as social partners, with the beginning of 2013 MAPZ were aligned to focus on beneficiaries and “Young and Creative” package was created, adding firstly 11 new measures and better suiting them to the needs of individual and current labour market situation. This package now (2014) counts 23 measures under employment and self-employment subsidies, training and specialization subsidies, occupational training, public works with emphases on added value (new social services in community, support to civil society organisation, green jobs, EU projects support, etc.) and job preservation. Measures were very well accepted and have been evaluated during 2014.

1.7. Value of VET qualification on the labour market / mismatches

In terms of the enrolments, the value of the vocational education has apparently not risen against the background of the economic recession and unemployment.

When it comes to the labour market situation of the persons with various VET qualifications versus persons with other level of education, the unemployment trends by educational attainment for the period 2010-2013 are presented in the Table 3 below:

Table 4. Average number of unemployed persons by educational attainment

Level of education	% of unemployed persons per year			
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Without education / uncompleted primary education	6.0	5.7	5.6	5.3
Primary education	23.4	22.5	21.2	20.7
1 to 3-year secondary VET schools	34.2	34.4	34.2	34.0
4 (or more)-year secondary VET school and gymnasium	27.4	27.6	27.9	28.5
Post-secondary non-university education	3.8	4.1	4.7	5.1
Undergraduate degree, postgraduate degree (incl. master , PhD)	5.0	5.7	6.3	6.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100,0	100,0

Source: Croatian Employment Service, Yearbooks 2011 - 2013

In the period 2010-2013 (Croatian Employment Service, 2011, 2012 and 2013), the largest number of registered unemployed persons referred to persons with secondary school education, most notably those who completed 1 to 3-year VET secondary school. As far as the educational attainment is concerned in 2012, the average number of unemployed persons increased in most groups distinguished by the level of education. The smallest increase was recorded in the group with the lowest level of education, while the greatest increase was recorded in the group with the highest level of education. Thus, the average number of unemployed persons with completed basic school increased by only 0.4%, while the average number of unemployed persons with post-secondary non-university education increased by 20.6%.

In 2013, the average number of unemployed persons grew across all groups distinguished by the level of education. The smallest increase was however recorded in the group with the lowest level of education, while the greatest increase was recorded in the groups with secondary, post-secondary non-university and university education. The average number of unemployed persons with no schooling or uncompleted primary school thus increased by as little as 1.2%, the average number of unemployed persons with 4-year secondary education increased by 8.7%, while the average number of unemployed persons with undergraduate university or post-secondary non-university education increased by as many as 14.9%.

On the other hand, persons with secondary education accounted for the greatest share of the total number of persons from HZZ register employed on a work contract basis in 2013, including both the persons who completed a 1 to 3-year vocational school (37.5%) and persons who completed a 4-year vocational school or grammar school (30.7%). The mentioned groups are followed by persons with lower levels of education, i.e. persons who completed basic school (14.2%) and persons with no schooling (1.8%), and persons with a high level of education: persons with graduate and post-graduate education (9.5%) and undergraduate university or post-secondary non-university education. Compared to 2012, registered employment increased across all groups distinguished by the level of education, except in the group of persons with no schooling and uncompleted primary school in which the number of persons employed declined by 6.6%. The greatest increase in employment was recorded in the group of persons with undergraduate university education (17.7%) and four-year vocational secondary school or grammar school (14.7%).

On the general note (European Training Foundation, 2013), the persons with the three-year VET qualification are faced with the most profound problems on the labour market. The share of workers with three-year VET education remained relatively high and stable during the periods of growth (32.8% in 2004; 32.7% in 2008). However, this group was struck particularly hard during the recession as its share in total employment fell to 27.9% by 2011. On the flip side, the average number of people with this level of education registered with HZZ decreased steadily while economic growth was strong: from 124 000 in 2004 to 81 000 in 2008, outperforming the general decline in unemployment (310 000 to 237 000). Consequently, the share of people with 3-year VET qualifications in total unemployment declined from 40.1% to 34.4% during this period. Since the crisis began, the number of unemployed people with 3-year vocational education has increased reaching its peak in the period 2011-2012. Research carried out while developing VET sectoral profiles (see Chapter 3 for more general details on the VET sector profiles) indicates that the decrease in labour market entry dynamics during the crisis period was worse for graduates from three-year vocational courses than from other levels of education.

Enrolment in three-year VET programmes has seen a steady decline over the past 15 years. Thus the number of students completing the final year of such programmes declined from 21 000 in 1998 to 16 000 in 2004, less than 13 000 in 2008 and about 11 000 in 2011 - effectively halving in just 13 years and declining as a share of upper secondary education graduates from 40% to 26%. The decline in cohort size (from 58 000 in 1998 to 46 400 in 2008) translated into a reduction in the number of entrants only in the three-year VET programmes. The number of placements in more popular 4-year VET programmes and general education programmes (gymnasium) remained steady over the years due to an unchanging bottom-up system of setting entry quotas.

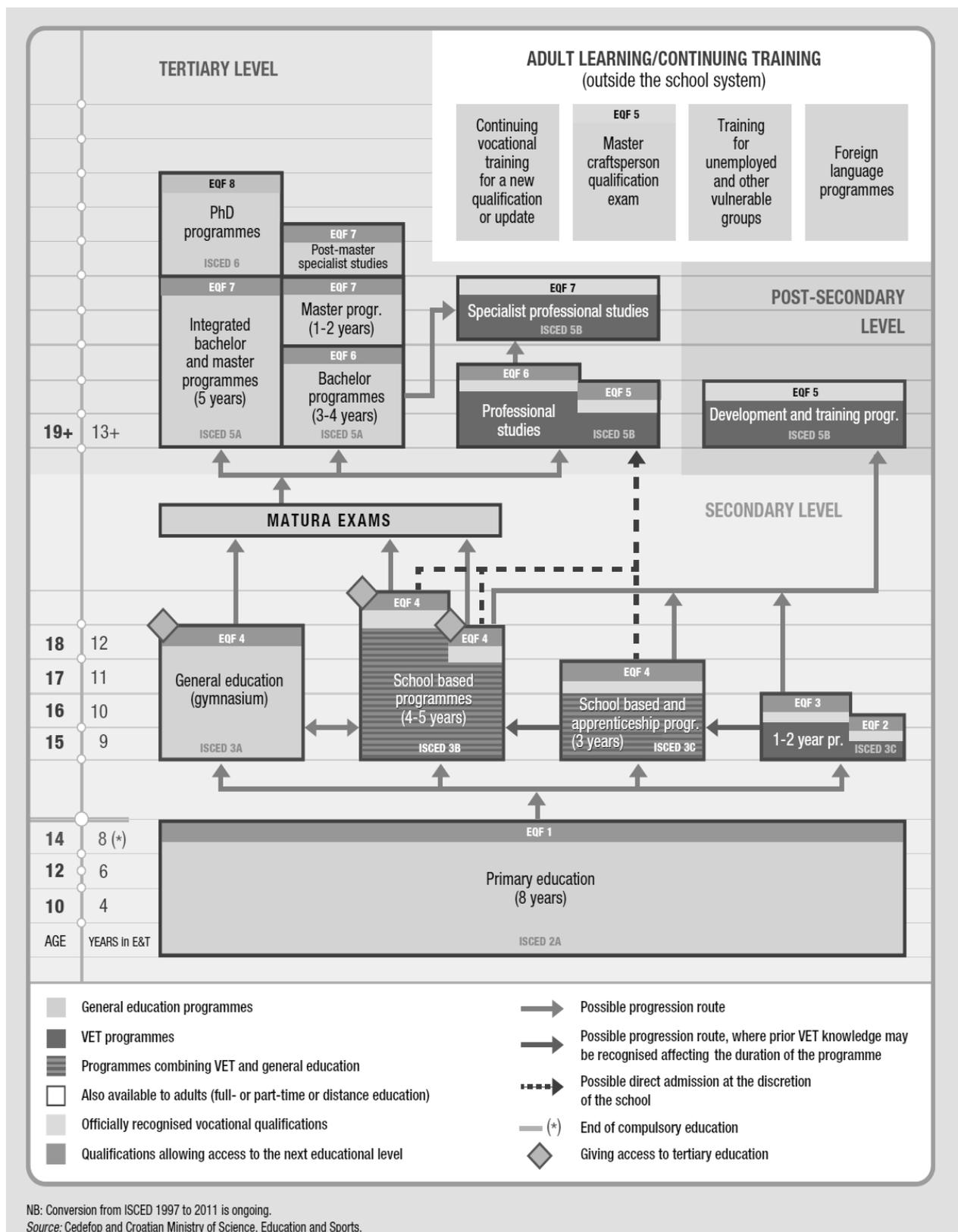
This resulted in an entire demographic decline affecting exclusively three-year VET programmes, in particular the least popular sectors within it. If this trend continues, this principle could soon leave 3-year VET in ruin, as a sharp demographic decline is expected when it comes to the cohort size of youth aged 14 (entry age for upper secondary education). Such demographic trends, combined with a continuation of the enrolment principles applied for the past 20 years as well as the deterioration of crafts and industry in Croatia that is aggravated by the slow pace of recovery from the economic crisis, may result in further enrolment decline in 3-year VET programmes by 2016. Viewed over the long term, these patterns can particularly influence the motivation of the 3-year VET students with the low achievement level and eventually their chances for integration into the labour market and social inclusion in local communities.

For the time being, there is no comprehensive analysis that would systematically examine the responsiveness of the education system to the labour market needs; although considerable effort was made in VET through the development of sector profiles (see Chapter 3 for more general details on the VET sector profiles). It is however considered that a mismatch exists. There appears to be a significant mismatch between the contents of education and the requirements of the labour market and very low levels of provision of adult education and training. However, more reliable information needs to be gathered on skills availability and needs.

CHAPTER 2

2. Providing VET in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1. Chart of the national education and training system



As shown in the Chart, the existing education and training system in Croatia consists of:

- Preschool education (*predškolski odgoj*);
- Primary education (*osnovno obrazovanje*);
- Secondary education (*srednje obrazovanje*), with:
 - General secondary education schools in general or specialized gymnasias (*opće ili specijalizirane gimnazije*);
 - Education in art schools (*umjetničke škole*);
 - Secondary VET education in secondary VET schools (*strukovne škole*) through:
 - Adapted VET programmes for students with disabilities (*posebni ili prilagođeni programi strukovnog obrazovanja*);
 - 1-year VET programmes (*1-godišnji programi strukovnog obrazovanja*);
 - 2-year VET programmes (*2-godišnji programi strukovnog obrazovanja*);
 - 3-year VET programmes (*3-godišnji programi strukovnog obrazovanja*);
 - 4-year programmes, including 5-year programmes for regulated occupations in health sector (*4-godišnji programi strukovnog obrazovanja, uključujući 5-godišnje programe za posebno regulirana zanimanja iz zdravstvenog sektora*);
- Postsecondary development and training programmes (*Programi stručnog obrazovanja i osposobljavanja nakon srednjeg obrazovanja*);
- Higher education (*visoko obrazovanje*), with the following structure:
 - University study (*sveučilišni studij*):
 - Undergraduate university study programmes (*preddiplomski sveučilišni studij*);
 - Graduate university study programmes (*diplomski sveučilišni studij*);
 - Postgraduate university study programmes (*poslijediplomski sveučilišni studij*);
 - Professional study (*stručni studij*):
 - Undergraduate professional study programmes (*prediplomski stručni studij*);
 - Specialist professional graduate study programmes (*Specijalistički diplomski stručni studij*);

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

According to the Development Strategy for Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia 2008-2013 (*Strategija razvoja sustava strukovnog obrazovanja u RH 2008. - 2013.*) that shaped the most recent VET reform initiatives, the VET system in Croatia serves to develop vocational and key competencies related to specific types of programmes within the concept of lifelong learning, and is relevant for achieving sustainable employment to meet the needs of a modern, competitive and flexible labour market or to prepare individuals for further education. These goals also impose the need for different approaches to learning, different methods and procedures within the teaching process and new teacher competencies. The Strategy aimed at modernisation and reform of the VET system based on principles of availability, relevance, quality assurance and transparency.

VET system in Croatia is regulated by the Vocational Education and Training Act (*Zakon o strukovnom obrazovanju*), which defines the objectives and principles of VET, acquisition of qualifications, VET quality assurance, stakeholder cooperation through joint advisory and expert bodies, and conditions for organising student practice in companies. However, this Act limits its ambitions to secondary VET, leaving a gap at the levels above ISCED 3.

The part of the VET system pertaining to trades and crafts qualifications/professions is conducted pursuant to the Crafts Act (*Zakon o obrtu*). Currently, this part of the system is going through major changes that are result of new Crafts Act (enacted in 2013), which among other regulates apprenticeship. New Act made a shift in jurisdiction between various institutions.

In addition, all programmes related to secondary VET education can be also provided as adult education and training programmes/continuous VET in line with the provisions of the Adult Education Act (*Zakon o obrazovanju odraslih*). This Act has established a normative framework and created legal prerequisites for further development of adult education as an integral part of the Croatian education system as a whole. In the field of formal adult education, standards are defined through one of four by-laws complementing the Act.

The process of shaping a modern VET system in Croatia has been initiated in the mid-2000s by the Agency for VET and Adult Education (*Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje i obrazovanje odraslih*, ASOO) and is still being led by that line institution. The first step in the process has been the complete overhaul of the system of occupations/ qualifications in the course of 2005 - 2008, that reduced 31 education sectors to 13 VET sectors and the sector of Arts. The current structure of the VET sectors is as follows:

- Sector 1: Agriculture, food and veterinary
- Sector 2: Forestry and wood processing
- Sector 3: Geology, Mining, Oil and Chemical industries
- Sector 4: Textile and Leather
- Sector 5: Graphics Technology and Audio-visual design
- Sector 6: Mechanical Engineering, Shipbuilding and Metallurgy
- Sector 7: Electrotechnics and information technology
- Sector 8: Construction and Geodesy
- Sector 9: Economy, trade and business administration
- Sector 10: Tourism and hospitality
- Sector 11: Transport and logistics
- Sector 12: Health and Social Care
- Sector 13: Security services, personal and other services.

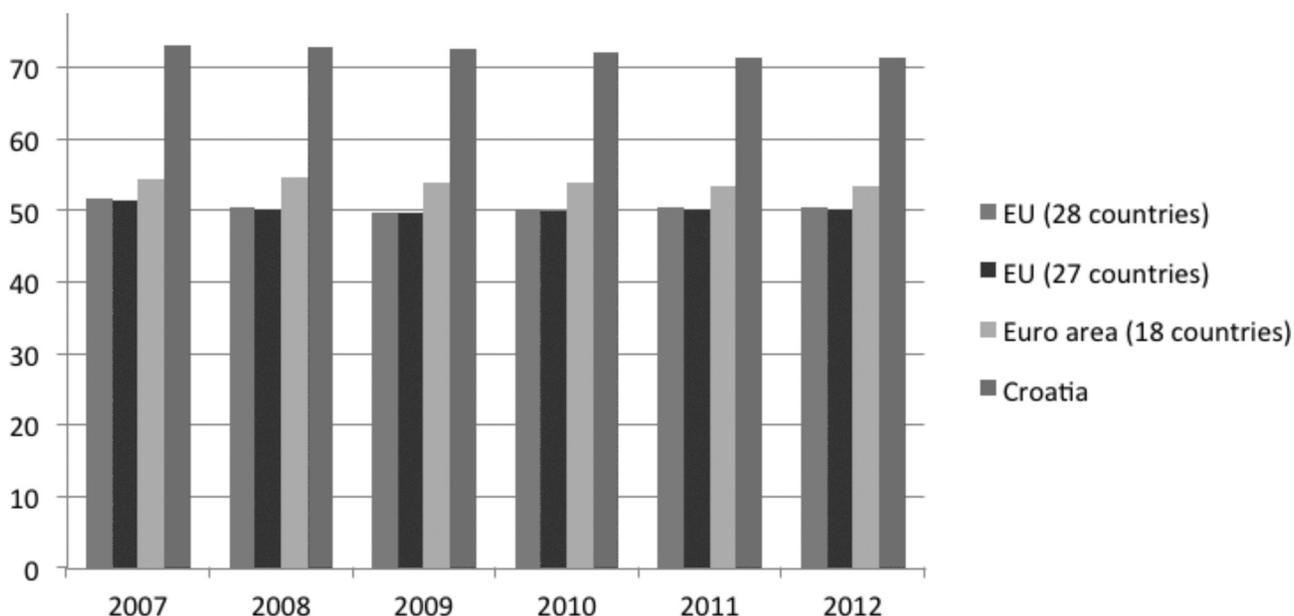
Having said that, the most recent step in the ASOO-led modernisation of the VET system is the initiative aimed at ensuring modernisation of the in-service training system for VET teachers.

In October 2014, the new Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (*Strategija obrazovanja, znanosti i tehnologije*) was enacted by Croatian Parliament. It is designed to propose measures that are aligned with strategies of the EU 2020, but also contains the goals whose achievement is expected by the year 2025. Underlying idea of the Strategy is existence of a knowledge triangle - lifelong learning, science and innovation. Regarding the VET system, the Strategy, *inter alia*, strongly emphasizes the importance of better connection of education and training to the labour market, and improvement of educational outcomes and skills - in order to establish common values, principles and objectives of all forms of VET, the Strategy envisaged the development of a National curriculum for VET.

2.2.1. Initial vocational education and training (IVET)

The current IVET system (upper secondary education) covers approximately 140,000 secondary VET students or on average 72 % of the total secondary school population in 307 schools.

Figure 2. Students at ISCED level 3-vocational stream - as % of all students at ISCED level 3 , %, total



Source: Eurostat, Date of extraction:17.11.2014

The IVET system is comprised of the following types of the VET programmes:

- Adapted VET programmes for students with disabilities;
- one-year VET programmes
- two-year VET programmes
- three-year VET programmes
- four-year VET programmes, including relevant five-year VET programmes.

Table 5. Main features of IVET programmes (upper secondary education)

VET programme / features	ISCED level	CROQF / EQF level	Number of programmes	Primary progression routes
1-year VET programmes / Two-year VET programmes	ISCED 3C	2 / 2 3 / 3	49	Labour market / Master craftsmen exam
3-year VET programmes for professions in industry	ISCED 3C	4.1 / 4	72	Labour market
3-year VET programmes for professions in crafts	ISCED 3C	4.1 / 4	63	Labour market / Master craftsmen exam
4-year VET programmes (including 5-year VET programme)	ISCED 3B	4.2 / 4	95	Labour market / Higher education (via StateMatura)

Sources: Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia /Agency for Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2014; Agency for VET and Adult Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2014;

One-year and two-year VET programmes

One-year and two-year VET programmes lead to lower professional qualifications at Croatian Qualification Framework (*Hrvatski kvalifikacijski okvir*, CROQF) level 2/European Qualification Framework (EQF) level 2 and CROQF level 3/EQF level 3 respectively. On average, they are attended by on average 1-2% of the total number of the secondary VET school students. The entry requirements for one-year and two-year VET programmes are: primary school certificate of completion of 7th and 8th grade (8 years of compulsory primary school), health and psychological conditions prescribed by curricula according to the law.

Currently, there are 49 programmes that offer relevant lower professional qualifications. VET students holding relevant certificates can apply for master craftsmen exam (*majstorski ispit*) after 10 years of working experience.

Three-year VET programmes

Three-year VET programmes for acquiring competencies in industry, trades and crafts lead to qualifications at CROQF level 4.1/EQF level 4. It is worth noting that the respective three-year VET programmes underwent the largest number of changes/reforms in the course of 1990s - 2000s. The complete overhaul of all crafts and trades programmes started with the introduction of dual system programmes in the school year 1995/1996 (consisted of 53 mostly very narrow specialisations / occupations that can be exercised in the crafts sector or other small businesses). To overcome the parallelism of dual and the school-based models as well as a number of hindrances in the implementation, a transition to the Unified Model of Education (*Jedinstveni model obrazovanja*, JMO) for crafts and trades was made during the school years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, respectively, which combines characteristics of both models.

Subsequently, there are two main sub-types: (i) predominantly school-based programmes for industrial and trade occupations; and (ii) JMO, which includes an apprenticeship-type scheme. On average, the three-year programmes are attended by 35-36% of the total number of the secondary VET school students. The entry requirements for three-year VET programmes are: primary school certificate of completion of 7th and 8th grade (8 years of compulsory primary school), health and psychological conditions prescribed by curricula according to the law. An additional condition before beginning education for crafts occupations is a signed contract on apprenticeship. Currently, there are 72 three-year VET programmes for professions in the industry and 63 three-year VET programmes for trades and crafts.

Three-year VET programmes focus exclusively on preparing graduates for labour market entry. These programmes do not enable access to the State Matura exams (*ispiti državne mature*). Nor do they provide a direct pathway to tertiary education - VET students need to complete the fourth year and take the State Matura exams to qualify for tertiary level entry. As of the year 2014 (Letica, J., Ištvančić, I., Buić, N., 2014), students who have completed VET programs for crafts or other three-year VET programs can continue his education at the expense of the State Budget in the fourth year in the same or in another VET sector or in gymnasium programs. The student take additional and supplementary exams of the first, second and third year of a particular qualification and then enter the fourth grade. Student can complete equivalent of a four-year program during period of two years. Upon successful completion student can take State Matura Exams that enable enrolment into the higher education institutions

On the other hand, graduates holding relevant qualifications can apply for master craftsmen exam after 2 years of working experience within the occupation at stake if they have the certificate in crafts, and after 3 if they have the certificate in other three years programmes. The status of master craftsmen (*majstorsko zvanje*) enables them to start their own businesses, employ workers and train apprentices. About 1 000 people per year pass this exam.

Number of students enrolling into three-year industrial and craftsman programmes is in steady decline in recent years.

Four-year VET programmes

Four-year VET programmes, including five-year VET programmes for regulated occupations in the health sector, lead to qualifications at CROQF level 4.2/EQF level 4. When it comes to the five years VET programmes for regulated professions, a five-year nursing education model has been established in line with the framework of vertical integration within a university education for all health professions, as was proposed by the EU Directive 36/2005/EU addressing the harmonization of the EQF.

On average, four-year VET programmes (including five-year VET programmes) are attended by 65-67 % of the total number of the secondary VET school students. The entry requirements for four-year VET programmes are: primary school certificate of completion of 7th and 8th grade (8 years of compulsory primary school), health and psychological conditions prescribed by curricula according to the law. Currently, there are 95 programmes that offer relevant qualifications.

Students having spent four years (or 5 years for regulated professions) at vocational schools also have the option of taking the State Matura exams, which is an external assessment. Students holding this qualification/vocational certificate as well as a certificate on the passed State Matura exams (*potvrda o položenim ispitima državne mature*) can apply to higher education. This puts the four-year graduates on track to tertiary education with no formal restrictions.

Number of students enrolling into four-years programmes is relatively stable in recent years

2.2.2. Continuous vocational education and training (CVET)

Formal CVET in Croatia covers programmes with various educational attainment levels for learners who are older than 16. They may be required to have a certain vocational qualification or work experience. Duration of programmes is shorter than one year but depends on the target group and complexity of the qualifications.

These programmes' objectives are to acquire:

- a vocational qualification;
- an additional vocational qualification;
- a competence to perform jobs or functions regulated by law.

CVET enables adult learners with previous education/work experience to acquire a professional qualification. Programmes are always concluded for a specific state-recognised qualification/profession. Professional improvement enables people regardless of their age and previous education or professional qualifications to master systematized professional knowledge and skills corresponding to the requirements of the labour market. Relevant CVET programmes that are approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (*Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i sporta*, MZOS) include:

- acquiring a secondary school degree or qualification
- low-skill professional qualification
- professional re-training, training and supplemental training.

Graduation from these programmes leads to CROQF levels 2 - 4.1/4.2 qualifications (see Chapter 3. Shaping VET qualification for further details).

2.2.3. Main features of apprenticeships and similar schemes

Three-year VET programmes for acquiring competencies in industry, trades and crafts are the only formal IVET programmes that are based more on professional and practical competences in majority acquired through apprenticeship scheme. The aforementioned JMO is based on the apprenticeship-type of schemes

Education for attainment of VET qualifications in trades and crafts is implemented according to a VET curriculum that consists of two parts - general education part and apprenticeship (Letica, J., Ištvančić, I., Buić, N., 2014). Apprenticeship consists of a professional-theoretical part and practical training and exercises. 3-year VET curricula for qualifications in trades and crafts is approved by minister in charge of education with prior consent of minister in charge of crafts.

General education and professional-theoretical part is implemented in VET schools. The practical training and exercises are implemented mainly in the work process, i.e. in craft business workshops or in a trade association, institution or cooperative licensed by the Croatian Chamber of Crafts and Trades (*Hrvatska obrtnička komora*, HOK). In a school year 2013/2014, the total number of licensed craft workshops or legal entities involved in the implementation of the apprenticeship-type of scheme in Croatia was 10.560. To a lesser extent, the practical training takes places in VET schools' workshops (according to the number of hours defined by the VET curriculum for each qualification).

For the practical training and exercises in craft business workshop or other legal entities, those institutions must provide conditions for the student to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies in the real work process and allow student the quality of the practical training and exercises, in accordance with the curriculum. This means that a student must have a mentor appointed to him (her) with adequate qualifications and pedagogical competences.

After successful completion of vocational education and training program for crafts student take apprenticeship exam that is organised by ASOO and National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (*Nacionalni centar za vanjsko vrednovanje obrazovanja*) and in line with new Crafts Act.

The journeyman certificate (*potvrda o položenom pomoćničkom ispitu*) as well as master craftsmen certificate (*potvrda o položenom majstorskom ispitu*) and relevant master craftsmen qualifications can be obtained through apprenticeship schemes coordinated by HOK. To apply for relevant examination, the candidate journeyman/master craftsmen has to have sufficient work experience in the field.

HOK also participates in the process of retraining for craftsman professions in the same area of work by undertaking an apprenticeship examination, through which one acquires the apprenticeship vocational certificate. The target groups are usually younger persons who could not find employment in the profession for which they

are qualified but in a similar profession. Wishing to advance to e.g. master craftsman status, those persons very often undertake the apprenticeship examination in the process of retraining for a similar profession.

Alongside to this mainstream apprenticeship scheme, students in other three and four year VET programs have, but at much smaller scale some type of the work-based learning (i.e. practical training/exercises) in companies, but they do not have a status of an “apprentice”.

2.2.4. Routes and progression opportunities / VET opportunities for vulnerable groups

As mentioned above, three-year VET graduates face significant barriers on their potential pathways to four-year programme and, eventually, to tertiary education. Legislative changes in 2012 obliged all schools with three-year programmes to organise an additional (tuition-free) fourth year for students aiming to continue their education. Those aspiring to continue education require a great deal of determination and have to acquire a lot of new skills and knowledge (European Training Foundation, 2013). Consequently, according to the Eurostudent 2010 survey, only about 9% of students in professional higher education and no university students have previously completed three-year vocational education.

As confirmed by various studies (European Training Foundation, 2012; European Training Foundation, 2013), changing courses or streams between three-year and four-year programmes is usually allowed and encouraged at the start of the secondary VET programme. As time passes, entering a different stream or course becomes more demanding for secondary VET students, as the number of exams they have to pass in order to make up for the difference between programmes and the amount of catch-up required in terms of practical training mount.

A few streaming patterns can be identified among secondary VET students. When it comes to horizontal as well as vertical mobility, changing streams usually happens between similar courses or programmes since there are fewer exams that need to be passed in order to make up for the difference between programmes or required hours of practical training. When it comes to vertical mobility, academic achievement is relevant. VET students who underachieve and risk dropping out after they enter four-year programmes often take a chance and enter less demanding three-year programmes. Mobility from three-year to four-year programmes is more difficult. It is mostly merit-based as students need to have good grades in order for the teachers' council to allow them to transfer between programmes. Horizontal mobility may increase the chance of grade retention for some students who were unable to find an apprenticeship in time or to make up for practical training. Transfer of a secondary student from VET schools to general secondary education, i.e. gymnasias, is not a common case due to the obvious differences between two types of secondary education.

Several possible routes are open to early school leavers. They can apply to HZZ and use one of the available active labour market measures. Some of these measures lead to further training that enables early leavers to gain a qualification. One option is to enrol in adult education/CVET programmes, usually offered in VET schools (for which tuition fees must be paid) or by adult education providers. It can be an important remedy to correct for early dropout and support second-chance opportunities.

Generally, speaking, the share of early school-leavers/drop-outs from secondary education system in Croatia is very low as compared to other EU member states. According to Eurostat, the rate of early school leavers (people aged 18-24 who have only lower secondary education or less and are no longer in education or training) was 4,5% in 2013. Apparently, it is concentrated in VET, particularly in three-year courses where enrolment macrodata indicates that up to one-sixth of the cohort do not complete the programme they enrolled in. Early school leaving/dropping-out includes young people who have dropped out of school before the end of compulsory education, those who have completed compulsory schooling, but have not gained an upper secondary qualification, and those who have followed vocational courses which did not lead to a qualification equivalent to upper secondary level. The issue has not been sufficiently linked to other policies addressing young people in Croatia.

Table 6. Early leavers from education and training - % of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training

geo\time	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU (28 countries)	14,7	14,2	13,9	13,4	12,7	12
EU (27 countries)	14,8	14,3	14	13,5	12,8	12
Croatia	3,7	3,9	3,7	4,1	4,2	4,5

Source of Data: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 17.11. 2014

VET-driven social inclusion efforts in secondary VET system are primarily aimed at the integration of special needs students or Roma who are starting to reach upper secondary education in greater numbers (European Training Foundation, 2013b). Students with physical or learning disabilities generally have three options. One option is to pursue regular VET programmes accompanied by individualised support. Another possibility, in the case of those with severe disabilities, is to enrol in adapted programmes within the framework of the one-year and two-year VET programmes which prepare them for so-called “auxiliary” vocational occupations. Alternatively, they enter special educational institutions, which tailor their pedagogical approach and infrastructure to the needs of this student category.

Specific measures aimed at ensuring learning opportunities for unemployed have been elaborated in section 1.6. Welfare/employment policies relevant to VET.

2.2.5. Governance and funding of the VET system

Although several ministries have influence on the development of the VET for the sectors under their remit, the main representative of the Government and, thus, the line ministry responsible for overall policy making and governing in the field of VET is MZOS. MZOS monitors compliance of the VET system with acts and other by-laws/issues within its scope of authority and, hence, coordinates a chain of the executive agencies in the field of education.

The biggest portion of the IVET and the CVET systems is under the competence of ASOO established in 2010 after the merger of two agencies: The Agency for Adult Education established by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in May 2006 and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training established by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in January 2005. As an executive body in charge of the overall development/organisation of the VET system, ASOO is responsible for:

- performing analytical and developmental tasks in the field of vocational and adult education
- coordinating proposals of professional bodies
- performing professional supervision of VET and adult education institutions
- providing professional advice and counselling services
- providing continuous professional development of employees in the field of VET
- innovating, monitoring and evaluating VET programmes
- stimulating cooperation and participation in the implementation of VET programmes and projects
- maintaining a database and providing information to state administration bodies and the relevant ministry on records and other relevant data regarding the
- monitoring of the state of VET and adult education and its development
- preparing analyses of management processes in VET and adult education
- defining criteria for the establishment, implementation and monitoring of systematic funding of adult education with regard to programmes, investment and material.

Among its main responsibilities, ASOO develops new and modernises existing VET curricula based on the VET occupational standards and standards of qualifications, that is competences and learning outcomes, which reflect the needs of labour market and further education (see Chapter 3 for further details). When it comes to the VET teachers, ASOO gives a lot of attention to the professional development and in-service training of VET teachers, through organisation and implementation of professional exams, implementation of procedures for

their promotion, and organisation and implementation of professional trainings.

The VET Council (*Vijeće za strukovno obrazovanje*) has 17 members who are representatives of all stakeholders in the VET area, appointed by the Minister of Education. Their role is to propose educational sectors, coordinate activities, provide initiatives for delivering new or changing existing curricula, propose measures, activities and strategies for VET development, and to perform other activities in compliance with the Decision on Appointment.

Prior to the adoption of the CROQF Act (see Chapter 3. Shaping VET qualification for further details), an important role in the process of harmonisation of the IVET system with labour market needs had 13 VET Sector Councils (*Sektorska vijeća*) which encompassed representatives of all partners and stakeholders in VET.

The current institutional infrastructure in Croatia related to the management of the CVET is not fully structured to deal with relevant wide-ranging and cross-cutting issues/approach. Apart from the companies, overall responsibility and the majority of actions in this area lies with ASOO and partly in HOK (e.g. co-ordination of the master craftsman exams, different forms of re-training into trade and craft professions, etc..

Other key stakeholders / social partners that have (in) direct influence on the overall development of the IVET and the CVET respectively are as follows:

- Education and Teacher Training Agency (*Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje*)
- Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts (*Ministarstvo poduzetništva i obrta*)
- MRMS
- Adult Education Council (*Vijeće za obrazovanje odraslih*)
- Croatian Chamber of Economy (*Hrvatska gospodarska komora*)
- Croatian Employers' Association (*Hrvatska udruga poslodavaca*)
- Industrial trade unions (six confederations of trade unions have met basic criteria for the overall participation in three-partite dialogue).

Since 2001, secondary school financing (including VET schools) has been decentralised. The intention of decentralising financing was to increase education planning and management responsibilities of local government and strengthen the schools' ties with its social and economic environment. Funds are derived from two sources. The State budget provides funding for:

- Salaries for teachers and other employees in education;
- In-service training of teachers and other specialists;
- Expenditures for the education of students from ethnic minorities, those with special needs as well as programmes for gifted students;
- Additional transport costs;
- Special teaching resources and equipment;
- Information and communication technology (ICT) programmes for schools;
- The school library stock;
- Capital investments according to the standards set by the relevant ministry.

Local and regional self-government units provide, via their local tax revenues, funds for:

- Investment and maintenance of school premises and equipment;
- Operating costs of secondary schools;
- Transport costs of elementary school pupils and employees in secondary schools;
- Subsidies for co-financing of pupils costs for food and lodging in pupils' hostels;
- Capital investments according to criteria determined by the minister.

If towns and counties cannot meet the minimum financial target, funds are topped up by the centrally provided Equalisation / Balancing Fund (*Fond za izravnavanje*). This is the case for all local and regional self-government units, with huge differences whatsoever.

The distribution of education spending shows that the largest portion of the education budget is spent on primary education, which consumes 43% of funds; 12% of its expenditure is spent on pre-primary education, 21% on secondary and 18% on higher education. Wages and salaries constitute a very large share of the education spending in Croatia (about 90% of recurrent spending compared to 82% in the EU-15 and 73% in the EU-10).

The funds for financing and encouraging CVET are provided for from the state budget, local and regional government budget as well as directly from individuals and their employers. The biggest budget is managed by HZZ that arranges for the provision of skills upgrading or training through active labour measures, mostly short courses for unemployed adults or redundant workers.

A major source of financing reforms in IVET and (to a lesser extent) CVET has during the last decade come from the EU pre-accession funds, most notably from the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development, and Stabilisation (CARDS) programme as well as IPA programme.

2.2.6. Education and training providers

The providers of the IVET are public and private secondary VET schools. When it comes to the teachers and trainers in the IVET, they are divided into two main groups:

- General subject teachers (languages, mathematics and natural sciences, social sciences, art) who acquire pedagogical qualifications and pass the exams on general pedagogy, didactics, psychology of education, and teaching methodology;
- The teachers of vocational subjects are divided into the following groups (as defined by the recently adopted Vocational Education and Training Act - see below for further details on the Act) :
 - Teachers of technical/theoretical contents (*Nastavnik stručno-teorijskih sadržaja*) can be performed by person that finished corresponding higher education through which a minimum of 180 ECTS points was scored, if so regulated by curricula, and has pedagogical psychological-didactical-methodical education through which 60 ECTS points are acquired (further in text: pedagogical competences), and meets all other terms regulated by curricula;
 - Teacher of practical work (*Nastavnik praktične nastave i vježbi*) - can be performed by teacher that finished under graduate university study or under graduate professional study of corresponding category through which a minimum of 180 ECTS points was scored and has pedagogical competences along with pre-acquired qualification of corresponding profile.
 - Vocational teacher (*Strukovni učitelj*) - can be performed by person that has a level of education regulated by curricula, and has at least secondary vocational education of corresponding profile, pedagogical competences, and work experience in appropriate profession in duration of at least five years.
 - Teaching associate (*Suradnik u nastavi*) - can be performed by person that finished corresponding secondary education, acquired pedagogical competences and has a work experience in duration of at least five years, unless regulated differently by vocational curricula.

There is no specific pre-service education for VET teachers that is organised in according to the 3+2 Bologna scheme. This is to say, none of the professional degree programmes includes courses in educational sciences and literally all higher education institutions educate potential VET teachers. Upon obtaining their professional degree (4 years of studying under pre-Bologna programmes and 3+2 years of studying under the Bologna-driven programmes), all the professionals-degree holders must complete additional pre-service programme (the above mentioned pedagogical-psychological-didactical-methodical education) if they wish to pursue a career as a respective VET teacher. The following topics (equivalent to 60 ECTS points) are normally covered by such pre-service programme:

- General pedagogy;
- Didactics;
- Psychology of Education;
- Methods of Teaching;
- Education for Creativity;
- Psychology of children with special needs;
- Methodology of educational research 1;
- School pedagogy;
- Theories of curriculum;
- General and developmental psychology;
- Multimedia Teaching;
- Applied Developmental Psychology;
- Classroom management.

VET teachers for three-year VET programmes, unlike other teachers, do not have to hold a higher education degree if no higher form of education exists in their field. In that case, they have to hold at least a secondary school certificate from the respective type of secondary school. Upon completing the required secondary (or higher) education, they have to obtain additional education, the same as for VET teachers in four-year VET schools. Master craftsmen who teach in licensed crafts/workshops have to become qualified to train apprentices, and are obliged to take an exam in industrial pedagogy in front of an independent expert commission (see below for further details and responsible institution).

Subject teaching in the IVET schools is carried out by about 6,300 teachers, practical teachers and assistants. Among these are approximately 4,000 teachers of vocational-theoretical subjects. About 1,500 teachers are engaged in practical workshop activities and part of the laboratory practice, and about 400 assistants participate in practical skills teaching and laboratory practice. Part of the teaching of vocational subjects is done by teachers without the required qualification, due to difficulties in recruiting appropriate teaching staff.

On the basis of an annual Catalogue for In-Service Training (*Katalog stručnog usavršavanja*), the continuous professional development/in-service training is mainly offered to VET teachers by ASOO. VET schools are also expected to provide on-site staff development activities, but there is no available data on its quality or effectiveness (see also below for school-based developmental projects and mobility projects funded by the respective EU programmes).

Apart from the state-funded in-service training as described above, in-service training of VET teachers is also implemented by:

- Different professional associations (with or without special units/in-service training programmes for VET teachers) and other non-governmental organisations that offer trainings either free of charge or on market terms;
- Public open universities (*Pučka otvorena učilišta*, PUO);
- HOK
- International institutions (through bilateral financial assistance), e.g. British Council

When it comes to those in-service trainings, there is no any relevant programme or provider accreditation procedure in place. The copyrights of programmes developed outside of the mainstream system are fully regulated, therefore, only mission driven international institutions invest significant resources into the in-service training.

The providers of formal CVET programmes may be as follows public institutions registered as for the provision of relevant adult education programmes, including:

- PUOs
- secondary schools
- higher education
- HOK
- institutions for the care of persons with special needs and disabilities

Relevant public institutions may be founded by the Republic of Croatia, local and regional government units, and other legal and physical entities. They can perform formal CVET programme if they have registered adult education as their activity and if they meet the spatial, staff and material criteria defined by the programme that must be in accordance with the standards and norms for its realization. The provision of formal CVET programmes is liable to inspection and professional supervision.

The CVET teachers and trainers are required to have the same qualifications as the IVET teachers and trainers working in secondary VET schools, including supplementary pedagogical-psychological-didactical-methodical training. Support to the continuous professional development of CVET teachers and trainers is also provided through the work of two institutions - the Croatian Andragogy Society (*Hrvatsko andragoško društvo*) and the Croatian Association of Adult Education Institutions (*Zajednica Ustanova za obrazovanje odraslih*).

2.3. Other forms of training

Institutions that may perform other forms of training in Croatia are: open universities (public and private), primary and secondary schools that implement adult education programmes, polytechnics, universities and other institutions of higher education, companies/education centres in companies, various private schools (e.g. foreign language schools), driving schools, professional associations and organizations, non-governmental organizations (*udruge*), employers' associations, trade unions, correctional institutions and institutes, religious institutions, foreign institutions, etc.

Different job-related knowledge, skills and competences acquisition or improvement is provided at sectoral or enterprises level mainly as non-formal education or short professional improvement courses. Non-formal training refers to organised learning processes directed at educating and training adults for work and meeting the needs of the labour market, participation in social activities and personal development. Such training do not have to meet prescribed standards for implementation; instead, the conditions for programme implementation are a matter of the education provider's choice and internal quality assurance. For certain regulated professions other bodies may be consulted to ensure that relevant occupational standards are met. The quality of provision is not otherwise monitored.

In enterprises the training of employees is not mandatory. Thus, in most cases, learning in enterprises depends on enterprise initiative and resources, since learning is a voluntary activity. Enterprises tend to provide learning through external or internal courses.

Other training programmes in Croatia can be financed from a number of sources budgets of the regional and local self-governments (decentralized/local budgets), profit sector, non-governmental organizations, users/adult learners, as well as through international funds and projects. Due to the dispersed nature of adult education and the large number of various sources of funding, data on overall investments in adult education is not available.

Generally speaking, the share of adults participating in various training programmes is among lowest in EU 27, 2.3%. There are various reasons why people do not undertake learning activities - lack of knowledge of what is on offer, learning opportunities not being accessible at work or in the local communities, poor quality of existing offers in the local communities, costs, or simple lack of interest. When it comes to the issues of geographical coverage, the major gaps exist in less prosperous and rural areas as well as on the majority of Croatian islands. Companies, mostly SMEs, do not actively promote learning due to lack of resources, low appreciation, or other reasons.

Table 7. Lifelong learning, persons aged 25 to 64 - % of persons stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey

geo\time	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU (28 countries)	9,3	9,3	9,3	9,1	8,9	9	10,5(b)
EU (27 countries)	9,3	9,4	9,3	9,2	8,9	9,1	10,5(b)
Croatia	2,4	2,2	2,3	2,2	2,3	2,4	2,9

Source of Data: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 17.11. 20

CHAPTER 3

3. Shaping VET qualifications

3.1. Procedures for linking VET with the labour market and developing VET qualifications

In the course of 2010 - 2011, the procedures and bodies for linking VET with the labour market needs as well as the methodology for the development of VET qualifications in line with the emerging CROQF were introduced by ASOO on the basis of relevant VET Act's provisions. Subsequently, the sections 3.1.1. and 3.1.2. describe relevant procedures, bodies and methodology established prior to the adoption of the CROQF Act (*Zakon o hrvatskom kvalifikacijskom okviru*), which was adopted on 8 February 2013 and came into force on 2 March 2013.

3.1.1. VET Sector Councils and Sector Profiles based on the VET Act

VET Sector Councils (*Sektorska vijeća, SV*) are bodies established by the VET Act. SVs are composed of social partners and have an advisory role in terms of:

- presenting the needs of labour market
- defining sector profiles
- providing opinion to ASOO concerning content of the VET qualifications
- analysing existing and necessary competences within VET sectors and sub sectors
- developing contents of parts of vocational qualification standard
- promoting sectors and possibility of employment within sectors
- providing suggestions for the VET curricula networks.

For each of 13 VET sectors (listed in Chapter 2) separate SVs were established. Each SV is comprised of maximum of 20 members, who are appointed for a period of five years with an option of reappointment. Members of sector councils are experts nominated by the respective social partners.

Sector profiles (*Profil sektora, PS*) represent a comprehensive tool which encompasses all relevant statistical data and analytical information with regards to the respective economic development, labour market and provision of education in 13 VET sectors. Profiles are available to ASOO and SVs as well as to other stakeholders for the purpose of planning development of VET qualifications in line with the labour market needs can be used for other purposes, e.g. as the basis for planning quotas per educational programme on county level.

Within sector profile, data which enable understanding of knowledge and skills supply and demand is shown through several segments. The first part of PSs presents the following information: demand for occupations that is shown through sector coverage (represented with list of sector occupations), display of demand for those occupations in economy activities, long-term mobility of employees in key economy activities, data on income, number of enterprises and workers employed in particular sector and data about vacant job posts, etc. More about occupational supply is shown through structure of unemployed persons with sector occupations, display of work force and inactive population with sector occupations, structure of occupations based on level of education as well as through data on net salaries and type of work contracts.

In the second part of PSs, the emphasis is put on competence demand within sector occupations. Model of competency matrix was used as basis for planning of structure and content of new qualifications and educational programmes. Third part shows data on the VET graduates' employment or their entrance to tertiary education following the completion of the respective VET programmes within sector.

As mentioned above, the adoption of the CROQF Act launched the process of establishing new structure of the Sectoral councils i.e. CROQF Sectoral councils, as advisory and professional bodies ensuring the development of human potential in line with labour market needs within respective sectors.

3.1.2. Methodology for the development of VET occupational standards, qualifications and curricula

According to the “Methodology for the development of VET occupational standards, qualifications and curricula” (*Metodologija za razvoj strukovnih standard zanimanja, kvalifikacija i kurikuluma*) that was introduced by ASOO in 2011 on the basis of relevant VET Act’s provisions, three major stages of development are required.

Development of the Occupational Standard (*Standard zanimanja*)

Occupational Standards are a tool developed to identify what skills and associated knowledge are required to be ‘competent’ in a particular job role. The standards are broken into units which separate out different sets of skills and knowledge. For VET qualifications, Occupational Standards are being developed to a level of detail which highlights and describes broad skills and knowledge sets which may be applied across a number of sub-sectors and related job roles within a particular industry. Occupational Standards are developed through a process called ‘Functional Analysis’.

Development of the Qualification Standard (*Standard kvalifikacija*)

The Qualification Standards take the skills identified and described within the Occupational Standards and translate them into tools which describe the criteria against which learners are measured. The Qualification Standards are broken down into a series of logical ‘units’. Each unit comprises of a set of ‘learning outcomes’ and ‘assessment criteria’. The learning outcomes describe what a learner should be able to achieve once a programme of tuition has been completed. The assessment criteria set out the activities and benchmarks that must be achieved by the learner to prove that the learning outcomes have been achieved.

Each unit is also given a credit value which identifies the amount of time required by an average learner to complete all of the relevant learning activity and assessment to achieve the required learning outcomes. Finally, when a range of Qualification Standards has been developed, a decision is made as to which units need to be ‘mandatory’ or ‘elective’.

Development of the VET curriculum (*Strukovni kurikulum*)

The final phase of the development process is associated with the production of the VET curriculum, which sets out what needs to be taught to ensure the learning outcomes can be achieved. To help organise the delivery content in an organised manner, the curriculum template requires that content be split into ‘modules’ and ‘subjects’. Modules are used to group together themes that arise out of the Qualification Standards.

E_qualifications (*E_kvalifikacije*)

An on-line database for VET qualifications entitled “E-qualification” was developed and it is located on ASOO’s web site. This database is a comprehensive tool aimed at ensuring single location which provides an overview of the existing VET qualifications and the respective materials that may be used by ASOO and the respective working groups for the development of the new VET qualifications and for updating of the existing VET qualifications.

As mentioned above, the adoption of the CROQF Act will result in the new methodology for the occupational standards as well as the qualification standards.

3.1.3. Quality assurance tools in VET

In line with the relevant provision of the VET Act, ASOO established a National Quality Assurance Framework in VET (*Nacionalni okvir za osiguranje kvalitete u strukovnom obrazovanju i osposobljavanju*) based on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET and aligned with the European Quality Assurance in VET’s quality cycle, indicative descriptors and indicators (Letica, J., 2014).

Arising from these changes, ASOO, in 2010, began work on a new approach to QA in VET and relevant QA

tools, based on the principle that secondary VET schools should take the lead by assessing themselves. The new QA approach/ methodology for the self-assessment breaks the work of secondary VET schools down into six areas for assessment:

- Planning and programming of work;
- teaching and support to learning;
- Learning outcomes;
- Material & human resources including continuous professional development of staff;
- Cooperation both within the VET school and with other stakeholders; and
- Administration and management.

Each is broken down further into quality areas, which are described by individual quality criteria. All are primarily applied to IVET. In 2011, the secondary VET schools started with self-assessment and the first annual reports were produced and analysed. To assist the VET schools in the process, ASOO developed a comprehensive manual and an online tool called "E-kvaliteta" (<http://e-kvaliteta.asso.hr>) that enables secondary VET schools to effectively present their self-assessment data and plans for improvements. Both of these are evidence-based. The process enables schools to measure their performance against qualitative indicators and to generate reports. Once complete, schools can compare their results with those of other schools and use the tool to show which areas need to be improved.

A comprehensive national approach is currently being refined further with a view to facilitating improvements to the different QA indicators and to establishing and ensuring correlation among some of the indicators (for example self-assessment and external evaluations). The Rulebook on QA in VET (*Pravilnik o osiguranju kvalitete u strukovnom obrazovanju i osposobljavanju*) as well as the web-site QAVET.HR have been developed in the course of 2014. Those tools are expected to further improve the quality in the IVET system in the upcoming years.

3.2. Development of the Croatian Qualification Framework

In parallel to the development of the aforementioned VET qualification methodology, the process of the development of the CROQF was launched. Development of the CROQF has been taking place since 2007 as a response to the need for a national framework of qualifications encompassing all awards for all aspects of education and training into a single transparent qualifications framework (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia /Agency for Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2014). The CROQF coordinates and integrates all stakeholders in the qualifications system, paying attention to the needs of the labour market, the needs of individuals and society. Under the CROQF, the qualifications are classified within 8 levels and additional sub-levels, as shown in Table 8

Table 8. Levels and sub-levels in the CROQF vs EQF

EQF	Levels	Sub-levels	Class of qualifications
8	8	8.2	Full
		8.1	Partial
7	7	/	Full and partial
6	6	/	
5	5	/	
4	4	4.2	
		4.1	
3	3	/	
2	2	/	
1	1	/	

In February 2013, the Croatian Government adopted the CROQF Act which gives the necessary legislative and institutional framework for further development and implementation of the CROQF as well as for the referencing

and self-certification of the CROQF to the EQF and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). According to the CROQF Act, MZOS is the National Coordinating Body responsible for the development and implementation of the CROQF as well as the designated National Coordination Point responsible for coordination of the referencing of CROQF levels to the EQF and for the self-certification of the CROQF against QF-EHEA using transparent methodology, providing access to information, guiding stakeholders through the referencing process, and promoting the participation of stakeholders in the referencing process.

As a base for a CROQF quality assurance system, there are three main concepts included:

- Occupational standards (key activities and required competencies for the workplace);
- Learning outcomes (organised within units/modules)
- Standards of qualifications (described by acquired learning outcomes, including assessment criteria and procedures), as a base for quality assurance and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The CROQF defines basic (complete and independent) characteristics/properties of qualifications and units/modules of learning outcomes as: Profile; Workload/volume; Reference level; and Quality, as an implicit part of qualifications and units/modules, denoting the reliability and credibility of the statement made by the official certificate (and/or other documents) about learning outcomes. Quality assurance is the focus of the CROQF and includes quality assurances of:

- Involvement of stakeholders and international and national experts (during development and implementation of the CROQF);
- Fit to purpose (labour market needs, and other purposes of qualifications, by standards of occupation and qualifications; validation; registration);
- Curricula;
- Assessment criteria and procedures as well as awarding criteria and procedures.

Three executive agencies for different educational sectors (higher education, VET and adult education, and general education) plays a major role for external quality assurance of education and training, including curricula development, assessment and awarding of qualifications. The National Council for Development of Human Potential (*Nacionalno vijeće za razvoj ljudskih potencijala*, NVRLJP) is a central strategic body for the CROQF. Responsibility and specific tasks of the NVRLJP are to:

- Assess and validate public policies, primarily policies related to education, employment, lifelong professional guidance and regional development, from a perspective of their influence on developing human potential and their contribution to achieving strategic goals and competitiveness of the Republic of Croatia, as well as developing society;
- Give recommendations on a process of planning and developing human potential according to a development strategy of the Republic of Croatia;
- Propose measures for integrated and harmonised policies related to employment, education and regional development;
- Monitor and validate the impact of the CROQF and respective qualifications, and give recommendations on how to better adjust education and labour market needs;
- Convey to the minister responsible for education and science its opinion on Sectoral council's recommendations referring to admission policy, admission quota and financing of qualifications from public sources, by qualification and by county;
- Monitor and validate CROQF Sectoral council's activities

CROQF Sectoral councils (*HKO Sektorska vijeća*), for 25 sectors and one cross-sectoral or interdisciplinary, are advisory bodies ensuring the development of human potential in line with labour market needs within respective sector, and their specific tasks are to:

- Validate proposals of units of learning outcomes, occupational standards and qualifications standards;
- Analyse existing and required competences covered by a sector;
- Give recommendations to the NVRLJP about admission policies, admission quota and financing of qualifications from public sources, by qualification and by county;
- Give recommendations about changes in qualifications standards based on changes detected in occupational standards;
- Give recommendations to the ministry responsible for labour about changes in the National Classification of Occupations;
- Propose recommendations for the sector development to the NVRLJP;

- Follow and analyse implementation of recommendations given to the NVRLJP;

The CROQF introduces a Register with 5 related databases (Units/modules of learning outcomes; Standards of occupations; Standards of qualifications or generic qualifications; Programmes for validation of units of learning outcomes; Programmes for acquisition of qualifications (including awarding institutions), which represents the formal link between qualifications and the quality assurance system of the CROQF. It is envisaged that the Register encompasses all types of qualifications even those outside the formal education system, so that a good quality assurance system is the basis for the recognition of prior learning no matter how and where the learning has taken place.

When it comes to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, a system of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is also developing within the CROQF, with the principle of equal value applied to the RPL as to in the recognition of formal learning.

CHAPTER 4

4. Promoting participation in vocational education and training

4.1. Specific measures for promoting the attractiveness and relevance of 3-year VET programmes

Act on State Aid for Education and Training (*Zakon o državnoj potpori za obrazovanje i izobrazbu*) provides tax breaks for businesses in whose manufacturing facilities or workshops practical training and exercises for crafts take place (Letica, J., Ištvančić, I., Buić, N., 2014). This allows them to reduce the basis for the calculation of income tax or self-employment tax by the amount of awards paid to students for attending practical apprenticeship training exercises. If the same entrepreneur receives *de minimis* aid on any other grounds he can reduce his basis for calculation of income tax or self-employment tax to the upper value of the *de minimis* aid in accordance with the relevant rules on *de minimis* aid, taking into account the prescribed limits. Entrepreneurs that have one to three VET students on practical training and exercises at their premises may reduce their tax base or self-employment income by 5%. An entrepreneur that has more than three students on practical training and exercises can increase the percentage of the reduction of his tax base or income from self-employment by one percentage point per student, not exceeding 15% of the tax base or income from self-employment.

Traditionally, HOK has been organising various promotional activities aimed at promoting 3-year VET programme, including an annual event “I want to be a master craftsman” (*Želim biti majstor*) held in cooperation with relevant VET schools. Due to the budget cuts, this event was not held in 2014.

In 2012, Croatian Government introduced annual stimulus package for entrepreneurs “Entrepreneurship Impulse” (*Poduzetnički impuls*), which primarily represents a set of measures for the promotion of SMEs. The “Entrepreneurship Impulse 2014” (*Poduzetnički impuls 2014*) package comprises four program priorities, one of which is the programme priority entitled “Promotion and education for entrepreneurship and crafts” (*Promocija i učenje za poduzetništvo i obrt*) with planned expenditures of 248.1 million kn. Under that priority, special type of financial supports/grants are available for:

- scholarships for students who are educated for scarce occupations
- support for practical training and exercises (under apprenticeship-type scheme) organised for VET students in a craft business or legal entity.

4.2. Measures for increasing the attractiveness and relevance of VET under European Social Fund

For the previous ten years Croatia was strongly involved in the pre-accession programmes (CARDS, Phare and IPA). With the accession date 1st of July 2013, Croatia became eligible for structural funds, including European Social Fund (ESF). Subsequently, responsible line ministries developed an Operational Programme Under The ‘Investment For Growth And Jobs’ Goal (*ESF Operativni program Učinkoviti ljudski potencijali 2014.-2020.*) that, *inter alia* defines a number of measures eligible for ESF funding aimed at enhancing VET attractiveness and relevance. These are as follows:

- In order to increase qualification level and employability potential of specific target groups the system of vouchers, namely : (a) vouchers for acquiring the 1st level qualification or one step up qualification for programmes in priority fields (tourism and catering, agriculture, mechanical and electrical engineering and information technology) or programmes leading to acquiring of basic skills (literacy, numeracy, ICT) and (b) vouchers will be provided for validation of non- formal and informal learning with a view of increasing citizens’ qualification levels;
- A National Curriculum for VET will be developed as well as several priority VET Sectoral Curricula for Tourism and catering, Mechanical and electrical engineering, ICT, Agriculture and Healthcare sectors
- Specific measures will tackle the issues of raising VET teachers’ capacities as well as ensuring high quality support for their work and professional development
- Further strengthening of work based learning approach will be carried out, including apprentices

- schemes for VET students and training for VET teachers that provides access to latest developments in respective sectors
- The VET sector visibility and promotion of its quality will be enhanced through bottom-up approach - development of campaigns, student skills competitions, specialized school fairs, etc., thus enhancing the conditions for acquiring of practical skills - the main task of the student's skills competitions and student fairs will be presentation of practical skills that students obtained during education to employers
 - In order to tackle the shortage of practical skills and to improve the quality of transition from school to the labour market targeted investment will focus on establishing regional centres of competences in specific vocational sectors mentioned above
 - Interventions are planned in the area of capacity building for the quality assurance development and implementation at a system level as well as strengthening capacities of VET schools for implementation of the quality assurance approaches (e.g. self-assessment).

4.3. Guidance and counselling

In the capacity of the national public employment service, HZZ is the main holder of systematically organised activities of information, guidance and counselling aimed at different users - from pupils and students in their finishing years of basic and secondary school to different groups of adults, the unemployed persons and job seekers, as well as the employers (CISOK, 2011). Expert teams work in 22 HZZ Regional Offices, together with a coordination team at HZZ Central Office. Employment preparation in HZZ includes lifelong career guidance, learning methods and techniques of active job seeking, training for employment and professional rehabilitation. Vocational guidance is defined as a set of various professional procedures to identify the possibilities, interest and competencies of users for them to be able to make decisions on education, training and employment, and manage their own professional development.

In the context of general guidance provision, there are many attempts to provide information to pupils in transition from primary to secondary and from secondary to higher education. These take the form of open days and career fairs in which education institutions mainly take part, supported where appropriate by HOK, employers and of talks by former pupils and in isolated cases by parents. Career guidance of the pupils/students is conducted through joint efforts of school counsellors and HZZ's career guidance counsellors.

Particular attention is paid to the pupils/students who, according to evaluations, might have an aggravated approach to the labour market after they complete their education, i.e. to the pupils/students with development and health issues, learning disabilities and behaviour disorders. In HZZ special attention is also given to vocational guidance of VET students with disabilities. Furthermore, the secondary schools students who achieve poor results are also referred to the expert team for career guidance. In expert opinions on the most adequate choice of further education, needs of the labour market and education opportunities are taken into account on one hand, as well as the student's individual abilities and needs on the other hand. If needed, the team evaluation is done with the possibility of psychological tests, an interview and a medical examination by a physician specialising in occupational medicine.

Once a year, HZZ conducts the Survey of Vocational Intentions of Primary School Pupils and Secondary School Students, on the basis of which the expert teams consisting of schools and HZZ representatives define the target groups that need specific services of career guidance. Aggregate results of the survey indicate the trends in the pupils'/students' vocational intentions and are forwarded to stakeholders in the field of education and employment on the county and national level.

HZZ has developed My Choice (*Moj izbor*). My choice is computer software for lifelong career guidance, used in HZZ regional offices, some schools and other organisations. It has been developed for the users aged 13 and above: primary school pupils, secondary school students, unemployed persons, employed persons considering the change of career and all other who are interested in various job information.

However, career guidance has still not been properly elaborated in the legislation governing education. It has been inadequately mentioned in the Primary and Secondary School Education Act, the Vocational Education Act and in the Adult Education Act. Career guidance in schools is mainly of a recruitment nature and cannot

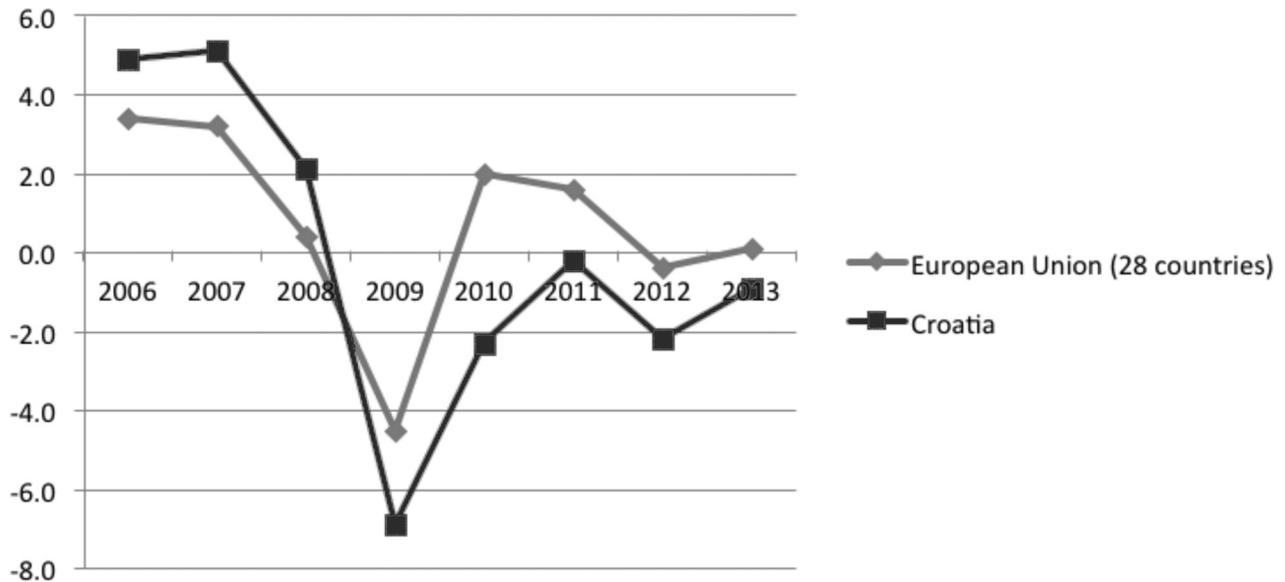
be equated with careers information based on accurate labour market information. The use of ICT facilities in schools for group career guidance activities rarely occurs. There are limited in-service training opportunities for the existing school guidance practitioners.

Since 2011 the Republic of Croatia has been included in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, with the aim of equalising the lifelong career guidance policies in the field of employment and education. It is a support to the development of the system of national policies of lifelong career guidance, connecting with employment, lifelong learning and social inclusion policies, and exchange of experience and knowledge among its member countries. Based on the decisions of the two ministries responsible for education and employment, the HZZ has been appointed the national representative and operational partner of the project on the level of the Republic of Croatia. The Euroguidance network Croatia was established at the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (Agencija za mobilnost I EU programme), as a part of the network of centres connecting the systems of career guidance in Europe. Euroguidance promotes mobility, provides expert assistance to career guidance counsellors and to individuals, enabling them to understand better the opportunities available to all citizens of Europe.

HZZ has also launched the development of the CISOK Regional Network that offers new type of service, including a more comprehensive approach to lifelong career guidance and a new philosophy in providing services in a more accessible, open and distinguishable way to all the citizens at the regional/local level.

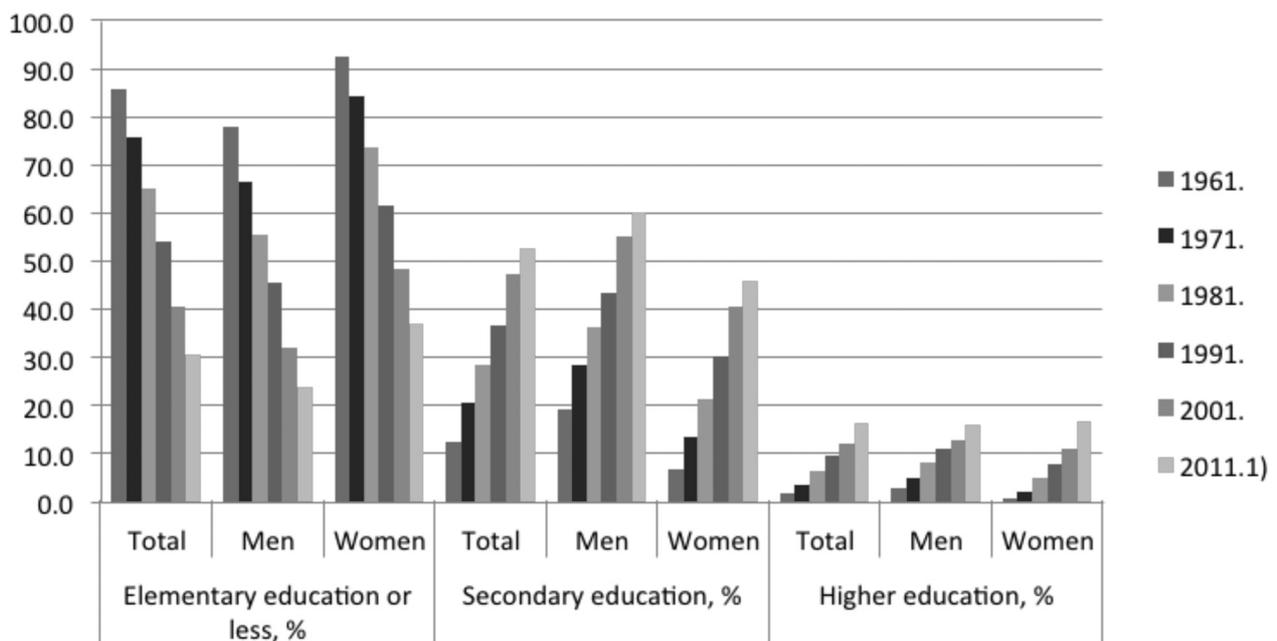
ANNEX 1: ADDITIONAL FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 3. Gross domestic product at market prices, percentage change over previous period



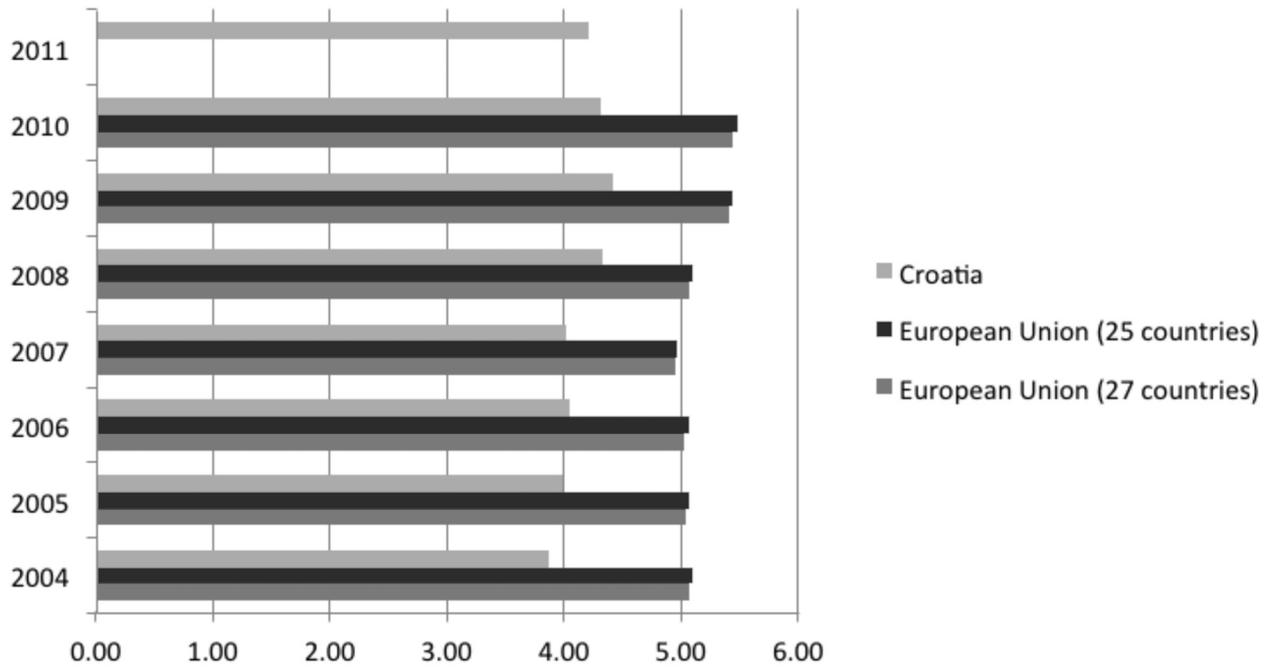
Source of Data: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 17.11. 2014

Figure 4. Population aged 15 and over by educational attainment and sex, 1961 - 2011 censuses



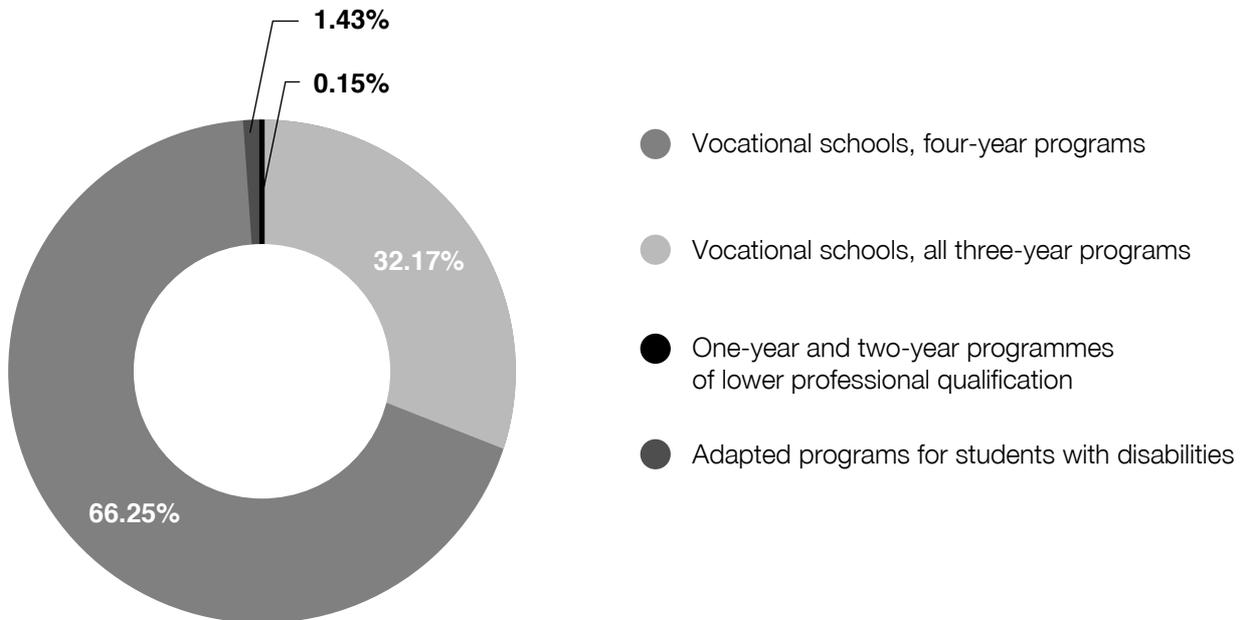
Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, accessed on 10.11. 2014

Figure 5. Investments in education and training - total public expenditure on education as % of GDP, for all levels combined



Source of Data: Eurostat, Date of extraction: 17.11. 2014

Figure 9. Breakdown of VET students as per type of VET school/programme, school year 2013/2014



Source of Data: Agency for VET and Adult Education of the Republic of Croatia., 2014.

Table 10. Upper secondary schools, class units and students, end of 2012/2013

	Schools			Class units	Students		Graduated students	
	Total	Self-contained	School class units		Total	Female students	Total	Female students
Upper secondary schools - total	727	242	485	7 551	183 039	91 456	44 324	22 488
State	668	200	468	7 251	177 149	88 145	42 951	21 712
Private	41	28	13	170	2 515	1 120	682	324
Religious community	18	14	4	130	3 375	2 191	691	452
Secondary schools- regular	687	227	460	7 329	181 384	90 785	43 876	22 302
4-year technical and related schools	259	66	193	3 336	82 808	40 131	19 226	9 611
State	247	63	184	3 274	81 817	39 669	19 006	9 528
Private	10	3	7	52	706	255	200	73
Religious community	2	-	2	10	285	207	20	10
3-year industrial and crafts schools	195	22	173	1 798	38 969	13 506	10 819	3 873
State	193	22	171	1 792	38 925	13 503	10 806	3 871
Private	2	-	2	6	44	3	13	2

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, accessed on 10.11. 2014

Table 11. Upper secondary schools, class units and students, end of 2013/2014

	Schools			Class units	Students		Repeaters	
	Total	Self-contained	School/class units		Total	Female students	Total	Female students
Upper secondary schools - total	739	242	497	7 558	182 878	91 120	4 471	1 511
State	679	200	479	7 250	177 067	87 786	4 389	1 465
Private	42	28	14	174	2 302	1 010	37	19
Religious community	18	14	4	134	3 509	2 324	45	27
Secondary schools- regular	699	227	472	7 333	181 197	90 407	4 431	1 494
4-year technical and related schools	258	65	193	3 321	82 523	39 777	1 855	657
State	246	62	184	3 252	81 497	39 256	1 839	647
Private	10	3	7	55	667	254	12	7
Religious community	2	-	2	14	359	267	4	3
3-year industrial and crafts schools	194	22	172	1 788	38 751	13 413	2 155	594
State	192	22	170	1 782	38 698	13 409	2 154	594
Private	2	-	2	6	53	4	1	-

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, accessed on 10.11. 2014

Table 12. Upper secondary school teachers and assistants, by sex and working time: beginning of 2013/2014 school year

	Teachers						Teachers, FTE		Teaching associate, FTE	
	Total	Wom-en	Full-time		Part-time		All	Women	All	Women
			All	Women	All	Women				
Upper secondary schools - regular	25 020	16 717	11 940	7 949	13 080	8 768	17 334	11 535	877	756
State	23 865	15 900	11 584	7 679	12 281	8 221	16 692	11 066	835	722
Private	700	483	215	154	485	329	375	266	17	15
Religious community	455	334	141	116	314	218	266	202	24	18
4-year technical and related schools	10 545	7 085	5 037	3 362	5 508	3 723	7 541	5 052	358	311
State	10 279	6 896	4 967	3 310	5 312	3 586	7 402	4 949	353	306
Private	180	123	67	49	113	74	111	80	3	3
Religious community	86	66	3	3	83	63	28	23	1	1
3-year industrial and crafts schools	6 803	4 091	2 662	1 436	4 141	2 655	4 187	2 382	219	191
State	6 771	4 070	2 662	1 436	4 109	2 634	4 179	2 376	219	190
Private	32	21	-	-	32	21	8	6	0,5	0,5
Education of adults	1 479	900	91	54	1 388	846	338	199	-	-
State	997	602	40	22	957	580	167	97	-	-
Private	482	298	51	32	431	266	171	101	-	-

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, accessed on 10.11. 2014

Table 13. Structure of a 3-year VET programme for trades and crafts based on the apprenticeship-type of scheme

Program structure	Hours per year			Total no. of hours
	1. grade	2. grade	3. grade	
General education	315	315	224	854
Professional-theoretical part with elective classes	244-281	244-280	244-288	732-849
Practical part with technological exercises	900	900	800	2600
Total A)+B)+C)	1 459-1 496	1 459-1 495	1 268-1 312	4 174-4 303

Source of Data: Agency for VET and Adult Education of the Republic of Croatia, 2014.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASOO	Agency for VET and Adult Education (<i>Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje i obrazovanje odraslih</i>)
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stability
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)
CROQF	Croatian Qualification Framework (<i>Hrvatski kvalifikacijski okvir</i>)
CVET	Continuous vocational education and training
DZS	Croatian Bureau of Statistics (<i>Državni zavod za statistiku</i>)
EQF	European Qualification Framework
EU	European Union
EQF	European Qualification Framework
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HOK	Croatian Chamber of Crafts and Trades(<i>Hrvatska obrtnička komora</i>)
HZZ	Croatian Employment Service (<i>Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje</i>)
ICT	Information and communication technology
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
JMO	Unified Model of Education (<i>Jedinstveni model obrazovanja</i>)
MAPZ	Active labour market policies (<i>Mjere aktivne politike zapošljavanja</i>)
MRMS	Ministry of Labour and Pension System (<i>Ministarstvo rada i mirovinskog sustava</i>)
MZOS	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (<i>Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i sporta</i>)
NEET	not in employment, education or training
NUTS	Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics
NVRLJP	The National Council for Development of Human Potential (<i>Nacionalno vijeće za razvoj ljudskih potencijala</i>)
PIGZM	Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (<i>Plan implementacije garancije za mlade</i>)
PS	Sector profiles (<i>Profil sektora</i>)
PUO	Public open universities (<i>Pučka otvorena učilišta</i>)
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
QA	Quality Assurance
QF-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
SME	Small and medium entrepreneurship
SMEs	Small and business enterprises
SV	VET Sector Councils (<i>Sektorska vijeća</i>)
VET	Vocational education and training (VET)
ZPZ	Employment Promotion Act (<i>Zakon o poticanju zapošljavanja</i>)

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