

VET in Croatia

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a major role in Croatia. Overall responsibility for VET lies with the Ministry of Science and Education supported by the Agency for VET and Adult Education (ASOO). The agency is responsible for developing VET curricula, continuous professional development of VET teachers, skills competitions and quality assurance. The 2009 VET Act strengthened cooperation through increased involvement of line ministries, social partners, chambers of trades and crafts, the employment service, professional associations and other stakeholders. It also established multipartite VET sector skills councils that informed VET on the needs of the labour market and higher education. Since the 2013 Act on the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF), 25 sector skills councils cover general, vocational and higher education. The Human Resource Development Council assesses, validates and coordinates education, employment, and lifelong professional guidance policies, regional policy and CROQF development, aiming to encourage human potential development, stimulate competitiveness and achieve Croatia's strategic goals.

All VET programmes combine professional and general competences, to varying degrees; most include mandatory work-based learning (WBL), with duration and type varying among different VET programmes. Learners from lower-level programmes can progress to higher levels at the discretion of their schools.

Initial VET is publicly financed and free of charge. Learners start VET on completion of compulsory education (ISCED-P 244) at age 14 or 15. At upper secondary level, 71.3% of learners participated in IVET at the beginning of the 2015/16 school year. Around two thirds of VET learners were in four-year school-based programmes, with one third in three-year programmes. Some learners participated in shorter, one- to two-year VET programmes (ISCED-P 351).

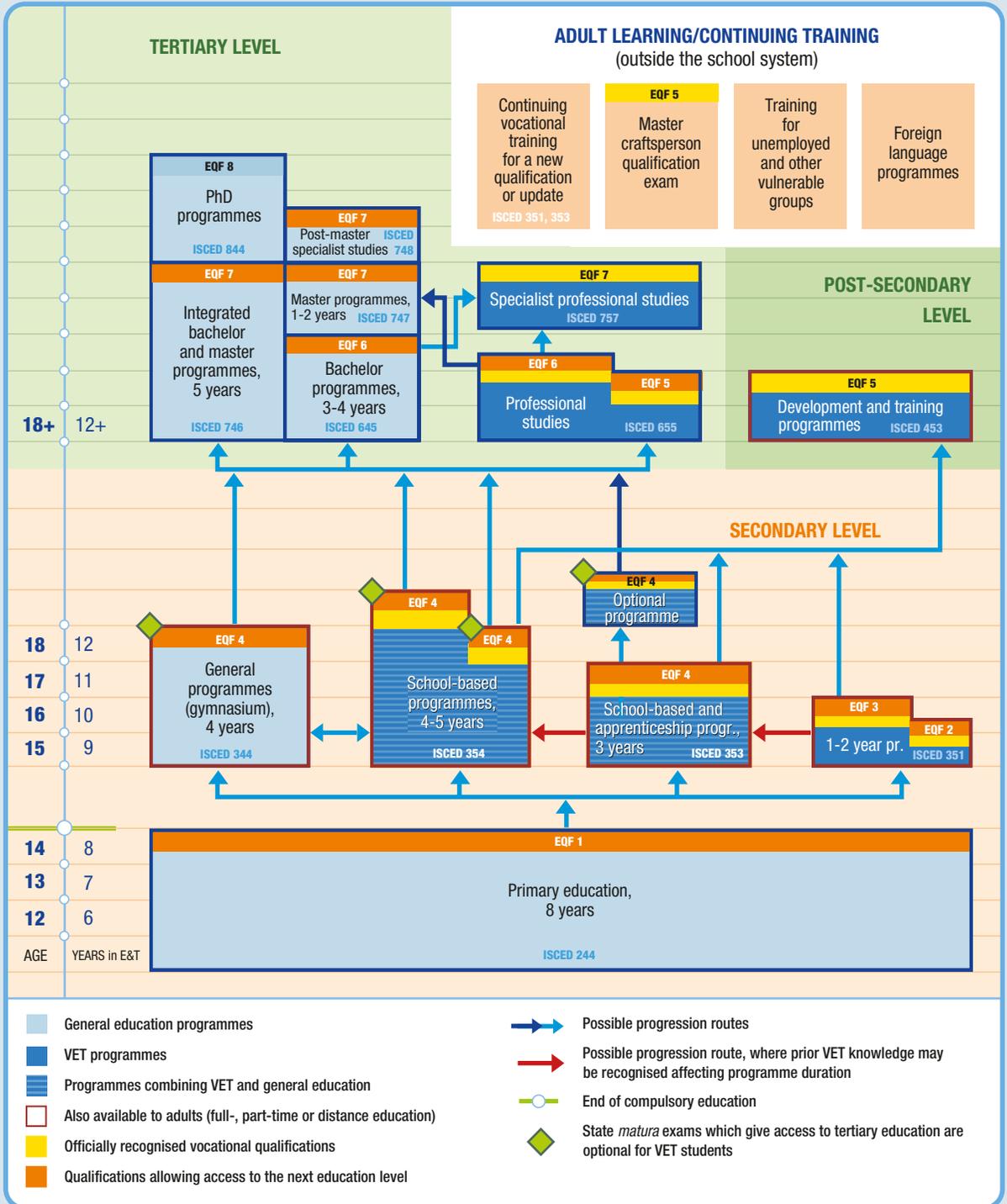
The four-year, mostly school-based VET programmes (ISCED-P 354) with a WBL component, lead to qualifications at CROQF level 4.2/EQF level 4. These 'technician' programmes allow progression to tertiary education, after completing external *matura* exams, administered by the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCVVO). Most students in four-year VET programmes use this opportunity (in 2011, 91.94% entered the *matura* exam, and 77.71% passed).

The three-year VET programmes (ISCED-P 353) give access to the labour market and lead to qualifications at CROQF level 4.1/EQF level 4; they are mostly run as apprenticeships, with significant work-based learning at companies. Since 2014, graduates from these programmes can enter an optional one- to two-year bridge programme and, if successful, take *matura* exams to qualify for higher education access. This programme corresponds to the fourth year of the school-based programme.

VET is provided at higher education level in polytechnics in the form of short-cycle programmes (ISCED-P 554) and professional studies (ISCED-P 655) with focus on applied sciences. Learning in these programmes typically involves extensive practical work experience and leads to a qualification at CROQF and EQF levels 5 and 6. Shorter programmes also exist.

Adult education and training (for people above age 16) covers a broad range of options, mainly in the form of short (re)training programmes, which range from basic or technical skills courses to complete formal secondary education and training. Entry requirements for post-secondary adult VET programmes include relevant IVET training and/or a number of years of professional experience. If adult education providers want to issue formal certificates at secondary education level, the education ministry has to approve their programmes.

VET in Croatia's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and ReferNet Croatia.

Distinctive features of VET

VET in Croatia has two main roles. Alongside preparation for labour market entry, it enables progression to tertiary education, primarily through four-year VET programmes, where learners spend half of their time acquiring general competences. Almost 80% of four-year VET graduates take *matura* exams and around 60% of VET graduates continue to higher education.

The level of participation in VET at upper secondary level is one of the highest in the EU (70.7% compared to the EU average of 47.4% in 2014).

Croatia has the lowest rate of early school leaving in the EU (2.8% in 2015, compared to the EU average of 11%) and has already met its Europe 2020 national target of 4%.

Support services are available for students at all VET schools. Legislation requires schools to employ either a psychologist or a specialist in pedagogy, who monitors teaching and learning processes and oversees extra-curricular activities. Most schools employ both types of support staff. Some have other professionals that help learners address learning difficulties.

Self-assessment at VET schools is part of the quality assurance system, which has been developed in line with the EQAVET. Systematic collection of information and follow-up of quality improvement processes at VET schools is possible thanks to the comprehensive online tool *e-Kvaliteta* (<http://e-kvaliteta.asoo.hr>). The tool also allows comparison between schools.

The education ministry and ASOO launched VET curriculum reform in 2008 that introduced unit-based and credit-rated qualifications and learning-outcomes-oriented modular curricula. New curricula are based on occupational and qualifications standards developed in cooperation with employers. The system for recognition of prior learning/validation of non-formal and informal learning is being prepared.

Challenges and policy responses

Despite initial VET reform efforts, most curricula need to be updated to be more relevant to labour market needs. The share of work-based learning and its quality needs to be increased. More effort will be placed on widening VET reform with the support of EU structural funds in 2015-20. Special emphasis will be put on curriculum reform, the development of national and sectoral VET curricula, and improving work-based learning in all types of VET. The VET system development programme 2016-20, adopted in September 2016, addresses these issues with a series of measures, which, among others, aim to align VET with labour market needs, develop new curricula and strengthen the WBL model.

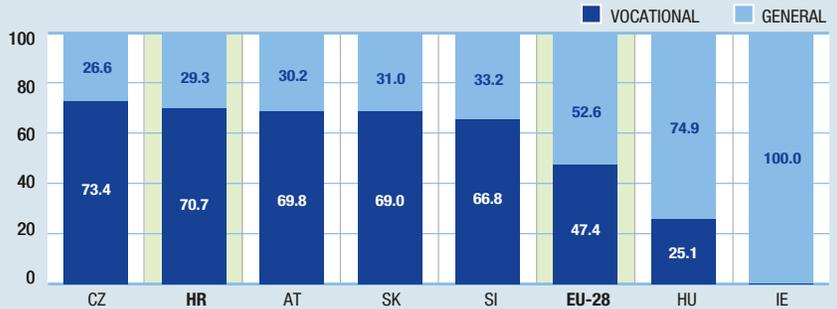
Youth unemployment is high (43% in 2015 among 15 to 24 year-olds) and 18.5% of youth (aged 15 to 24) were neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) in 2015. Youth guarantee schemes are expected to help young people get into employment, apprenticeship, traineeship or get the chance to continue their education or training within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed. Both the education, science and technology strategy (October, 2014) and the VET system development programme 2016-20 aim to improve the skills and competences of Croatia's citizens and the country's economic competitiveness.

Participation in adult learning/continuing training was 3.1% in 2015, among the lowest in the EU; it increased slightly in the following year. There are incentives for employers in the form of tax deductions of up to 50% of adult education and training costs (70% for small and medium-sized enterprises). However, uptake by companies is low, due to lack of awareness and the complexity of administrative procedures involved. New measures to address these issues are foreseen in the EU Structural Funds operational programmes for 2015-20.



Education and training in figures

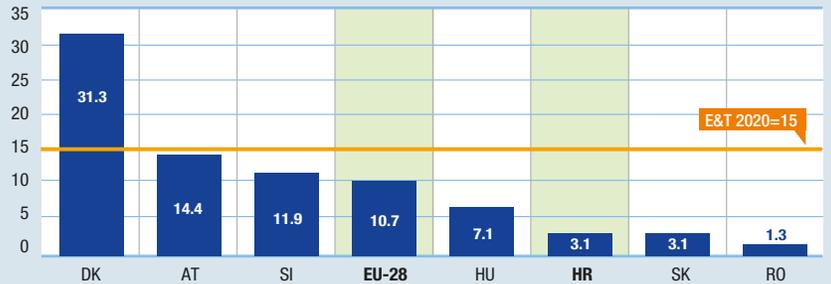
Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2014



NB: 47.4% is the provisional weighted EU average for 2014 based on available country data (27 countries). In Ireland, it is possible to proceed to apprenticeship training following completion of lower secondary education (ISCED 2), but most learners continue to complete upper secondary education, which is general, rather than vocational, in nature.

Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 6.12.16.

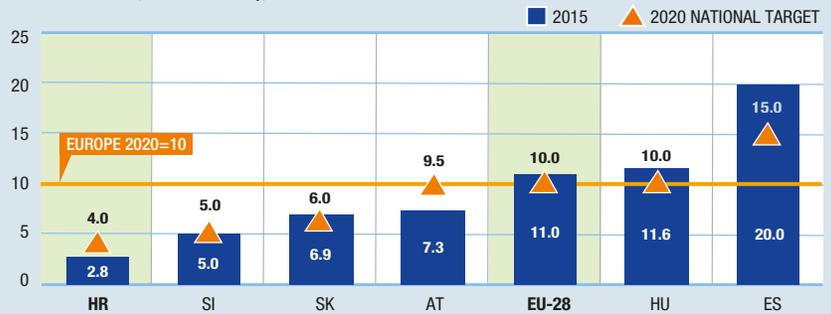
Lifelong learning
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015



NB: Break in time series in HU 2015 data.

Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 6.12.16.

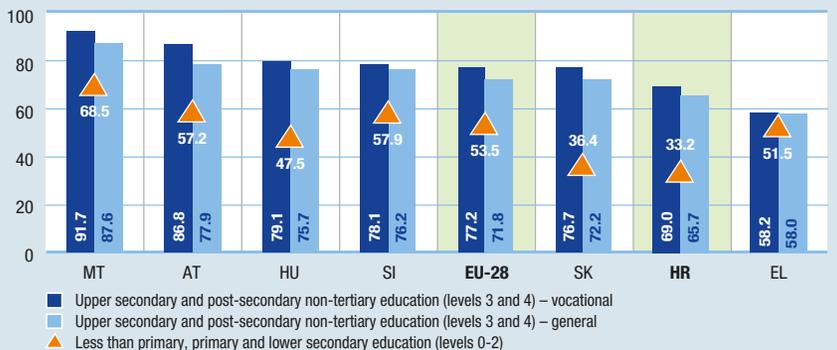
Early leavers from education and training
% of early leavers from education and training, 2015



NB: Break in time series in HU 2015 data. Definition for national target differs in SK and ES.

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 6.12.16.

Employment rates of young graduates
% of 20 to 34 year-olds no longer in education and training, 2015



NB: Break in time series in HU 2015 data.

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 14.10.16.



Further information

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- Government of Croatia (2016). *Program razvoja sustava strukovnog obrazovanja i osposobljavanja 2016-20 [VET System Development Programme 2016-20]*. http://www.asoo.hr/UserDocslimages/VET_Programme_EN.pdf

http://www.mzos.hr	Ministry of Science and Education
http://www.asoo.hr	Agency for VET and Adult Education
http://www.azoo.hr	Education and Teacher Training Agency
http://www.azvo.hr	Agency for Science and Higher Education
http://www.mobilnost.hr	Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes
http://www.ncvvo.hr	National Centre for External Evaluation of Education
http://www.mingo.hr	Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts
http://www.hup.hr	Croatian Employers Association
http://www.hgk.hr	Chamber of Economy
http://www.hok.hr	Chamber of Trades and Crafts
http://www.hzz.hr/	Employment Service

This Spotlight is based on input from the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ReferNet Croatia 2016).



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