The first attempt to provide adult learners with an opportunity to validate their competences acquired outside of the formal education system was made in 2007 under the Act on Adult Education, which stipulated that adult learners can prove their knowledge, skills and abilities regardless of the mode in which they were acquired by taking exams.

Afterwards, the Act on Vocational Education and Training (Official Gazette No. 30/09) prescribed that the competences acquired by non-formal and informal learning should be confirmed in exams, in accordance with the occupational standards or professional qualifications. The Act prescribed that the procedures for the implementation of the exams for the recognition of non-formal and informal competences were to be decided by the minister. The Act on Croatian Qualification Framework (2013) provided a legal basis for the regulation of the common system for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The Strategy for Education, Science and Technology provides a basis for the introduction of procedures and a coherent system for the recognition of non-formal and informal knowledge and skills, as stipulated in the CROQF and in the strategic documents of the EU. This long-term objective was set in order to increase the learners’ mobility within the lifelong learning system. Furthermore, the Strategy points out that the validation system for non-formal and informal learning should be primarily aimed at adults who have certain life and work experience.

Validation of learning outcomes for various learning and education modes shortens the time spent in adult education, thus significantly decreasing the related costs – both for the learners and for the community, and closing the gap between formal education and the competences acquired through other forms of learning and education.

Also, the Strategy emphasises the need to provide expert support and guidance to the learners during the process of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and to ensure that all learners acquire additional competences in the process of validation and recognition of previous learning. The validation should be conducted at the institutions holding highest professional competences in a certain area of knowledge and skills.

In addition to promoting the principle of quality assurance in education, the implementation of the CROQF at all educational levels will enable transparency, compatibility and transferability of qualifications between different educational institutions at the national level and cross-referencing of the CROQF with the EQF at the European level, with learning outcomes as the common point of reference. In accordance with the European Parliament and Council Recommendations from 2008, and in connection with the implementation of the EQF for lifelong learning, the qualifications acquired in the EU member states should clearly indicate the level of the national qualifications framework and the corresponding level of the European Qualification Framework.

One of the support mechanisms for validation and transfer of obtained qualifications, both nationally
and internationally, includes the quantification of the workload volume needed to acquire a certain learning outcome through the development of the credits system for vocational education and training (ECVET) and its referencing to the credits system in higher education (ECTS). Credits in vocational education support the development of a system focused on learning outcomes, development of the validation and recognition systems for the acquired knowledge and skills, and development of qualifications and examination methods based on learning outcomes. Therefore, the system of vocational education and training, while developing vocational qualifications, will be based on the CROQF principles.

Visibility and recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning, especially during volunteering and internships as well as during various types of work experience acquired abroad, will be additionally supported by the instruments developed by the European Commission, which include Europass and Youthpass. The use of these instruments, as well as the validation of non-formal and informal learning will be built on the foundations and principles of the CROQF. Implementation of procedures and systems for the recognition of acquired knowledge and skills, especially those resulting from non-formal and informal forms of learning, is a long-term goal for our community. It will enable better horizontal and vertical mobility and flexibility, applying the principles of lifelong learning, also included in the CROQF and the strategic documents of the EU.

The Act on the CROQF states that the Ordinance on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning (which is being drafted) prescribes in more detail the procedures for the application, recognition and validation of previously acquired sets of learning outcomes and that it should be implemented in accordance with the relevant validation programmes for CROQF registry of units of learning outcomes.

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