2019

Ensuring conditions for full functionality of regional competence centres

It is planned to ensure conditions for full functionality of regional competence centres by completing calls for proposals co-financed by EU funds (ERDF and ESF). Further expansion of the network of regional competence centres to other priority sectors is planned, based on the evaluation of the work of the appointed centres. In 2018, 25 vocational schools were selected to act as regional competence centres.

Centres are places of excellence in vocational education and training in which the vocational education and training activities and other activities that contribute to improving the quality of vocational education and training and their adaptation to the needs of the economy and the labour market are carried out.

Project of development and implementation of sectoral curricula

Within the framework of the modernization of vocational education in the Republic of Croatia and the development of new vocational curricula, the implementation of the project of development and implementation of sectoral curricula started. The project is worth HRK 233 million and Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education is the main body responsible for implementation. Objectives of the project are to lead to the rationalization of the number of curricula, to enable students to engage more easily in the labour market, to provide better horizontal mobility, to increase their professional development and to contribute to continuation of education. Emphasis will be placed on the implementation of work-based learning (in accordance with the National Curriculum for Vocational Education). The project will provide support to schools in implementation of new approaches and models. Schools will have more autonomy and flexibility.

Curricula for adult education

New curricula for adult education are being developed. The curriculum for the development of basic digital, reading and mathematical skills of adults will enable lower educated persons to acquire competences in order to adapt to a dynamic labour market and to actively participate in society.

Appointment of a working group to develop a new Curriculum for elementary adult education is
planned. By developing the curriculum for elementary adult education, the content will be adapted to adult learners. The development of these curricula will improve the quality and relevance of adult education programmes and it will increase the number of adult learners with completed basic education and training for simple jobs in occupations, as well as the number of adults who have acquired basic digital, reading and mathematical skills.

2018

Alignment of vocational education with labour market needs

In the forthcoming period, the Ministry of Science and Education plans promoting the attractiveness of vocational education and aligning the outcomes of vocational education with the labour market. One of the requirements for doing so is the development of the vocational curriculum, which is completely aligned with labour market needs and ensures future employability.

The Strategy on Science, Education and Technology (Strategija znanosti, obrazovanja i tehnologije [1], Official Gazette 124/2014) and the Programme for Development of the Vocational Education and Training System (Program razvoja sustava strukovnog obrazovanja i osposobljavanja, 2016-2020) are the main steering documents in the process. Based on the Programme, the use of 83 million EUR from European Social Fund and 63 million EUR from European Regional Development Fund was made possible

In order to fulfil the key strategic objectives of the vocational education reform, changes in the Vocational Education and Training Act (Zakon o strukovnom obrazovanju [2], Official Gazette 30/09, 24/10, 22/13, 25/18) were acquired. Amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act make possible the development of the new curriculum in vocational education to acquire qualifications, the establishment of a better-quality assurance system and the development of a system that will enable lifelong learning and mobility, as well as the establishment of regional centres of competence.

Proposed National Curriculum of Vocational Education

Proposed National Curriculum of Vocational Education [3] was published on the Ministry of Science and Education’s website on 14th December 2017, after the public discussions on national curriculum documents. The proposed document sets out common values, principles and objectives of vocational education. Furthermore, it defines the ratios of the general, vocational and core competences, provides the framework and the basis for development and introduction of the curriculum for the acquisition of qualifications.

The proposed documents highlight knowledge and skills, relevance, lifelong learning, responsibility, work, occupational safety, cooperation and social partnership, entrepreneurship, identity, integrity, respect, solidarity and health in vocational education.

The main objectives are to support students in their development into:

- Persons qualified for entering the world of work, continuing education and lifelong learning
- Self-confident persons with entrepreneurship skills
- Learning oriented persons
- Persons actively and responsibly participating in the community.

The Ministry of Science and Education published the Public call for applications for the experimental program **School for life** ("Škola za život") with the deadline set on 15th March 2018. The subject and the aim of the call is to select up to 80 schools (primary and secondary education including vocational education), which will then join the experimental implementation of the program in the school year 2018/2019. The experimental program will be implemented in the first grade of vocational schools with a four-year program, but only in general educational subjects.

**Rising the quality, relevance and attractiveness of the adult education programs**

The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (Strategija znanosti, obrazovanja i tehnologije [1], Official Gazette 124/2014) in some parts refers to the adult education system and the measures that need to be implemented concerning the development of the lifelong learning system in Croatia.

According to the Labour Force Survey conducted in Croatia (2012), the share of adult population (age 25-64) involved in educational activities is very low (2.7%). The EU average is 9% (27 countries included). The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology proposes **5% by 2020 as a desirable share of people included in adult education activities**. In order to meet this target, it is necessary to ensure the legislative framework in the following period that would be focused on developing quality assurance system in adult education and removing the structural, situational and psychological obstacles in access and participation of adults in formal and informal education programs.

The Ministry of Science and Education is carrying out a series of measures and activities with the purpose of increasing participation of adults in lifelong learning such as the implementation of **basic adult education** and **training for simpler jobs in occupations**. The mentioned measures target adults who have not completed elementary education by including them in basic adult education programs and training programs for simpler jobs in occupations. The measures refer to all Croatian citizens from age 15 to 65, who have permanent residence in Croatia. Furthermore, the development of the new program of the basic adult education is in preparation.

**2017**

**Law on the Employment of Pupils and Students**


The Working Group held its first working meeting on 14 March 2017.
Amendments of Vocational Education and Training Act


The suggested amendments aim to:

- remove current incompatibilities and overlaps between the Vocational Education Act and the Act on the Croatian Qualifications Framework
- enable the development and production of new vocational curricula aligned with labor market demand
- facilitate participation of key stakeholders in monitoring of present state and planning of further development of VET
- establish a better system of quality assurance and build a system that will enable lifelong learning and mobility

Public consultation will be concluded on 13 July.

Facilitating the continuation of education at ISCED 3 level

In January 2016 the Regulations On conditions and methods of continuing education for a higher level of qualification were passed by the Ministry of science, education and sports which enable the students who completed some lower level of ISCED 3 qualification at (mostly related to vocational education) to continue their education at higher level free of charge in order to achieve superior qualification or even gain the qualification required to enroll into higher (university) education.

Comprehensive curricular reform

The first stage of the Comprehensive curricular reform, devoted to the development of curricular documents, was completed in February 2016. During this stage of the project, a large (several hundreds) number of presentations and consultative meetings was held with all the stakeholder groups of the project, spanning the whole range from the educators in kindergartens, schools and other types of educational institutions to the representatives of top range public-policy organizations and bodies involved in education and education-related trade unions.

The final output of this work is a total of 55 documents, including „National Curriculum Framework” as the pivotal document as well as a number of curricular documents related to various educational levels, curricular areas, cross-curricular topics and subject curricula. During February 2016 all of these documents were made publicly available online [5].

On 18 March 2016 Ministry of Science, Education and Sports invited all interested stakeholders to take part in the online expert discussion [6] regarding all these documents, which was concluded on 1 May 2016. Almost three thousand experts, whether on their personal or institutional behalf, participated in in the expert discussion.
On 27 April 2016, Ministry opened the general public consultation regarding the curricular documents.

Main objections which emerged from the expert and public consultation can be summed up in three categories:

1. The expert community should have first received and discussed the framework curriculum along with explanation of the methodological approach, its scientific and empirical grounds and expected outcomes of its application in the education system.
2. The documents should have been developed and discussed in methodologically valid and necessary order; originally envisaged in the curriculum development process. The fact that many or most objections refer to methodology many institutions pointed out that there was no sense in giving feedback to subject curricula when their major remarks refer to methodology or framework curricula from which subject curricula should be derived in their basic principles.
3. After relevant input from this level of discussion has been integrated into the document the following levels of documents should have been developed.

These potential substantial drawbacks in the organization and implementation of the overall process are to be further addressed and discussed among expert community and policy makers in order to define the steps in the further progress of the process.

Given the number and substance of the relevant feedback it is to be expected that the state and quality of development of draft documents will remain the topic of expert and policy consultation and debate until the above outline issues are resolved.

Regarding the fact that the proposed curricular documents structured on the basis of the proposal for the Framework for the National Curriculum are not currently structured in terms of content as it is stipulated by a legal provision that serves as the basis for their adoption, the procedure for adopting the Act on Amendments to the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools has been launched in the meantime, whose adoption is planned in the fourth quarter of 2016.
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