



## VET in Croatia

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a major role in Croatia. Overall responsibility for VET lies with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports 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), though duration and type varies. 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 the age of 14/15. A high proportion (71.3%) of learners at upper secondary level 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, one third in three-year programmes. Some learners participated in shorter, one- to two-year VET programmes (ISCED-P 351).

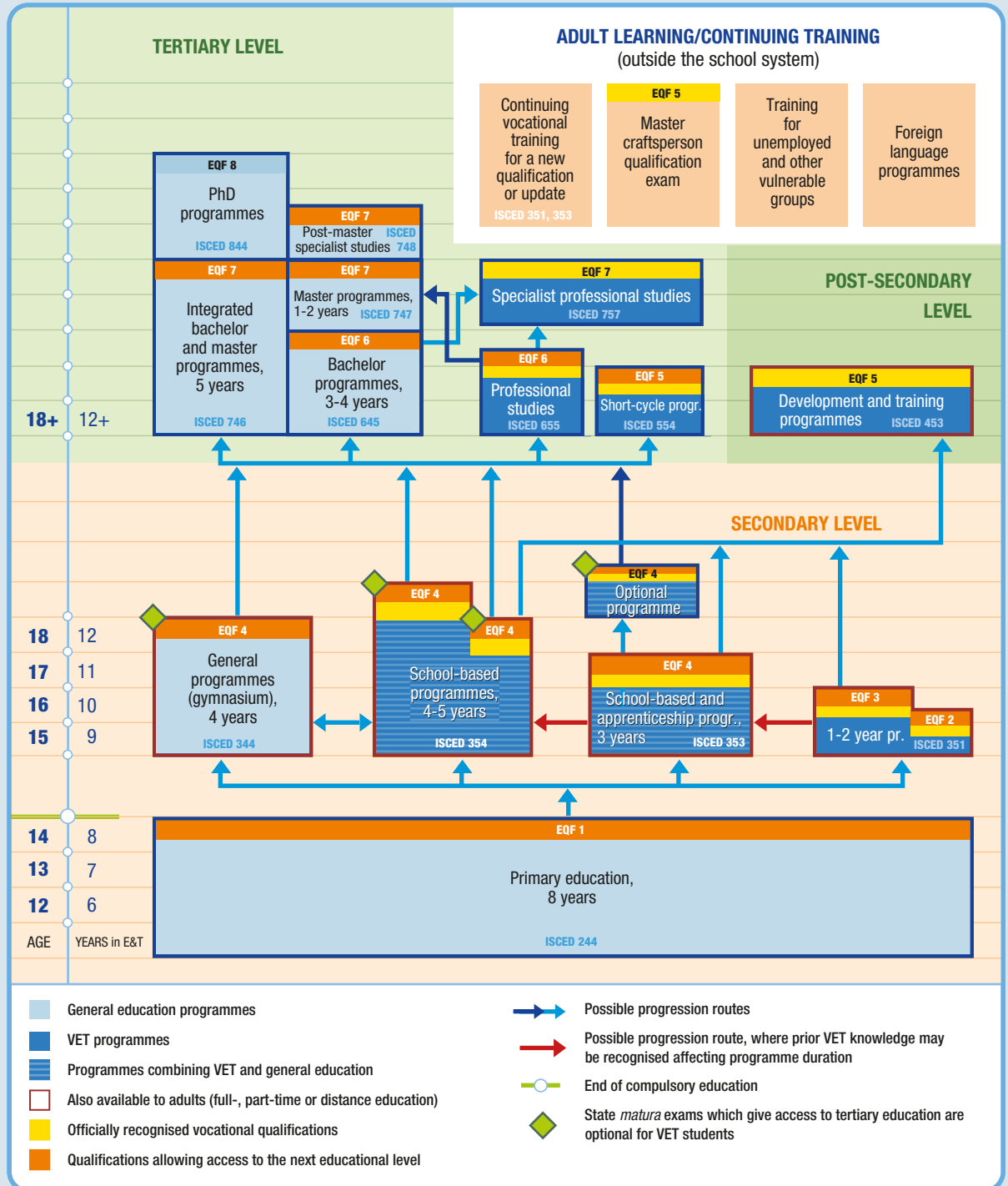
Four-year, mostly school-based VET programmes (ISCED-P 354) with a WBL component lead to qualifications at CROQF level 4.2/EQF level 4. These 'technician' programmes allow progression to tertiary education, after completing external *matura* exams, administered by the National Centre for External Evaluation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

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.

At higher education level, VET is provided at polytechnics in the form of short-cycle programmes (ISCED-P 554) and professional studies (ISCED-P 655) with a 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 those over 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. Learners in four-year VET programmes spend half of their time acquiring general competences. Almost 80% of four year VET graduates take *matura* exams and around 60% continue to higher education. The level of participation in VET at upper secondary level is one of the highest in the EU.

Croatia has the lowest rate of early school leaving in the EU (2.7% in 2014, compared to the EU average of 11.2%) and has already met its Europe 2020 national target of 4%.

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

Self-assessment at VET schools is part of the quality assurance system, developed in line with EQAVET. Systematic gathering of information and follow-up of quality improvement processes at VET schools is possible via the 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 recognising prior learning and validating non-formal and informal learning is being prepared.

## Challenges

Despite initial reform efforts, most VET 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 made 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 2015-20 VET system development programme will address these issues.

Youth unemployment is high (45.5% in 2014 among 15 to 24 year-olds) and 19.3% of youth (aged 15 to 24) were neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) in 2014. Youth guarantee schemes are expected to help young people get into employment, an apprenticeship, a traineeship or the chance to continue their education or training within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed. The Education, science and technology strategy (October, 2014) aims to improve the skills and competences of Croatia's citizens and its economic competitiveness.

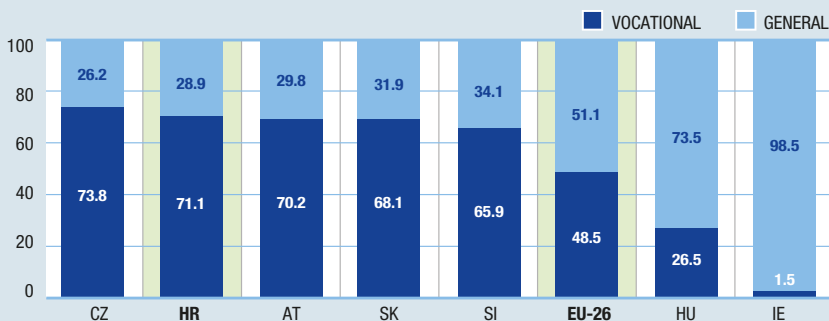
Participation in adult learning/continuing training is 2.5%, among the lowest in the EU, and has been decreasing for the past two years. There are incentives for employers in the form of tax deductions of up to 50% of adult education and training costs (70% for small and medium-sized enterprises). However, 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

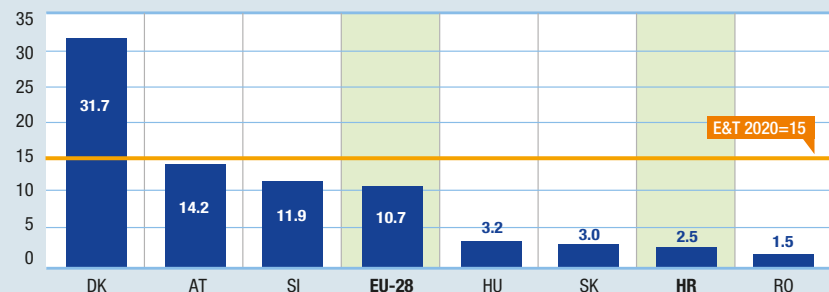
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2013



NB: 48.5% is the provisional weighted EU average for 2013 based on available country data (26 countries).  
Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 22.7.2015.

### Lifelong learning

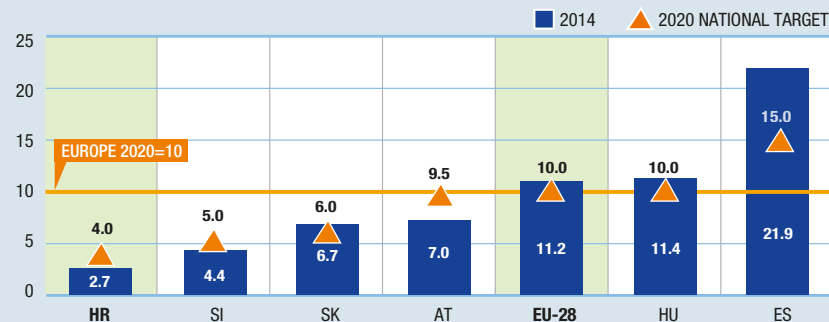
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2014



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 22.7.2015.

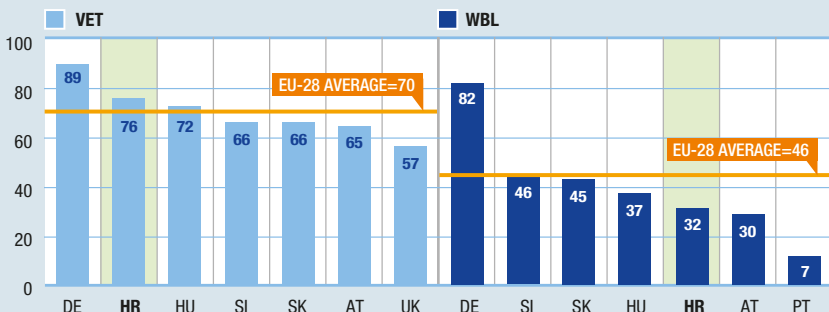
### Early leavers from education and training

% of early leavers from education and training, 2014



NB: Break in time series in all countries; low reliability in HR; definition for national target differs in DE, NL and ES.  
Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 22.7.2015.

### Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification and whose highest level of education involved some learning at a workplace (% , 2014)



NB: VET: respondents of the survey described their highest qualification as vocational;  
WBL: studies involved some learning at a workplace (e.g. apprenticeships, internships, other forms of work-based learning).  
Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs survey, 2014.



## Further information

- Cedefop ReferNet Croatia (2015). VET in Europe: country report Croatia. [http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/2014\\_CR\\_HR.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/2014_CR_HR.pdf)
- Eurydice (2015). Croatia: overview. In: European Commission (ed.). *Eurydice*. <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Croatia:Overview>
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<a href="http://www.mzos.hr">http://www.mzos.hr</a>	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports
<a href="http://www.asoo.hr">http://www.asoo.hr</a>	Agency for VET and Adult Education
<a href="http://www.azoo.hr">http://www.azoo.hr</a>	Education and Teacher Training Agency
<a href="http://www.azvo.hr">http://www.azvo.hr</a>	Agency for Science and Higher Education
<a href="http://www.mobilnost.hr">http://www.mobilnost.hr</a>	Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes
<a href="http://www.ncvvo.hr">http://www.ncvvo.hr</a>	National Centre for External Evaluation of Education
<a href="http://www.minpo.hr">http://www.minpo.hr</a>	Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts
<a href="http://www.hup.hr">http://www.hup.hr</a>	Croatian Employers Association
<a href="http://www.hgk.hr">http://www.hgk.hr</a>	Chamber of Economy
<a href="http://www.hok.hr">http://www.hok.hr</a>	Chamber of Trades and Crafts

This spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Croatia.



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