

Introduction

This report has been drafted by the EQAVET National Reference Point of Croatia and describes the main quality assurance arrangements in vocational education and training.

SECTION A - DESCRIPTION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. Initial VET (IVET)

Introduction

Learners start VET upon completion of compulsory education (ISCED-P 244) at the age of 14/15. Two thirds of VET learners are in four-year school-based programmes (ISCED-P 354), which allow progression to tertiary education, after completing external “Matura” exams (Leaving Certificate). One third are in three-year programmes (ISCED-P 353) that give access to the labour market and are mostly run as apprenticeships, with significant WBL at companies and 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. Some learners participate in shorter, 1-2 year VET programmes (ISCED-P 351).

1.1 Quality assurance arrangements at system level in IVET

- National Framework for quality assurance in initial VET – who is in charge of what?
The quality assurance system in initial VET is defined by the Primary and Secondary School Education Act, Vocational Education and Training Act, Act on Pedagogical and Professional Supervision, Act on Educational Inspection, Act on the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education and Ordinance on the State "Matura" exam. The institutions involved in quality assurance at national level are Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MoSES), Agency for VET and Adult Education (AVETAE), Education and Teacher Training Agency (ETTA), National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (CEEE), as well as the Educational Inspection (EI).

- Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in initial VET systems
The Agency for Vocational Education and Training is responsible for monitoring the process of self-assessment and the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education conducts external evaluation of education. The Ministry of Science,

Education and Sports performs inspection supervision of IVET. AVETAE and ETТА perform pedagogical and professional supervision of VET institutions (initial VET). Regarding the quality of education offered in VET, sector councils act as advisory bodies to ensure the development of human potential in line with labour market needs. VET schools/providers have duties and responsibilities that are defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act, such as: the vocational education of regular students and activities of vocational education, aligning the education on offer with the needs of the labour market, establishing local partnerships, developing and adjusting parts of the curriculum in accordance with local and regional needs. The quality of VET delivery at provider level is based on insight into the provider's work as well as on national and special tests, according to special regulations.

- Requirements for evaluation and review

VET quality assurance is defined by the Vocational Education and Training Act as permanent evaluation of participants (students), VET institutions and processes in the VET system. Quality of VET is accomplished on four levels: a rational curriculum network and the network of VET institutions, a unique database for information monitoring and system management, an evaluation system and evaluation data gathering, stimulating and correcting measures. External evaluation of student achievements / outcomes is performed by the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education as defined by the Act on the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education by means of national tests and the State "Matura" exam.

Institutions for vocational education are obliged to perform self-assessment. Self-assessment is performed for the following key areas: planning and programming of the work; teaching and learning support; student achievements; material conditions and human potential; employee professional development; human relations in the institution for vocational education; management and leadership; cooperation with other stakeholders. The priority areas are based on eight self-assessment key areas defined in the Vocational Education and Training Act. The self-assessment approach, which was developed by AVETAE, used the logic and methodology of the EQAVET. Self-assessment of VET institutions is monitored and evaluated by the Quality Commission, a body named by the VET institution governing board.

- Identification of training needs

Parts of the vocational curriculum, mostly 15% of the special and elective part of vocational content, are defined by VET provider together with VET stakeholders, local and regional government in accordance with the national curriculum. Sectoral councils are counselling and expert bodies which express the needs of the labour markets, higher education and all other stakeholders and Croatian society in general. Stakeholders are involved in the process of VET development on national, local and regional levels.

- Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on VET providers

Establishment of VET institutions in Croatia is regulated by Act on Institutions and regulation by special act, like the VET Act. Before establishment of secondary school, including VET school, founder has to acquire confirmation

from MoSES on necessity for the establishment of school (in line with Primary and Secondary School Education Act). Upon adoption of decision on establishment of school, school has to acquire approval for beginning of work and support it with set of documents and proof of human capacities, proof of premises and needed equipment, proof of fulfilment of technical, health and ecological conditions need for performing tasks as a school. MoSES appoints a commission to determine if school meets conditions needed for beginning of work and upon confirmation MoSES issues a decision on commencing work.

In general terms, as defined by the Vocational Education Act, any legal and physical identity form can establish VET school if they meet requirements. Specific human and spatial and equipment requirements for each VET qualification are defined in VET curricula.

- Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)/ monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

Validation and assessment of learning at system level is regulated by Regulation on ways, procedures and elements of assessment of students in primary and secondary school, as well as with Regulation on the State “Matura” exam. AVETAE and ETTA perform pedagogical and professional supervision of VET institutions (initial VET). The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports supervises inspection of IVET.

- How is the quality assurance implementation monitored?

The QA implementation is monitored by MoSES and supported by education Agencies (AVETAE, ETTA, NCEEE). In preparation is the establishment of more coherent approach for quality assurance for VET, embracing the quality cycle and applying indicators for regular monitoring of its implementation. QA implementation is also monitored through analysis of school reports on self-assessment, which is conducted by AVETAE on a yearly basis.

1.2 Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in IVET

- Planning at VET provider level (including identification of training needs)

The VET institution (provider) aligns the educational offer with the needs of the labour market and establishes local partnerships. VET institution has autonomy over the development of part of the VET curriculum (up to 15%) in accordance with local and regional needs.

- Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)

The foundations for the requirements for self-assessment are defined in the Vocational Education and Training Act. VET schools perform self-assessment annually; the assessment is voluntary at the moment. AVETAE developed the Croatian Quality Assurance Framework that comprises six areas – planning and programming of the work; teaching, training and support to learning; learner's achievements and learning outcomes; physical and human resources – professional development of staff; cooperation within the VET provider – cooperation with other stakeholders – promotion of provider; and finally administration and management (provider and quality).

Each priority area is broken down into Quality Areas which are further defined through a number of quality criteria which determine the standard and level of activities and processes in VET. These quality criteria are set out as Performance Descriptors. AVETAE has also developed a Self-Assessment Manual, which describes a standard procedure for carrying out self-assessment

in VET. VET providers produce an annual self-assessment report, the core of which should be an evaluation based on answers to the criteria of the VET Quality Framework. To support the process, AVETAE developed on-line tool "Ekvaliteta" that provides support to VET institutions during the self-assessment process by providing location for input of required information on self-assessment and the opportunity of generating reports on self-assessment in printable version.

- Certification, assessment and validation of learners

The Primary and Secondary School Education Act defines the school certificate ("svjedodžba") as the official document which confirms completion of each school year. The school certificate is a public document. Completion of secondary education programmes in vocational schools ends by defending a final paper ("završni rad"). Students in vocational education programmes that last for at least four years may take the state graduation exams (State "Matura") that allow them to continue their education at tertiary level.

- Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholders are engaged at local level by VET providers, but involvement varies. Representatives of stakeholders can be members of Final practical assignment Committee at the provider level.

Self-evaluation of VET institutions is monitored and evaluated by a Committee for Quality. Methods and procedure for the election of members to the Committee for Quality are determined by the statute of the VET institution.

2. Continuous VET (CVET)

Introduction

Vocational training, as part of continuous VET, is defined as education for the acquisition of competences for the performance of simpler jobs. Vocational further training, as part of continuous VET, is described as education for the acquisition of further additional competences of the same or higher qualification level inside the same educational sector for which the learner has a recognised qualification. Continuous VET is provided at adult education institutions and in VET schools.

2.1 Quality assurance arrangements at system level in CVET

- National Framework for quality assurance in CVET – who is in charge of what?

Continuous VET is part of the adult education system and therefore applies to the delivery and especially to quality assurance in CVET. The Adult Education Act defines that the Agency for VET and Adult Education is responsible for monitoring, development and evaluation of the adult education system. Administrative and inspection monitoring of adult education institutions is conducted by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports whereas supervision of the work of the adult education institutions (providers) is performed by the Agency for VET and Adult Education.

- Statutory stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in CVET systems

Continuous VET is provided by adult education institutions and VET schools. CVET is a part of the adult education system and therefore, the Vocational

Education Act and Adult Education Act apply to the delivery and especially quality assurance in CVET. The Adult Education Act defines that AVETAE is responsible for monitoring, development and evaluation of the adult education system. Administrative and inspection monitoring of adult education institutions is conducted by MoSES whereas supervision of the work of the adult education institutions (providers) is performed by AVETAE.

- Requirements for evaluation and review

The self-assessment of institutions providing continuous VET may be performed using an online tool (application) "e-Kvaliteta" (<http://e-kvaliteta.asoo.hr>); a manual for using the online tool has been developed by AVETAE. A special part of the manual is devoted to the delivery of adult education programmes – the planning and programming of the work – as a self-assessment priority area. At the moment there are no special requirements for evaluation and review for adult education institutions at system level.

- Identification of training needs

The CVET institutions (providers) align educational offerings with the needs of the labour market, and establish local partnerships. They also develop part of the curriculum in accordance of the local and regional needs.

- Who can deliver VET and under what conditions – accreditation or other requirements on CVET providers

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports approves the implementation of adult programmes based on the Adult Education Act. The Ministry establishes a commission to verify and determine the material and human resources required to carry out CVET programmes. Before approval, an institution is required to obtain expert opinion from AVETAE on the programme that the institution intends to provide. AVETAE is responsible for the supervision of the institution.

- Certification – assessment and validation of learning (system level)

After the completion of primary and secondary schools in adult education, students are awarded the school certificate. This certificate has the same meaning and the value as the certification students receive upon completion of regular secondary education. For shorter programmes in adult education or vocational education and training, a public document (certificate of training) is awarded.

- Monitoring, inspection and use of indicators

Based on the Adult Education Act, AVETAE supervises the professional work of the institution. AVETAE proposes measures to improve institution work for the participants in the program and to improve the management of necessary mandatory documentation. If the Agency notices serious omissions, it will request an Educational Inspection of the school. Administrative inspection of institutions is carried out by the ministry responsible for education (MoSES). Monitoring of the implementation of non-formal programmes is not carried out by either state or public institutions.

2.2 Quality assurance arrangements at provider level in CVET

- Planning at CVET provider level (including identification of training needs)

Vocational training and vocational further training programmes have to be developed in accordance with labour market needs. During designing of the

program and planning, the real labour market needs for acquisition of certain skills, competences and knowledge have to be supported with documents and/or research data.

- Requirements for monitoring and review (self-assessment)
The self-assessment of VET schools which conduct adult education is enabled via an online tool (application) for the self-assessment of VET schools, "eKvaliteta" (<http://e-kvaliteta.asoo.hr>) and via a self-assessment manual. The self-assessment of adult education institutions is neither obligatory nor defined by law. Therefore, it is voluntary. VET schools, which offer adult education, conduct self-assessment and evaluate the quality of CVET programmes.
- Certification, assessment and validation of learners
Knowledge, skills and competences acquired are testified by public certificate issued by the VET school or adult institution provider. The Rule Book on Public Documents in Adult Education (article 124) defines the name, the content and the form of the Public document.
- Stakeholder involvement
In continuous VET, quality assurance is regulated only for VET schools. In the program developed by AVETAE, outputs are the self-assessment report and the school improvement plan. It is recommended that the self-assessment report be written annually. The report should consist of the results from the "E-kvaliteta" application and an overview of the previous year's results.

SECTION B - INTERACTION BETWEEN NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EQAVET

- National Reference Point – Introduction

Croatia is a member of the EQAVET network for QA in VET. The Agency for VET and Adult Education is the Croatian National Reference Point for quality assurance in vocational education and training (qavet.hr) since 2014. The Croatian National Reference Point (NRP) for quality assurance in vocational education and training has been established in the accordance with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF). As the National Reference Point AVETAE is the link between European policy developments, national policy and national practice. AVETAE has the specific task of bringing together, informing and activating the various national stakeholders and parties regarding the European network and vice versa. Furthermore, it has to encourage, stimulate and support the implementation processes at national level and strengthen synergies and European cooperation, disseminate information about quality assurance in VET and support their international and national implementation, development and exchange. Finally, AVETAE has to ensure that the EQAVET Recommendation is implemented in a way which embeds a culture of quality assurance throughout the EU.
- National approach to enhance quality assurance

The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (2014) envisioned systemic quality assurance on all levels of elementary and secondary education, as well as vocational education. Quality assurance is based on implementation and development of various evaluation procedures in order to provide high quality of work in institutions, better learning outcomes and higher level of responsibility of all stakeholders in education. Some of the procedures planned in the strategy are: improvement of the self-assessment system of educational institutions, implementation of digital system for evaluation and tracking of learning outcomes, better management of quality assurance system in education and the development of an external evaluation system of educational institutions and learning outcomes. Implementation of these procedures will promote educational policy that is based on relevant and well-reasoned indicators. Enhancing QA is recognised as one of the priority areas in national development programmes.

VET Development Program is set out as a priority development for a coherent national VET QA system, aligned with the EQAVET Recommendation, which will be the basis for changes, and the development of detailed guidelines for VET providers and other parts of the system, introduction of new approaches that will support culture of quality, modernisation and rationalisation of the system and definition of jurisdictions, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in QA system.

- Influence of EQAVET on national developments of quality assurance

Quality assurance system in Croatia is being improved in line with EQAVET. With the aim of further development and modernisation of VET a process of establishing a unique national VET QA system, at system level, provider level and at the level of qualifications, is underway. The VET Development Program sets out to establish indicators of system quality (linked with EQAVET) and to define procedures for system improvement on the basis of measurable indicators.