

**2011 NATIONAL REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA - Contribution to the preparation of the 2012 Joint Report on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)**

**6<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

**CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMMES (approx. 2 PAGES)**

**QUESTION 1 Please provide a summary of the main education and training elements in your National Reform Programme (NRP):**

In general, education, sector within the overall concept of life-long-learning has seen a lot of reforms introduced during recent years in Croatia. The reforms adopted, based on the “Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010”, the “Republic of Croatia VET system Development Strategy 2008-2013”<sup>1</sup> and the “Strategy for the Construction and Development of the National Curriculum for Preschool Education, General Compulsory and Secondary School Education and “Strategy for Adult Education”, had actually brought the strategies’ goals achievement throughout the recent period. With the overall aim of the adopted interventions being the **development of the knowledge-based society and economy and the increase of quality in education in accordance with the EU Lisbon Strategy provisions**, Croatia has taken a number of substantial steps to improve the quality and effectiveness of its educational system in order to establish comprehensive national standards and achieving more coherence between the education sector and the labour market needs.

Croatia is currently in the process of implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF), which integrates the whole reform process within the educational system and is an important precondition for the regulation of the system of lifelong learning. It has special significance for implementing the development strategy of the vocational education system and the Bologna Process. By promoting the quality assurance system on all levels of education, CROQF will provide for the comparability, transparency, and transferability of acquired qualifications between all educational institutions at national level and, by referencing the CROQF to the EQF and the QF-EHEA, on the European level.

Some of the most important structural changes/reform measures within the four levels of Croatia’s formal education system have been the following:

- The Economic Recovery Programme, adopted in April 2010 by the Croatian Government, includes implementation of various measures, with corresponding indicators that are in line with all strategic documents at national and EU level.
- State Pedagogic Standards for Pre-School, Elementary and Secondary Education were adopted;
- Following the development of the “Strategy for the Construction and Development of the National Curriculum for Preschool Education” the “National Framework Curriculum” was published in July 2010. It has defined values related to society, culture and education. Values have served for identifying objectives stated as: competencies; extended general education;

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<sup>1</sup> But also on a series of other national development Documents (National Strategies, Action Plans and legislation)

definition of learning outcomes according to areas and cycles; availability of education to all according to their capabilities based on the principles of inclusion; differentiation related to programmes for gifted pupils and pupils with special needs; as well as external assessment of all curriculum units and self-evaluation by education institutions. The National Framework Curriculum presents a basis for elaborating programme documents (e.g. school curriculum, interdisciplinary and subject-related curricula, professional development curriculum, elaboration of manuals, brochures and other informative material).;

- Enhancement of quality assurance includes the following: (i) in 2006 Croatia participated in the OECD/PISA project for the first time; (ii) the Law on the National Centre for the External Evaluation of Education (NCEEE) entered into force in January 2005 and the Centre has been entrusted with the preparation of National Exams and the *State Matura*, which was first implemented in 2010, as a permanent system of external evaluation of work and achievement;

- A proposal for the new VET areas/sectors in the Republic of Croatia reduced 31 education sectors to 13 VET sectors and the Sector of Art. The process of developing a new system of VET qualifications was launched in 2007. It will be based on learning outcomes and will reflect labour market needs; 13 VET Sector Councils were established with a view to having a central role in identifying the qualifications needed in the VET system;

- Tertiary education is aligned with the requirements of the Bologna Process. Starting in the 2005/2006 academic year, a new system of three cycles of studying has been put in place - undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate study;

- Set of projects launched under The Multi-annual Operational Programme Human Resources Development (IPA IV Component) represents the continuation of reforms related to VET and adult education started in CARDS, with the simultaneous introduction of conditions for ensuring quality throughout the full spectrum of education. Ministry of Science, Education and Sports is Body responsible for Priority Axis 2/Measure 2.2 - *Supporting access to education by disadvantaged groups and Priority Axis 3 - Enhancing human capital and employability (Measure 3.1. Further development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework; Measure 3.2. Strengthening the provision of Adult Learning; Measure 3.3 Supporting the quality and effectiveness of institutions responsible for policy design and provision of education and training).*

## QUESTION 2

### **What measures has your country taken to reduce early school leaving?**

Since *the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia* guarantees the entitlement to education under equal conditions (Article 65) and makes it available to all according to individual capabilities, and since compulsory primary education is free of charge according to relevant legislation, MoSES considers that these facts have regulated the entire system and minimised a rate of early-school leaving to 3,7%<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, for example, a drop-out rate in primary education has been decreasing, implying an increase in number of pupils completing primary education. A number of first-grade pupils in the 1999/2000 school year equalled 47.374, while in the 2007/2008 school year the number of pupils completing eight grade equalled 46.630. Consequently, 98.4 per cent of first-grade pupils in the 1999/2000 school year completed their primary education, with a drop-out rate of app. 1.6 per cent for the relevant year.

Data on a number of pupils who completed primary education by the end of the 2008/2009 school year show that the completion rate for primary education equals over 99.7 per cent of all pupils.

#### **2.1 Measures to analyse current situation and monitor developments in early school leaving (e.g. data collection, surveys and research):**

In cooperation with the Social Science Research Institute, the MoSES has elaborated a study on unexcused absence of primary school pupils as an indicator of early-school leaving. A study showed that a profile of particularly critical pupils refers to pupils from families of lower educational attainment and pupils with difficulties.

A study on unexcused absence in the Republic of Croatia has revealed a need to prevent unexcused absence which leads to early-school leaving. Urgent and selective action is needed in environments with a considerably high level of high-risk absence. Programmes aimed at prevention and education on consequences and dynamics of unexcused absence should become a part of a teaching process since the beginning of primary education at all schools, particularly focused towards pupils and families at particularly high-risk locations.

Secondly, in order to elaborate emergency and prevention programmes in cooperation with the Teacher Training Agency (government agency), focused on families with lower educational attainment the MoSES has initiated a research on the impact of pedagogical measures on pupils affected by those measures. The research will reveal influences on early-school leavers in the context of the education system and personal characteristics of individual pupils. Guidelines for identification of high-risk factors and high-risk behaviour by pupils are being elaborated, in addition to guidelines for schools referring to their prevention. There has been noted a form of special preventive work – cooperation between schools and parents. The influence of school environment on the education activity has been recognised increasingly

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Eurostat 2010,  
<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc440>

Finally, although the strategy of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, The Education and Training Development Plan 2005-2010 shows a clear commitment for inclusion of pupils with special education needs (disabilities) into the regular education system by securing them adequate support, there should be added that a portion of such pupils attend schools for children with special needs (a total of 19 schools in the Republic of Croatia) that nevertheless have not been included into the statistical data on completing primary education.

Moreover, another problem that relate to measures to analyse current situation is unreliable data on early-school leavers among Roma primary school pupils - the estimate is only 18 per cent.

The analysis of these data leads to the conclusion that in the last four years the inclusion of children of the Roma national minority has been constant in terms of their overall number. However, a growing number of children has been included into regular early childhood education programmes lasting up to ten hours, thus confirming efforts aimed at wider integration of Roma children into the early childhood education system.

The encouraging fact is a permanent increase of Roma pupils since the 2002/2003 school year that marked the adoption of the National Programme for the Roma. It indicates efforts by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and its wish to increase the participation of Roma children in compulsory primary education.

In the school year 2002/2003 the primary education included 1.500 pupils, while at the beginning of the school year 2009/2010 a total of 4.186 pupils of Roma national minority attended primary education.

**2.2 Please indicate the areas of priority areas your country is focusing on (e.g. target groups, educational sectors):**

Set of interventions under The Multi-annual Operational Programme Human Resources Development (IPA IV Component) is being implemented and programmed within the Priority Axis 2/Measure 2.2 - *Supporting access to education by disadvantaged groups and Priority Axis 3 - Enhancing human capital and employability (Measure 3.1. Further development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework; Measure 3.2. Strengthening the provision of Adult Learning; Measure 3.3 Supporting the quality and effectiveness of institutions responsible for policy design and provision of education and training)*. Target groups include the following: those facing disadvantage in access to or within education including those with special educational needs (including primary and secondary school drop-outs, those in lagging behind regions, persons with disabilities and minorities; teachers non-teaching staff and students in education and training institutions at all levels; trainers involved in practical training (including apprentice schemes) at enterprises; CROQF bodies/ all other relevant stakeholders involved in the overall development of the CROQF; representatives of VET institution maintainers; representatives of employers and trades unions, relevant officials of MSES, AVETAE; adult learners; staff and, trainers in adult education institutions, polytechnics and higher education institutions; managerial staff of education institutions local government and regional/local offices, staff from institutions dealing with education policy design and policy implementation, education agencies and institutions staff , higher educations administrative and non-teaching staff .

**2.3 Measures to prevent early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken at system level, at school level and in support of individual pupils/learners:**

According to *the Act on Primary and Secondary Education*, all children in the Republic of Croatia who fulfill six year of age until 1 April of a current year (Article 19) should commence their primary education. Respecting this fact present an obligation not only for the parents but also for relevant institutions: county offices of government administration responsible for education, or the Zagreb City Office responsible for education, respectively, based on enrolment areas (referring to a geographical area related to a certain primary school according to pupils' permanent residence, or registered temporary residence, respectively, it presents an integral part of the Network of Education Institutions).

Accordingly, parents are obliged by law that their children attend primary school until 15 years of age, in case of pupils with special needs even until 17 years of age. However, if a need arises related to family violence and/or juvenile delinquency problems, in addition to schools there will be included Social Care Centres, and the Ministry of Interior (if necessary).

In addition to its director who is a professional and operational head, each school has its professional team. It may include a pedagogue, a psychologist, and a special education expert, and their task is to provide assistance to each pupil in a manner that suits him/her best.

Furthermore, in order to secure right to education under equal conditions to all pupils, free textbooks were secured to all primary school pupils in the school year 2007/2008, according to *the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia* from 30 November 2006, and amendments to *the Act on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools* from 2006.

Another measure for providing assistance by local and regional government administration is bearing expenses related to transporation of pupils following a regular programme. Entitlement to transporation, according to Article 69 of *the Act on Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Education*, refers to all pupils from grades 1-4 with residence removed at least three km from their school, and all pupils from grades 5-8 with residence removed at least five km from their school.

According to *the Decision on Criteria for Funding Increased Transportation Expenses and Special Teaching Aids, as well as Subsidies for Meals of Pupils with Special Needs in Primary School Programmes*, pupils with special needs who are holders of a decree on adequate teaching form, have been entitled to transportation costs and transporation costs for accompanying persons, in case that a type and degree of disability requires an accompanying person. The reimbursements refers to costs of fuel per km for individual transportation by a parent as follows: 10 per cent of current fuel price for a vehicle used by a parent for individual transporation, and 15 per cent of current fuel price for a vehicle used by a parent for transporation of more than one child.

In addition, since 2005 the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has been implementing the project entitled *A Network of Schools Without Architectural Barriers* aimed at spacial adaptation of an adequate number of schools in each county in order to secure even availability of education to pupils with considerable physical disability, and enable them to be entitled to education in vicinity of their residence and growing up in their families. The inclusion of pupils with disabilities into the regular system of early childhood and primary

education system represents an important principle of early childhood and primary education in the Republic of Croatia.

**2.4 Measures to compensate early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken:**

Second chance learning for adults is offered by numerous adult education institutions, such as: open universities, primary schools, secondary schools, higher education institutions, language schools, institutions for the care of persons with special needs and disabilities, correctional and other institutions. They need to fulfil the requirements stipulated by the Adult Education Act if they wish to provide formal adult education (acquiring a school degree or qualification, low-skill professional qualification, professional re-training, training and supplemental training).

The Government of the Republic of Croatia has, in accordance with the resolution of the United Nations on the decade of literacy between 2003 and 2012, launched the project “For a Croatia of Literacy: The Way to a Desirable Future – The Decade of Literacy in Croatia 2003-2012”. The purpose of the project is to enable persons over 15 to finish primary school and thus raise the level of literacy in the Republic of Croatia. The persons without occupation, who within the project finish primary school, are also enabled to undergo training for simple jobs to facilitate their employment.

Gradually, the implementation of the project is becoming decentralised, and an increasingly important role is played by the state administration offices of the counties who in the very text of the project have been designated as project facilitators. In addition to the state administration offices, the facilitators also explicitly include popular open universities and other establishments with an accreditation for the primary school education of adults.

Financing is arranged so that each attendee personally receives the “voucher for the primary education of adults” with which he/she pays for the education and checks in the adult learning institution. Institutions may without any particular applications and procedures join the project if they have the approval (accreditation) for the education of adults. The state administration offices have the complete list of accredited institutions nation-wide, and they can provide information to and advise potential attendees. The price of the voucher was determined by the project of the Government of the Republic of Croatia being universal for the entire country. To date, the primary education of adults was financed directly from the national budget of the Republic of Croatia for more than 5200 attendees and with more than 25 mil HRK. Due to economic situation the government restricted participation only to the defined target group.

Since 2003 the project “For a Literate Croatia: the Way to a Desirable Future” continues funding of elementary education for adults, as well as acquiring of first occupation.

More information could be found in the Country Report on the Action Plan on Adult Learning Croatia.

## TERTIARY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT (approx. 3 PAGES)

### QUESTION 3

**What measures has your country taken to increase tertiary (or equivalent) education attainment?**

**3.1 Measures to increase entry rates to higher education, including widening access to under-represented groups:**

**3.2 Measures to improve completion rates of students in higher education:**

On 24th March 2010, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted a decision to subsidy costs for the first year of regular study (professional and university studies) in public higher education institutions in Croatia, during the academic year 2010/2011. This decision has allowed all full time students, who pass the admission threshold and enter into the enrollment quotas, free study in the first year of study. Participation in the costs of study is expected in the following years of study, according to success achieved during the study and other criteria in accordance with regulations of higher education institutions.

In 2010 the construction of a new student's dormitory in Split has begun. Also, a number of faculties have moved their premises to the new campus of the University in Rijeka. As part of programming for the Operational Programme Regional Competitiveness 2012-2013, Croatia is planning to further support capital investments.

Following kinds of subsidies and support exist for students in Croatia:

- costs of student meals are regulated – a full-course meal costs 2.5 euro
- in addition, the regulated cost of meals is subsidised by 75% for all full-time students
- subsidised accommodation for full-time students accommodated in student dormitories
- financial support for those accommodated in private facilities
- free local transportation for around 50% of students in Croatia, and subsidised transportation for an additional 20%
- free health insurance for all full-time students
- tax relief for parents of every child who is a full-time student
- students who have no parents receive a special national allowance
- students who were disadvantaged in access to higher education due to being in the Croatian Army during the Homeland War, or their children are entitled to free literature, subject to a means
- in addition to 40% of students studying free of charge, around 25% of students in Croatia receive scholarship or grant of some sort.

It is planned to further elaborate the temporary decision on the funding of tuition fees in the provisions of the forthcoming law on higher education. The same is necessary in the student support provisions, as the ones currently in place are unsustainable and do not meet the observed needs of the student population in general and underrepresented groups in particular.

Croatia is using EU funds to build capacity or develop other policies in higher education. In cooperation with Institute for the Development of Education and other relevant stakeholders the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has prepared a Tempus SM project Towards Equitable and Transparent Access to higher education in Croatia. The specific objectives of the project are: collecting and evaluating data on social status of students in Croatia, establishing a policy framework to enhance the equity-dimension and transparency of the HE funding and student support system in Croatia and consequently establishing staff positions at university level and national coordination group to implement and monitor measures for equitable and transparent access to higher education. With the aim to identify members of underrepresented groups and in order to increase their number in higher education, Croatia joined the Eurostudent project in the 2010/2011 round. The report, due to be published by end of June 2011, will be a major source of information about underrepresented groups and the Eurostudent data will be used in assessing the further development of policies and measures regarding their better participation in higher education.

EU funds (IPA and ESF) are foreseen for adjustment of higher education curricula according to the Croatian Qualifications Framework, support for disadvantaged groups (pupils and students with disabilities, as well as members of national minorities), introduction of curricula in the English language, strengthening of student services, financial governance in higher education institutions and analytic and statistics systems.

Following the adoption of the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education April 2009 and the Ordinance on the Content of Accreditation and the Conditions for Issuing of Accreditation for Higher Education, Delivery of Study Programmes and Reaccreditation of Higher Education Institutions in 2010, the Agency for Science and Higher Education has begun conducting external quality assurance of higher education institutions. 20 higher education institutions will be evaluated in 2010/2011.

In October 2010 the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports published 3 draft laws for public consultation (draft laws on university, higher education and research). During the first phase of this public consultation the Ministry received numerous suggestions and comments. These were incorporated into a draft text that is, as of June 2011, in Cabinet procedure pending the sending of the laws to Parliament. The law on university addresses the issue of organizational structure and governance of Croatian universities, as well as reform of the system of public funding of universities by introducing funding agreements.

There has been broad consensus on the need to restructure the financial governance of Croatian universities, and a general support for the introduction of a system of funding agreements. In February 2011 a large national conference was held on the topic of funding agreements, with speakers from Germany, Austria and Denmark presenting their national implementation practices. Croatia has prepared an IPA 2010-2013 twinning project for the introduction of funding agreements at Croatian universities.

The new law on higher education plans to increase the levels of higher education institutions' autonomy as well as to provide the necessary accountability mechanisms. In a reform of the currently inadequate system of tuition fees, the new law plans to abolish tuition fees and to introduce enrolment fees instead. Enrolment fees for first and second cycle students will be payable by all students irrespective of their studying intensity and will be capped at 60% of net monthly salary in Croatia in the previous calendar year (approximately 450 euro annual fee). The minister will pass an ordinance which will specify the criteria for students to be exempt from paying enrolment fees.

Also, academic positions will be reformed and higher education institutions will receive autonomy to set the criteria for the hiring of their academic staff, which has hitherto been determined in a process involving a series of committees, including one at the national level.

Life-long learning will be explicitly outlined in the new law, both in order to facilitate entry into higher education by non-traditional learners and to regulate the introduction of quality non-degree programmes. All life-long learning programmes at higher education institutions are to be integrated into the internal accreditation systems. This will also allow higher education institutions to establish procedures for validation of nonformal and informal learning.

## MOBILITY (approx. 2.5 PAGES)

### QUESTION 4

**What measures has your country taken to promote learning mobility?**

**4.1 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of students in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults):**

**4.2 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of teachers and other education professionals in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults)?**

International learning mobility has been adopted as a strategic priority for the development of higher education system<sup>3</sup>, and full accession to the mobility programmes, Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme, presents a pre-accession requirement for the Republic of Croatia in order to become a member of the European Union.

Since the accession of Croatia to the Bologna Process in 2001, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has made continuous efforts in order to strengthen institutional capacity for mobility, referring to the number and training of staff at the Ministry, sectoral agencies and international relations offices at higher education institutions.

Preparations for the accession to the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme included the establishment of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes. The Agency was established in 2007 as the national agency for the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme.

From the year 2011, educational institutions at all levels may join all mobility schemes, introduced by the Lifelong Learning Programme, in cooperation with partnering education institutions in EU member states.

With the full accession of Croatia in the Lifelong Learning Programme, the possibility for cooperation in education with the EU Member States significantly increased. Firstly, Croatia nominated its representative to the Eurydice network and set up a Eurydice Unit in the MoSES. Furthermore, Croatian National Agency (NA) for LLP was designated as a contact point for Europass and Euroguidance.

Internet portal "Study in Croatia" was launched in November of 2010. "Study in Croatia" is a comprehensive source of information about higher education in Croatia aimed at prospective international students. The portal presents an overview of the Croatian higher education system, practical information about application procedures, student life, visas and accommodation and scholarships. Additionally, the portal provides information on learning Croatian as a foreign language, as well as general information about Croatia

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<sup>3</sup> "There shall be promoted mobility and overcoming obstacles to free movement of students and teachers." (*Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010*, p. 33, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Zagreb, September 2005)

### **4.3 Steps to identify and reduce the obstacles to learning mobility?**

As a candidate country, in the pre-accession period the Republic of Croatia was required to ensure necessary legal basis and effective administrative procedures supporting international mobility, particularly among the Republic of Croatia and members of the European Union, as an important element of preparatory measures for full accession to the Lifelong Learning Programme.

In order to achieve a strategic goal of increasing international incoming and outgoing mobility, particularly in the higher education system, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports established the Working Group for Removing Obstacles and Enhancing International Learning Mobility in June 2009. Members of the Working Group are representatives of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations, Ministry of Finance, Tax Administration, Croatian Institute for Health Insurance, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, Agency for Science and Higher Education, representatives of universities, the Council of Public and Private Polytechnics and Schools of Professional Higher Education, Institute for the Development of Education and the Croatian Student Conference. The Working Group has been envisaged as a platform for a dialogue among beneficiaries (participants in international projects with mobility as their integral part), and representatives of authorities responsible for legislation and procedures related to international mobility.

In the form of the Multi-annual Action Plan, the Working Group has proposed amendments to legislation supporting international mobility in education, simplification and changes of certain procedures related to international mobility, and other activities contributing to increasing and promotion of mobility.

The Action Plan for fostering and removing obstacles to international mobility in education for 2010-2012 was adopted by the Government in September 2010.

The measures of the Action Plan are as follows:

1. Increasing financing of learning mobility
2. Improving the legal basis in relation to taxation of grants and scholarships
3. Optimising the management of the EU funds (exchange rates)
4. Equalising rights of foreign and national students
5. Regulating temporary residence
6. Regulating health insurance system and procedures
7. Improving recognition of international cooperation and mobility as strategic priority for institutional development
8. Capacity building of education institutions
9. Increasing number of modules in foreign languages at the HEIs
10. Facilitating availability of information on studying in Croatia
11. Developing national data basis of international student mobility
12. Improving recognition of study periods abroad

The Action Plan for fostering and removing obstacles to international mobility in education for 2010-2012 is available at <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=6483&sec=2468>

## NEW SKILLS AND JOBS (approx. 2.5 PAGES)

### QUESTION 5

**What measures has your country taken to improve the assessment of future skills requirements matching since 2009?**

#### **5.1 Recent measure to improve skills forecasting (in addition to information provided through Eurydice in June 2010):**

13 VET Sector Councils were established with a view to having a central role in identifying the qualifications needed in the VET system. Sector councils are bodies established by VET Act (Official Gazette No. 30/2009). Sector councils are composed of partners and act as advisors and experts in defining and presenting needs in labour market, higher education and numerous other integral elements of Croatian society through: defining necessary vocational qualifications; analyzing existing and necessary competences within sectors and sub sectors; providing opinion to Agency concerning content of vocational qualification; developing contents of parts of vocational qualification standard; promoting sectors and possibility of employment within sectors; providing suggestions for curricula networks and institutions for vocational education, to founders of vocation education institutions; determining profiles within every particular education sector. For each educational sector separate sector council is founded, and it can be comprised of sub sectors. sector councils are established by the minister of science, education and sports and the Minister appoints and resolves its members. Each sector council is comprised from maximum of 20 members, who are appointed for a period of five years with and option of reappointment. Members of sector councils are experts nominated by responsible ministries for each sector and with compliance of employer, from the ranks of employers, chambers, syndicates, professional associations, national unions of persons with disabilities, universities, vocational education institutions and other stakeholders. One member from responsible ministry for each particular sector is nominated in each sector council, and the minister of science, education and sports directly nominates representative from VET Agency and other representatives from associated institution for vocational education.

As part of the development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework, it is planned to upgrade the sector councils into comprehensive groups involving all stakeholders across all levels of education. These groups would be established based on common areas of activity in the economy or society in general and would provide advice on the development of this area. A national committee would be established to provide national guidance.

A technical specification for the the National Information System for Science and Higher Education (NISSHE) has been developed in March 2011. The complete development of NISSHE, as well as its pilot implementation, is planned with community assistance through IPA 2010-2013 service contract. NISSHE is a prerequisite for a strong external quality assurance system in higher education and science, as well as a crucial condition for development of evidence based policy making in higher education in Croatia.

## **5.2 Recent measures to take the results on board in education and training planning processes, information and guidance:**

Within IPA funded operation *Strengthening Institutional Framework for the Development of the VET Occupational Standards/Qualifications & Curricula* there have been 13 occupational standards, qualifications and curricula developed so far by the working groups members whose members were also Sector Councils representatives.

## **EDUCATION BUDGETS (approx. 2 PAGES)**

### **QUESTION 6**

**How has the economic and financial crisis affected education and training budgets in your country (please refer to developments in particular education sectors, if appropriate)?**

The Education and Training Development Plan 2005-2010 has foreseen the annulment of primary school operation in three shifts. The state pedagogic standards from 2008 have foreseen that all schools will operate in one shift by 2017. However, due to financial restrictions at the national and local level, indicators related to monitoring conditions of school operation have shown that planned objectives will not have been met in due time.

Restrictions related to adopted pedagogic standards and standards under elaboration refer to:

- unrealised priority of closing up schools operating in three shifts
- annulment of free textbooks
- annulment of free transportation for secondary school pupils
- increased number of pupils per class.

More particularly, in 2009, 400 million HRK, or 3.29% of the total budget of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports were allocated to cover the costs of textbooks for elementary and first and second-year secondary school pupils. However, due to the economic crisis, the National Programme of Measures for the Implementation of Compulsory Secondary Education has been temporarily postponed. According to provisions of the Act on Amendments of the Primary and Secondary School Education Act (OG, 86/2009) the Government of Croatia, may, in line with the funds available in the state budget, decide on financing for each school year – that is, co-financing – of transport for secondary school students. Furthermore, local and regional self-government units ensure the co-financing of accommodation and meals for students in dormitories.

Due to economic crises a special attention has been given to the recruitment policy of the staff at the education institutions. The MoSES developed Instructions on regulating new employment at work posts of employees that terminated their employment due to their entitlement to retirement, in a manner that a new employment is not possible without an insight into required documents and new consent by the Management Board. It enables savings and better monitoring of current status, since salaries of employees in primary education are funded entirely from the State Budget.

Furthermore, due to a Budget decrease, funds for new buildings have been limited, while funds for didactic equipment and equipping school libraries have been decreased.

The budgetary provisions for higher education in 2011, compared by 2010, rose by 0.7%. They, however, decreased by 1.8% compared to 2008. It is, however, planned that the provisions for the 2011 budget will rise further and increase over the 2008 budget by 0.5%.

However, although the State Budget for the national activities related to education decreased due to the economic crises, the budget for international activities, more particularly international learning mobility, significantly increased.

In view of the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union, the Republic of Croatia fully accessed the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action programme as of year 2011 on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding on the participation in the Youth in Action programme and in the action programme in the field of lifelong learning (2007-2013), signed in December 2010. In order to become a full member of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Government of the Republic of Croatia allocated significant budgetary resources that would increase progressively, for the purpose of the national contribution for the participation in the Programmes, as well as for the operation of the National Agency, the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding the national contribution for full participation in the Lifelong Learning Programme equals 6 million EUR for the year 2011, 8 million EUR for the year 2012, and 10 million EUR for the year 2013.

Besides the possibilities to participate in the Union Programmes in the field of education, the beneficiaries of the state budget are encouraged to elaborate and achieve their activities using Instrument for pre-accession (IPA), Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2011, since majority of resources available for activities aimed at development may be accessed now exactly through these resources.

## LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES (approx. 2 PAGES)

### QUESTION 7

**What progress has your country made in the development and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy?**

**7.1 Does your country have such a strategy (please indicate where it is laid down):**

**7.2 Please briefly refer to the main measures addressing the principles of shared responsibility, effective financial mechanisms, flexible pathways and quality initial and targeted continuing training:**

In the last forty years, the lifelong learning has evolved from an emerging idea to a dominant principle and orientation, related to development of numerous national education systems. Its importance has been emphasised in numerous international action plans, declarations, documents and conferences. Croatia does not fall behind this trend – inclusion of the lifelong learning into strategic documents in the area of education (e.g. The White Paper on Croatian Education, 2002; The Education and Training Development Plan 2005-2010; Declaration on Knowledge by the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2002; The Strategy and Draft Adult Education Action Plan, 2004) has become one of leading principles for developing Croatian education system contributing to the creation of the learning society.

The State Pedagogic Standards for **Pre-school, for Elementary and Secondary Education**, adopted in 2008, regulate the following issues: the organisation of education programmes according to their purpose and duration, a number of children in education groups; a number of teachers and expert associates (pedagogues, psychologists, and special education experts); material conditions and benchmarks for funding; nutrition, hygiene and children health care; as well as equipping interior and exterior of a kindergartens and schools; and didactic material required for work.

In the **higher education** sector the following issues and topics have been or are being addressed:

- The current structure of Croatian universities is in critical need of change. The new laws propose a change in the structure of the universities which will increase the universities' autonomy, while also ensuring the introduction of accountability mechanisms, which are currently completely absent. These changes are currently being discussed with the academic community.

- The funding of higher education in Croatia is also in need of reform, and the new laws propose the introduction of funding agreements / contracts. These changes are closely tied to the changes of university structure, because the current structures would face considerable challenges in implementing any common goals agreed in the funding agreement.

Finally, recognition of prior learning (**RPL**) has been a point in which Croatia needed to develop new frameworks and policies. As part of the work on the Croatian Qualifications Framework and the new higher education law, the legal framework for proper introduction of RPL has been prepared. It is expected it will be passed in 2011, and the implementation of measures, in part, supported by EU funds.

**Adult education** is one of the key factors contributing to economic growth, reduction of unemployment, social inclusion and labour market mobility. It upgrades the competences of adults and makes them more competitive in the labour market. A precondition for the improvement of adult learners' competences is the development of an adult learning system providing flexibility and benefits for both adult learners and employers. Adult-education institutions should develop programmes that follow recent socio-economic developments and be in accordance with labour market needs. In order to increase the participation of adult learners in these programmes, adult education institutions should work on national, regional and local levels to raise society's awareness of lifelong learning and the benefits stemming from it.

Furthermore, the adult education sector should develop new ways to motivate adult learners, such as providing monetary incentives. In 2008 the participation of adults in lifelong learning<sup>4</sup> in Croatia was 2.2%, far below the EU-27 rate of 9.5%, but it is important to underline that the statistical methodology used in Croatia only takes into account the formal adult education programme.

Croatia is actively supporting the goals set at the EU level, which are stipulated in the 2006 "Communication on Adult Learning: It is Never Too Late to Learn",<sup>5</sup> and the 2007 "Action Plan on Adult Learning: It is Always a Good Time to Learn"<sup>6</sup>.

In recent years, the Government of the Republic of Croatia has accordingly made significant institutional and legislative changes in the adult education sector. The Adult Education Act passed in 2007 regulated, for the first time, the normative framework for making adult education an integral and equally important part of the Croatian education system. In 2008, four by-laws ensued from the Adult Education Act: the By-law on Public Certificates in Adult Education, the By-law on Standards and Specifications in Adult Education Institutions, the By-law on the Contents, Form and Method of Keeping Pedagogical Documentation and the By-law on Records in Adult Education Institutions. Since 2003, the MoSES has supported the concept set forth in "A Literate Croatia: The Way to a Desirable Future", through projects funded entirely by the state budget. Accordingly, primary education, as well as vocational training, is free of charge for the participants. The aim is to increase the overall level of literacy and to reduce unemployment by enabling individuals over the age of 15 to finish primary education and complete a training programme for simple occupations.

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<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, 2010, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc440>

<sup>5</sup> COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (2006) [Adult Learning: It is Never Too Late to Learn](http://web.aoo.hr/Documents/13%20Adult%20learning%20It%20is%20never%20too%20late%20to%20learn.pdf), Communication from the Commission, COM(2006) 614 final, Brussels, <http://web.aoo.hr/Documents/13%20Adult%20learning%20It%20is%20never%20too%20late%20to%20learn.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (2007) [Action Plan on Adult Learning: It is Always a Good Time to Learn](http://web.aoo.hr/Documents/14%20ACTION%20PLAN%20It%20is%20always%20good%20time%20to%20earn.pdf), Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2007) 558 final, Brussels; <http://web.aoo.hr/Documents/14%20ACTION%20PLAN%20It%20is%20always%20good%20time%20to%20earn.pdf>

**OTHER SIGNIFICANT REFORMS IN THE PRIORITY AREAS (approx. 2 PAGES)**

**QUESTION 8**

**What progress has your country made in making reforms in the priority areas not directly addressed in questions 2 – 7? (Please indicate relevant priority area and give a short description)**

For enrolment into the 2010/2011 academic year the **State Matura** (national school leaving exam) was successfully implemented for the first time in Croatia. Besides the final examination for graduates of gymnasium, for other students and candidates the State Matura replaced the entrance exams. Passing the State Matura exams 25.296 graduates were enrolled in higher education institutions in academic year 2010/2011. A unified login system was developed to combine state graduation exams and applications for admission to study programs (NISpVU). The whole process is carried out via National IT system for application to higher education institutions (NISpVU) that candidates use to apply for selected study programmes, as well as to find out which State Matura exams to take. This system is administered by the Central Application Office at the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

Following the adoption of the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education April 2009 and the Ordinance on the Content of Accreditation and the Conditions for Issuing of Accreditation for Higher Education, Delivery of Study Programmes and Reaccreditation of Higher Education Institutions in 2010, the Agency for Science and Higher Education has begun conducting **external quality assurance** of higher education institutions. 20 higher education institutions are being evaluated in 2010/2011.

The concept of learning outcomes and development of new qualifications framework as an instrument for regulation of the lifelong learning has been introduced with the **Croatian qualifications framework for lifelong learning (CROQF)**

The CROQF encompasses eight reference levels, with additional four sublevels reflecting the special characteristics of the Croatian education system. Each reference level is described in terms of student workload, level, measurable learning outcomes, competences obtained and professional profile, and closely related to the national and institutional quality assurance systems.

The CROQF will link and coordinate different education and training subsystems. Apart from its transparency function, the CROQF is seen as an important tool for reforming the national education and training system. It is a generally held view that the CROQF would be able to address and respond to some of the current needs of Croatian society and education and training. Besides helping the link to the EQF, and thus making Croatian qualifications better understood abroad, the framework is seen as reflecting national needs and priorities and as an instrument making it possible to develop and implement new education and training solutions specific to the Croatian context. There is a need to:

- (a) better link education and training with labour market needs;
- (b) improve social inclusion and equity;
- (c) improve pathways between subsystem and between sectors;

- (d) make qualifications transparent and more consistent;
- (e) support lifelong learning and offer a good basis for validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- (f) support quality assurance arrangements.

The short-term objective is to make the different types of qualifications more transparent and learning achievements and the system more understandable for individuals and employers. The framework platform allows partnership and commitment to develop. In the medium and longer term it is expected that CROQF will contribute to making the qualification system and qualifications more coherent and consistent, thus improving access and progression possibilities. This should also make it easier to develop procedures and standards for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning, help to improve responsibility and accountability of institutions and promote lifelong learning.

The shift to learning outcomes is seen as an essential part of the CROQF development and is supported by all relevant stakeholders. As CROQF is envisaged as a reforming tool, extensive work still lies ahead. All education programmes will have to be aligned with the principles of CROQF (which also includes learning outcomes approach) and labour market needs. NQF will provide a platform for assurance of flexible learning paths and progression routes. Implementation of CROQF will also contribute to harmonisation of learning outcomes assessment procedures on national scale as well as further strengthening of the overall quality assurance mechanisms.

The Report on the Referencing of the CROQF to the EQF and the QF-EHEA is being finalised by the working group composed by the national and international education experts. The submission of the Referencing Report to the European Commission is foreseen for August 2011.

**PROPOSALS FOR THE PRIORITY AREAS OF THE SUBSEQUENT PERIOD (APPROX. 1 PAGE)**

**QUESTION 9**

**Under the 4 broad strategic objectives, described below, the Council also defined mid-term priority areas for the period 2009-11. Which mid-term priority areas would your country wish to cooperate on during the next cycle (please indicate order of priority – high, medium, low)?**

<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:</b> MAKING LIFELONG LEARNING AND MOBILITY A REALITY	THE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY WITH A SPECIAL ATTENTION ON NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING	<b>HIGH</b>
	EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK	<b>HIGH</b>
	ESTABLISHING COOPERATION AIMED AT INCREASING MOBILITY IN EDUCATION	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:</b> IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING	LANGUAGE LERANING	<b>HIGH</b>
	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS	<b>HIGH</b>
	GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING	<b>HIGH</b>
	BASIC SKILIS: READING, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE	<b>HIGH</b>
	HARMONISING DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS WITH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS	<b>MEDIUM</b>
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:</b> PROMOTING EQUITY, SOCIAL COHESION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP	EARLY LEAVERS FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING	<b>HIGH</b>
	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	<b>HIGH</b>
	MIGRANTS	<b>HIGH</b>
	PUPILS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:</b> ENHANCING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION, INCLUDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING	TRANSVERSAL KEY COMPETENCIES	<b>HIGH</b>
	CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION	<b>MEDIUM</b>
	PARTNERSHIPS	<b>MEDIUM</b>

**9.5 Other comments:**

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