

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND SPORTS

**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
2008 - 2013**

Zagreb, July 2008

I Introduction

Challenges of fast development of new knowledges and technologies, frequent changes in the labour market and growing demand for highly qualified labour force, demographic aging of population, the process of globalisation and accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union as the central priority, impose the development of the society based on knowledge and the lifelong learning process.

The goal proclaimed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports to make Croatia the most dynamic country in the region until 2010, that will be a leader by the quantity of created and accumulated knowledge, carries the need to redefine the entire education system, and necessarily modernise the system of vocational education and training. This has been confirmed in the key documents of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the *Strategic Framework for Development for 2006 – 2013*, and the *Education System Development Plan for 2005 – 2010*.

Most citizens in the Republic of Croatia, like in the European Union countries, are educated through the vocational education system. The vocational education system is, therefore, crucial in accumulating human capital as a precondition for achieving economic growth, better quality employment and social goals. Initial vocational education needs to ensure the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences important for the labour market, as well as the possibilities for progress in further education, particularly in higher education. Continuous vocational education has to offer possibilities of acquiring competences important for further professional development of an individual, and also the increase of knowledge and innovativeness of the society.

The Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia, 2008 – 2013., was created with the aim to develop a system of vocational education and training that will lead to ensuring precisely the possibilities given above at the national level.

II. Reasons for drafting the Strategy

The Republic of Croatia has been facing, besides the challenges of integration, the challenges of globalisation as well. In the context of fast growing knowledge and market competition, the Republic of Croatia will base the development on enhancing knowledge and skills, and the development of human resources. Knowledge and skills are becoming the biggest capital, and persons who possess knowledge and skills lead to social progress. Under such circumstances and social environment, the Republic of Croatia has been implementing huge changes to the entire education system. One of its most important components, on which the developed European countries base their economic development, is the system of vocational education. The vocational education serves to develop professional competences and competences needed for employment, which have to meet the needs of a modern, competitive and flexible labour market, ready for fast changes, and to support the success of individuals in such labour market. This also imposes the need for different approach to learning and teaching, the application of different working methods and procedures in the teaching process, and new competencies of teachers. The emphasis is given to acquiring wide knowledge that enables to work professionally on various jobs, easier employability, and higher readiness to respond to new and faster requests by employers.

The Republic of Croatia, being a candidate country for the European Union membership, is involved in all the processes of development in vocational education and training – common European principles, standards and tools. The Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia for 2008 – 2013, draws also on the principles and goals of the Lisbon Declaration the *Education and Training 2010*, from 2000, inviting the Member States to modernise educational systems so that the European Union may become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy. The European vocational education priorities and development strategies were confirmed by the Copenhagen Declaration (2002), the Maastricht Communiqué (2004) and the Helsinki Communiqué (2006).

The above stated documents emphasise the possibility of comparability, transferability and recognition of qualifications and competencies by developing reference levels, common principles for certification and credit transfer system for vocational education so to promote the mobility of citizens. It is necessary to develop qualifications based on competencies, at sector level, with compulsory inclusion of social partners. A priority is, also, taking measures for enhancing the reputation and attractiveness of vocational education, that, among other things, requires an open, flexible and individualised system which ensures fast transition to working life and/or further education, and supports the development of competencies of adults in the labour market. A contemporary system of vocational education meets the needs of an individual also in such a way as to analyse the present and envisage the future trends in the labour market, adapting the education supply to the labour market demands. Important priorities are also the application of common criteria and quality assurance principles, strengthening of transparency through the application and rationalisation of information tools and networks, and highly qualified teachers who are being continuously professionally developed. The European dimension emphasises also the need to develop key competencies (functional literacy, numeracy, ICT competencies, knowledge of foreign languages, entrepreneurship, mathematics and natural sciences, interpersonal and social competencies, learning how to learn, general culture), and the utility of a more thorough and longer compulsory general education, and later and better selection of a profession.

III. Objectives of the Strategy

The objectives of the Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia for 2008 - 2013, are the following:

- to define directions of vocational education development and modes of their realisation
- to determine parameters of changes in vocational education
- to establish mechanisms for systematic monitoring and realisation of objectives
- to promote equal learning rights and conditions for all
- to promote vocational education and training
- to enhance the vocational education quality
- to build mechanisms of comparability and recognition of Croatian vocational qualifications in Europe (European Qualifications Framework).

The Strategy will serve to the creators of education policies, social partners, actors of educational activity, and to all users of the vocational education system.

IV. Strategic and Institutional Framework of the System of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Croatia

4.1 Strategic and Legislative Framework

The reference point of the *Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia for 2008 – 2013*, is found in the following national documents:

A) Strategic documents:

1) *55 recommendations concerning improvement of competitiveness in Croatia* (the National Council on Competitiveness, 2004)

“... Every “national economy” and its competitive position depend primarily on the quality of available human resources. The use of such resources and investment into their quality are the main factors of development. Education increases the competitiveness of economy through ensuring the necessary quality of human resources.

Education, precisely, enables the acquisition of knowledge, skills, standpoints, and values an individual needs to realise one’s working and social roles...”

These documents through the recommendations given below stimulate changes in the system of vocational education and training.

- To increase the inclusion of adults in additional education programmes
- To evaluate knowledge and skills needed in the future labour market
- To adapt education programmes to the development of knowledge and skills needed in future
- To increase vertical and horizontal passability following the compulsory education system
- To modernise education of teachers ("to instruct the teachers")
- To conduct external and international evaluation, and increase the role of society

2) *The Declaration on Knowledge – Croatia Based on Knowledge and the Application of Knowledge* (the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2004)

“The principal trend in education in the 21st century is the orientation towards the transfer potential of learning: the orientation towards a quality acquisition of smaller extent of permanent knowledge that is actively acquired and is suitable as a constant basis for further permanent life-long learning. In this way, the problem solving capabilities are developed, instead of accumulating educational contents from the society of the past which is changing.”

3) *The Education System Development Plan for 2005 – 2010*. (the Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2005)

“Development goals of the system of vocational education and training:

- To change vocational education so as to render it less specialised and more adaptable to the needs of trainees and labour market.
- To adjust professions profile and programme to the labour market, to social and economic needs, to modernise contents and methods of vocational education and training, and ensure possibilities for continuing education after the completion of a vocational school.”

4) *The Strategic Framework for Development for 2006 – 2013* (the Government of

the Republic of Croatia, 2006)The objectives given in the chapter *People and Knowledge*:

- to enhance an active role of labour market institutions in harmonising supply and demand of labour force
- to decrease long term unemployment and promote lifelong learning
- to modernise vocational education in accordance with the economic needs
- to extend the duration of compulsory education
- to increase the share of highly educated persons in the general population
- to increase allocations for education, but also the effectiveness of spending the available funds
- to stimulate the participation of private sector in financing, both regular education and in-service training

5) *The White Paper on Vocational Education and Training* – Proposals and Recommendations on Vocational Education and Training Policy, Strategy and Legislation (Working Group Strategy and Legislation within the CARDS 2002 Project “Vocational Education and Training: Modernisation and Institution Building, 2006”)

6) *The National Programme of Measures for the Introduction of Compulsory Secondary - school Education* (the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia, June 2007)

“Besides the evaluation of the state related to the overall education in the Republic of Croatia, the National Programme determines strategic goals for the period from 2007 to 2013, which are before all:

- To improve the enrolment rate of the young into secondary schools and to create prerequisites for higher rate of the secondary education completion,
- To create conditions for their better social inclusion, particularly of the young with special needs,
- To create better conditions for learning and working in schools for pupils,
- To improve working conditions for teachers, professional assistants and headmasters / headmistresses, their systematic professional training and advancement,
- To define tasks of individual competent state administration authorities, public institutions, as well as other education system participants,
- To create conditions for better and more harmonised cooperation between the areas of education and labour,
- To harmonise the Croatian education system with the European systems for the purpose of comparability of the learning results,
- To create prerequisites for lifelong learning.”

7) *The Strategy for the Construction and Development of the National Curriculum* (the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2007)

8) *The Operational Programme for Human Resource Development 2007 – 2009, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance – IPA* (the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the European Commission, 2007)

9) *The National Pedagogical Standard of the Secondary Education System* (the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia, 2008)

B) Legislative framework

- Act on Secondary Education (OG 19/92; 26/93, 27/93, 50/95, 59/01, 114/01, 81/05)
- Trades and Crafts Act (OG 77/93, 90/96, 102/98, 64/01, 71/01, 49/03, 68/07)
- Act on Employment Mediation and Unemployment Rights (OG 32/02)
- Act on the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (OG 151/04)
- Regulation establishing the Agency for Vocational Education and Training (OG 10/05)
- Regulation establishing the Agency for Adult Education (OG 59/06)
- Act on the Education and Teacher Training Agency (OG 85/06)
- Adult Education Act (OG 17/07)
- Act on State Aid in Education and Training (OG 109/07)

4.2. Key holders:

- Ministry of Science, Education and Sports
- Agency for Vocational Education and Training
- Agency for Adult Education
- Education and Teacher Training Agency
- National Centre for External Evaluation of Education
- Ministry of the Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship
- Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts
- Croatian Chamber of Economy
- Croatian Employment Service
- State Office for Statistics
- Croatian Employers Association
- Education institutions

V. Overview of the State of Vocational Education and Training

The current system of vocational education and training covers 70.9% of the total secondary school population, that is 135,930 pupils in 290 schools.

The system of regular vocational education for the acquisition of lower and secondary school qualifications according to education programmes is comprised of:

- one-year and two-year programmes of lower professional qualifications in 23 education programmes. The number of pupils who attend such programmes is 1,000, which makes 0.7% of the total number of pupils in vocational education, that is 0.5% of the total secondary school population.
- three-year programmes for professions in the industry and trades and crafts in 93 education programmes. Attended by 49,560 pupils, which makes 36.5% of the total number of pupils in vocational education, that is 25.9% of the total secondary school population.
- four-year programmes of technical and the like orientation, in 83 education programmes. Attended by 85,370 pupils, which makes 62.8% of the total number of pupils in vocational education, that is 44.5% of the total secondary school population.

The current system of vocational education and training does not ensure the acquisition of competences needed in the labour market, because the education supply and education programmes are not modernised fast enough. Currently, they are neither based on the market needs analyses, nor are the employment rate indicators and/or the education continuation rate of the pupils who completed vocational education followed up.

Insufficient real qualifications or the inexistence of the labour market need for such profile of competencies, nevertheless, factually leads to aggravated employability, thus diminishing national and individual potentials for growth and progress.

The vocational education system is facing a big challenge of continuing modernisation of the education supply and working methods. The contents of the great majority of the existing curricula and teaching programmes is outdated and offers no possibility of acquiring contemporary knowledge, skills and competencies, because the dynamics of their modernisation does not follow the development of new knowledges and technologies. An aggravating circumstance of their regular modernisation is understaffedness in the system, as well as financial implications it requires. Moreover, the methodology of drafting curricula and teaching programmes provides no mechanisms that would ensure that they reflect not only contemporary knowledge, but also their relevance in the world of work. Nowadays, the curricula and teaching programmes are created exclusively within the education system that not sufficiently knows and follows the labour market trends. An additional problem is the structure of the curricula and teaching programmes itself, which is subject-oriented and prescribes the tasks of teachers themselves, and not the competencies a pupil has to acquire. In other words, the focus is on teaching, and not on learning. Also, general competencies are not unambiguously defined in curricula. Moreover, the consequence of such structure of the curricula and teaching programmes is an insufficient connection of teaching subjects and contents, and poor horizontal and vertical passability within the education system. There is also a problem of premature guidance of pupils to choose professions, which is particularly pronounced in choosing narrowly profiled occupations, which provide for a very narrow set of competencies.

There is also still noticed a great need for additional and continuous investment in the human resources development in all the components of the system, and their better coordination. This

is most clearly pronounced in teachers of vocational subjects, as direct implementers of the education process. The existing system for vocational teachers' education is inadequate, outdated and not uniform. There is still no standard for teacher professions, the consequences of which are the undefined competencies for teaching jobs and the unstandardised higher education curricula which provide qualifications for teaching jobs to most of the teachers. Pedagogical – psychological and didactical - methodological education is, at the moment, acquired in higher education institutions through various programmes which are not harmonised among themselves, and are not sufficiently related to the needs of the vocational education system.

There is also a decrease of interest in teaching jobs, and particularly among certain professional profiles (doctors, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, etc.). Possible reasons for such a decrease are the impossibility of advancement and professional training, the decline in the appeal of the teaching profession and the remuneration.

Analysing the network of programmes, it leads to the conclusion that the vocational programmes distribution is not sufficiently relevant in terms of the labour market needs, and not sufficiently rational in terms of the ratio of labour market needs and the price for the implementation of particular programmes, and the provision of the required quality and number of teaching staff. This leads to a huge dispersion of programmes in various schools and various environments, and a low average number of pupils who attend a particular programme per one school. Such examples are in the sector of mechanical engineering, attended by 16,041 pupils in 131 schools, that makes 122 pupils per school at average. In this way, the system became much more expensive, since every school should be equally equipped with necessary didactic, workshop and laboratory equipment. Besides, fast development of technologies dictates a continuous modernisation of school equipment. Such inadequate equipment of schools directly affects the quality of the teaching process. Moreover, schools and local community face great difficulties when they need to adjust their supply of programmes to the labour market needs fast, due to the need to adapt both equipment and staff.

In view of irrelevance of particular programmes in some environments, there are difficulties in providing conditions to implement practical lessons in realistic working environment, since it is inexistent at some local levels. The problem of quality implementation of practical lessons is present in some companies, entrepreneurships and trades and crafts workshops, due to the insufficiently built trust and clear practical lessons implementation programmes.

When defining the network of programmes and planning enrolment into programmes, the real needs of the labour market are not taken into consideration sufficiently, both for professions and for required competencies. The labour market analyses and their projections, the economic plans of development at local and national level, are still not taken as a necessary precondition for planning the enrolment needs. In the same way, clear quantitative indicators of successful employability in the occupational field and/or the education indicators are not taken into account, and often do not exist, when planning enrolment. On the other hand, the existing indicators show that a considerable number of young people educated in vocational professions, and particularly in three-year programmes, has difficulties in finding work and/or is not employed in the discipline they were educated for. This is a heavy burden both for the education system and for employers, due to a large number of pre-qualifications needed. An interest to enrol into a part of the curricula is decreased or even inexistent, due to the inexistent interest of the labour market in such a profession and / or insufficient appeal of the profession itself, despite of market possibilities.

5.1. Steps Taken to Improve the System

Over the past period, great moves were made in the human resources development and the establishment of structures which ensure a successful development of vocational education. The Agency for Vocational Education and Training was established in 2005, as a key stakeholder in the vocational education system, as well as the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (established in 2004) which ensures the quality of the entire system, and the Agency for Adult Education was established in 2006, which takes care of the education of adults, the lifelong learning. A series of initiatives were launched, the Strategy for the Construction and Development of the National Curriculum was drafted, the National Pedagogical Standard of the Secondary Education System was adopted, and the Croatian Qualifications Framework is currently being drafted.

The Agency for Vocational Education and Training in cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders (the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Ministry of the Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship, and other ministries, the Croatian Employers Association, the Croatian Employment Service, the State Office for Statistics, the Croatian Chamber of Economy, trade unions, higher education institutions, professional associations and chambers, small, medium and large companies, local and regional self-government) conducted a labour market analysis, resulting in the establishment of 13 educational sectors in vocational education, instead of the past 32 areas of work. A special move was made by establishing the Sectoral Councils by the Agency for Vocational Education and Training for each of the 13 educational sectors, as three-partite bodies that represent a direct connection between the labour market and education, and the first step in the development of partnerships of all the stakeholders interested in the development of vocational education. A large number of sectoral council members are businessmen who have already given concrete proposals for the improvement of education supply, by defining 323 professions that match the needs of the contemporary Croatian economy.

Shifts are made in raising the level of quality assurance in vocational education through national exams, preparations for the state graduation exam, the introduction of self-evaluation of schools, and by adopting the National Pedagogical Standard of the Secondary Education System. Still, these are only initial steps introducing the quality assurance elements into the system.

A big breakthrough was made also by the development of the Vocational Education and Training Information System (VETIS) and the Project of Integrated System for Standardized Data Group Management (e-Matica).

The Act on Education and Guidance abolishes traineeship in elementary and secondary schools for persons who already have some work experience, and this should contribute to easier decision-making to take a teaching job.

A large part of the above stated activities are stimulated, financed and professionally supported by the European Union and the World Bank.

VI. Focus on Change – Reform of the System of Vocational Education and Training

As a result of the status overview of the system and the established fact that major breakthroughs in the education system were made not only to harmonise it with the European vocational education standards, but also to meet the needs in Croatia for competent and educated labour force, the drafting of the *Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia for 2008 – 2013* started, the document that would direct the development of the vocational education towards accomplishing five key goals, listed below. These goals are in accordance with the basic principles that vocational education must be based on.

6.1. Basic Principles of the System of Vocational Education and Training

The role of the vocational training is twofold: on one hand, it contributes to the competitiveness of the national economy, but on the other, its role is also to contribute to the social cohesion of a particular society. It needs to provide a broad basis of competences which are crucial for professional and personal success of an individual, and to serve for the development of human resources and enhancing the society based on knowledge and innovativeness. It is, therefore, crucial that it be founded on the following set of principles:

- ◆ the principle of **accessibility**, that ensures equal possibilities of access for all the citizens to initial and continuing vocational education;
- ◆ the principle of **flexibility**, that enables individuals to acquire equal qualifications in different ways, and ensures horizontal and vertical passability of an individual and an individualised approach to needs, so to allow everyone to accomplish maximum possibilities and lifelong learning;
- ◆ the principles of **relevance** and **rationality**, that ensure the basis of vocational education on analyses of the society and the labour market needs, the acquisition of competences relevant for the working life and/or continuing education, and continuous evaluation and rational adjustment of education supply.
- ◆ the principles of **partnership**, ensuring the inclusion of all the partners (the state and economic institutions, private sector and other interested subjects) in planning, financing and managing the modern system of vocational education and training;
- ◆ the principle of **quality assurance**, that strengthens confidence in system and contributes to its improvement;
- ◆ the principle of the **transparency of the system**, that is open, active, and adaptable to contemporary markets, and based on clear criteria of decision-making and financing.

6.2. Objectives of the Reform of the Vocational Education and Training

The objectives of the reform of the vocational education and training effectuate the above listed principles. There are five key objectives of the reform of the vocational education and training which are envisaged by this *Strategy*:

- to develop qualifications based on competencies and learning results,
- to harmonise permanently education with the labour market needs,
- to create a system of vocational education and training that allows for lifelong learning and mobility,
- to define the role of teachers in the learning outcomes-oriented system,
- to establish the quality assurance system.

6.2.1. Developing qualifications based on competencies and learning results

The development of a vocational education system directed to stronger flexibility and relevance requires the abandonment of a traditional approach based more on the educational programme duration, than on the results of learning, i.e. on what an individual knows, understands and is capable of doing at the end of the learning process.

Placing the learning results in the focus of attention, requires comprehensive adjustments of the existing system. Croatia embarked on the road of these changes and in 2006, as a crucial step, started drafting the Croatian Qualifications Framework, which is a basis for the implementation of changes also in the vocational education. The key principles and elements of the Croatian Qualifications Framework are defined in the *Starting Points for Croatian Qualifications Framework* and are in conformity with those of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Instead of acquiring vocational profession, which is the case nowadays in vocational education, it is necessary to orientate towards the acquisition of vocational qualifications. While the term profession is by its meaning closest to a work place or a set of jobs, the qualification represents the level (complexity) and the volume (“quantity”) of competences acquired by a particular individual, that are proved by a school certificate or another public document issued by the competent institution.

The principal content of qualifications are the results of learning, that is the competencies acquired through learning, and they comprise knowledges (the factual and theoretical information acquired through learning), skills (the application of knowledge in performing tasks and solving problems, and they refer to cognitive and practical / psychomotoric skills), and competencies in narrower sense (the acquired application of knowledge and skills in accordance with given standards, that is independence and responsibility in their application).

By drafting the Croatian Qualifications Framework, the vocational education will also use an approach which defines and describes vocational qualifications of the results of learning. Further development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework will define all the educational levels that may be acquired in the Croatian educational system, and provide measurable results of learning that will be relevant for all the qualifications and levels, regardless of the educational way the qualification was acquired.

It is also necessary to consider the models of evaluating and recognising the informally and non-formally acquired qualifications.

The establishment of the Croatian Qualifications Framework, with the promotion of the quality assurance principles in education, will enable, at all educational levels, the transparency, the comparability and the transferability of qualifications between various educational institutions at the national level and their connection with the EQF at the European level, and their common point of reference will be the results of learning. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, 2008, to all the Member States, is to introduce measures so that all the qualifications until 2012 include a clear mark of the level of the national qualifications framework, as well as a mark of the reference level of the European Qualifications Framework.

One of the mechanisms of support to the recognition and transfer of the acquired qualifications, within one country and internationally, is the expression of the scope of acquired qualifications by developing a system of credits for vocational education and training, and its connecting with the credit system in higher education (ECTS), and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET).

The credits in vocational education are a support to the development of a learning outcomes-oriented system, then to the development of a system of validation and recognition of prior learning, and they are also a support to the development of qualifications and methods of testing based on the results of learning.

The vocational education system will, therefore, when developing vocational qualifications, and in accordance with the future development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework, start developing a clear and simple instrument of credits for vocational education.

Adopting the approach of developing qualifications based on competences, with the establishment of the Croatian Qualifications Framework, will ensure better connection of vocational qualifications with the system of higher education, but also with the labour market, because the competences which need to be acquired through learning will be mainly defined precisely by the labour market.

Objectives:

- > Develop all the vocational qualifications (with clear marks of the national level and the EQF level) by the end of 2012
- > Develop the credit system for vocational education and training by the end of 2012

6.2.2. Harmonising permanently the education with the labour market needs

The vocational education system plays a central role in responding to the challenges of fast appearance of new technologies, the demand for new competencies, the globalisation and aging of population. The need to bigger investments into human resources development requires also adjustment of the vocational education system, as a response to such challenges.

The vocational education plays a key role in developing human resources with the aim of achieving economic growth, employment and realisation of social goals. It, therefore, has to provide a wide basis of knowledge, skills and competencies required at the labour market, or in further education.

In order to make mobile the further development of the vocational education system to meet the needs of individuals and the society, it is necessary to define mechanisms that enable fast reactions of the system to changeable market requirements through, among other things, an adequate adjustment of education supply and curricula, and harmonisation with higher education. Therefore, it will be necessary to follow the information and labour market analyses in creating education supply and network of programmes. Simultaneously, the creation of profession standards and qualifications development needs to precede the creation of curricula.

The information of the labour market must show trends in employment and demographic trends. The analyses of sectors and/or subsectors need to provide information on the number of employed, movements in the sector, demanded competences, projection of the future development of the sector and personnel requirements, titles of jobs and ways of advancement within an industry or an economic sector. Only on the basis of such indicators, it is possible to offer relevant and rational network of programmes.

Curricula must give the possibility to acquire the demanded knowledge, skills and competencies. Their creation, therefore, needs to be based on the previous development of the profession and qualification standards. A profession here is understood as a set of jobs whose main tasks and obligations are characterised by a high grade of similarity. The profession standards will specify job descriptions, activities performed within a working place, and competencies that are precondition for an efficient performance of tasks in this area of employment. The qualifications will define the level, scope and profile of competencies needed to be acquired at the end of the learning process. The curriculum needs to be drafted starting from the learning results defined in detail, through ways and types of evaluation to contents and methods of teaching.

Such mechanisms of creating the education supply and the education programmes may be realised only through partnership with all the stakeholders of vocational education (employers, trade unions, chambers, local government representatives, and all other interested parties).

It is particularly important to define the roles of stakeholders and bodies that will act as a link between vocational education and the labour market, and higher education. The principal holders of this process need to be sectoral councils, being the bodies that present, with competence, to the system of vocational education and training the needs of the labour market and higher education which need to be met by the vocational education. Their further work needs to be defined by the Act on Vocational Education, which is being drafted.

In the function of better meeting the labour market needs, it is necessary to further develop and enhance the lifelong professional orientation in vocational education, as an important tool of education and employment policy, among other also through strengthening capacities for providing services of professional orientation.

Objectives:

- > Define the roles of all the key stakeholders and mechanisms of their cooperation by the end of 2008
- > Define the work of sectoral councils by the end of 2009
- > Define the methodology of labour market research by the end of 2011
- > Draft an Action Plan of lifelong professional orientation in vocational education and training by the end of the first quarter of 2012
- > Collect and process the results of the labour market research by the end of 2012

6.2.3. Creating a system of vocational education and training that allows for lifelong learning and mobility

An available and flexible system of vocational education needs to allow for lifelong learning by providing an efficient education supply and flexible ways of acquiring qualifications. The system will, in the process, promote the principle of accessibility for all the population groups, offering education pathways both to those with high potential, as well as to those who risk exclusion from the education system and the labour market – particularly to those who leave education early, to individuals with low qualifications or with no qualifications, to people with special education needs and to older people.

The system will, also, support education and geographic mobility of pupils and employees, among others, by providing vertical and horizontal passability between all sections of the education system.

Objectives:

- > Develop mechanisms of following-up the inclusion in lifelong learning by the end of 2010
- > Develop mechanisms of following-up the pupil mobility by the end of 2010

6.2.4. Defining the role of teachers in the learning outcomes-oriented system

The teachers play a key role in a successful implementation of the vocational education reform. It is, therefore, necessary to reform the system of initial education, further training and advancement of teachers, and in these aspects also to orientate exclusively towards acquiring competences.

It is, therefore, necessary to make an analysis, the profession standard and the qualification for a vocational teacher, which will define the level, scope and profile of knowledge, skills and competencies for a teacher, as well as their professional advancement pathways. These elements must serve as a basis for drafting curricula, both for initial, as well as for later education and training of teachers.

Beside knowledge and understanding of the subject and the area of work, a teacher in a learning outcomes-oriented system must have broad pedagogic knowledge. The teacher has to create and apply logical and simulative sequences of work, use various methods and means efficiently, build up to the previously acquired knowledge, clearly introduce new concepts, give explanations, invite to questions and discussion. However, for acquiring competences it is exceptionally important also to ensure the application of new knowledge and skills. For efficient teaching oriented to the acquisition of competences, the teachers need to have wide understanding of all the developmental and other processes that have impact on the progress and well-being of a pupil, and build relations of trust, fairness and support.

The teachers, during their work, need to have ensured a considerably closer contact with direct working processes in economy.

Objectives:

- > Develop mechanisms of following up the professional training of teachers by the end of 2010
- > Draft the teacher training curriculum by the end of the first half of 2011
- > Draft the profession standard and the qualification for a vocational teacher by the end of 2012
- > Draft the teacher education curriculum by the end of the first half of 2013

6.2.5. Establishing a quality assurance system

With the aim of enhancing trust in the vocational education system and improving it, it is necessary to develop the quality assurance of all of its components (institutions, teaching processes, etc.) The quality assurance needs to be a continuous process, comprising a systematic and regular evaluation of all of its elements, and it needs to include:

- defined and measurable goals and standards, as well as guidelines for their realisation,
- consistent methods of self-evaluation and external evaluation,
- conditions, mechanisms and procedures for subsequent advancement in case of an unsatisfactory evaluation result, and
- availability of evaluation results to the wider public.

The need to establish a quality assurance system as an integral part of managing institutions in the system of vocational education and training is noticed to be the most necessary. Furthermore, this means to evaluate the institutions regularly, i.e. their system of quality assurance by external supervisory bodies, which in turn, have to be subjected to regular (external) evaluation themselves.

All the past analyses showed that the current network of programmes is not rational and expensive, and it is necessary to ensure the quality of processes and mechanisms which determine the network of programmes and enrolment quotas. In this process, the most important is to clearly define measurable indicators which are based on the labour market needs and the economic development strategies, and to define the roles and responsibilities of all the relevant stakeholders of this process. It is necessary, in this connection, to define clearly the criteria for (planning and) equipping schools, to set clear and measurable criteria and mechanisms for the curriculum implementation approval, but also for systematic monitoring the meeting thereof. In other words, the vocational education providers have to be submitted to a regular check so to establish if they meet all the required material, personnel and other conditions for the further implementation of the previously approved programme.

It is necessary to establish the quality assurance system of the teaching process implementation through elaborated elements and follow-up mechanisms.

A fast development of new technologies, knowledge and changes in the economy, impose the need to regularly evaluate the profession and qualification standards required by the labour market, and thus also the curriculum, so to ensure that these are oriented to the acquisition of relevant competences.

By developing the vocational education and training with the establishment of the quality assurance system, the trust of an individual and an employer in the education system will grow, and the transfer and recognition of qualifications between institutions and states will become easier.

Objectives:

- > Establish the quality assurance system in vocational education and training by the end of 2012

VII. Implementation of the Strategy

The realisation of the *Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia, 2008 – 2013*, implies also the adoption of the Act on Vocational Education, as well as other implementation legislation.

The implementation of the Strategy will require drafting of annual action plans at the end of calendar year for the following year, and determining implementation bodies, as well as bodies in charge of monitoring the implementation, the measures and the activities of the action plan.