**(I) Project Result 1 – Qualitative Research**

**(I.I) Desktop research in each partner country**

**Task:** Deep research on existing certificate and quality assurance structures in the partner countries of EU-CERT.

| 1. **What are the common existing certificates in your country?**   In Croatia, the Ministry of Science and Education devises plans and policies for the CROQF (Croatian Quality Framework) which matches the EQF (European Qualifications Framework). Additionally, this ministry maybe assisted by other Croatian agencies such as Ministry of Labour and Skills in the development of CROQF to build and make Croatia as competitive as possible within Europe and globally as far as education is concerned.  The Croatian education system has evolved over the last decade and since joining the EU on 1 July 2013 the country has made several leaps forward in order to match the EU framework and accomplish higher standards in education and therefore, higher productivity.  After the collapse of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, Croatia formally became a constitutional republic in 1991. Articles 65 and 66 of the Constitution for the Republic of Croatia provides for the rights to education for all. Primary education is free and compulsory while secondary and higher education is available to all under equal conditions and according to their aptitudes and abilities.  The Croatian education high schools (secondary education), consist of the following curriculum:   1. **Grammar schools** (general or specialized) lasting for four years. 2. **Vocational schools**, lasting from one to usually three or four years, exceptionally five, upon the completion of which the students acquire a qualification of a certain level, scope, profile and quality which is proven by a public document whose content and form are prescribed by the ministry responsible for education. 3. **Art schools** (music, dance, art and other, determined by the type of curriculum) lasting a minimum of 4 years.   The existing system of **vocational education** covers 66.9% of the total secondary school population, i.e. 96,018 students in 300 schools.  The system of **regular vocational education** for acquiring low and intermediate level qualifications, according to educational programs, consists of:   * **one-year** and **two-year** programs of lower education in 8 educational programs. The number of students attending these programs is 159, which is 0.17% of the total number of vocational education students, or 0.1 % of the total secondary school population. * **three-year programs** for occupations in industry and crafts in 139 educational programs. They are attended by 26,995 students, which is 28.1% of the total number of vocational education students, or 18.8% of the total secondary school population. * **four-year** technical programs and similar orientations in 83 educational programs. They are attended by 63,442 students, which is 66.1% of the total number of vocational education students, or 44.1% of the total secondary school population.   Source: Ministry of Science, Education & Sports; Rep of Croatia  Agency for Vocational Education and Training (asoo)  Further the Agency for VET in Croatia (asoo.hr) also promotes competitions and fairs at national and international levels to raise standards within the VET system in Croatia. This ensures the visibility of Croatian competitions for vocational school students at the international level.  According to the modern trends and the so-called “skills movement”, in 2019 the WorldSkills 2019 was held in Zagreb which attracted some 300 participants from across Croatia from 40 different vocational disciplines. Some 12,000 visitors attended the fair from all over Croatia and included both educators and learners alike.  With the recommendations by the European Commission in 2004 of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET), the Agency for VET in Croatia has been developing and implementing VET quality and standards since 2010. The activities of ASOO are further enshrined in law under the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education Act (Art. 4, para. 2), the Vocational Education Act (Art. 13) and the Adult Education Act (Art. 23). These laws include participation in evaluation, self-assessment and external evaluation procedures within the system of vocational education and training and adult education.  ASOO participates in the work of EQAVET and is the reference point in Croatia for quality standards and maintaining VET quality across Croatia. It has also carried out the following as part of the implementation of the self-assessment process:   * continuous advisory support to schools in the implementation of the self-assessment process * professional training for school Quality committees * monitoring the implementation of the self-assessment process – Self-assessment reports * visits to schools and Quality committees for support * reporting on the self-assessment process   At tertiary level, there are many universities that cater to various programmes and range both in breadth and depth depending upon the field of study. These universities provide tertiary education and cater from Bachelor’s degrees to doctorate programmes within a wide range of subject fields from hospitality and tourism to languages and medical studies.  In Croatia, adult education is recognized as an important component of the education system, supported by a number of important strategic documents. The most important steps in the development of the adult education system are the adoption of the Adult Education Strategy in November 2004 by the Government of Republic of Croatia, the establishment of the Adult Education Agency by Government Decree in May 2006 (Agency for VET and Adult Education since 2010) and the adoption of the Adult Education Act in February 2007. By the enactment of the Adult Education Act the normative framework is established and legal preconditions for the further development of adult education as a full-fledged part of the entire Croatian education system are created.  The first article of the Adult Education Act defines adult education in Croatia as a process of learning of adults aimed to exercise the right to free personality development, training in order to increase own employability (acquisition of qualifications for the initial profession, retraining, acquisition and deepening of professional knowledge, skills and abilities) and active citizenship education. In Croatia, adult education relates to all forms of education for persons older than 15 years. The Act stipulates that adult education is based on following principles: lifelong learning; rational use of educational opportunities, territorial proximity and universal access to education under equal conditions and in accordance with the abilities; freedom and autonomy in choosing the manner of content, form, means and methods; respect for diversity and inclusion; professional and ethical responsibilities of andragogic workers; guarantees of the quality of the educational offer and respect for the personality and dignity of each participant.  Furthermore, the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology, adopted by the Croatian Parliament on 17 October 2014, recognizes adult education as an integral part of a comprehensive education system based on the concept of lifelong learning. It emphasizes two main goals of adult education: 1. The acquisition of transversal competencies of the individual: initiative and entrepreneurship, learning to learn, cultural expression, social inclusion (volunteer, environmental, political and other activism, adoption and application of democratic values ​​and attitudes), parenting skills, creative and artistic evaluation and expression, development of basic economic, financial and media literacy, etc. 2. The acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable employability, greater adaptability, i.e. mobility in the labour market.  The Agency for VET and Adult Education is one of the key institutions in the field of adult education in the Republic of Croatia today. Pursuant to the Agency for VET and Adult Education Act (by which the Agency takes over the tasks of the former Agency for Adult Education), the Agency is in charge of developing the adult education system through a number of elements, including analytical, development and research activities; alignment of proposals of corresponding expert and working bodies in the adult education system; expert and advisory work towards adult education institutions; participation in evaluation, self-assessment and external assessment procedures in the adult education system; methodology for developing adult education programs; encouraging cooperation and participation in the implementation of programs and projects related to the development of the adult education system; training and professional development of employees in the adult education system.  Adult education also plays an important role at the level of EU policies, where a number of strategic documents speak of the importance of further development and improvement in this area.  The Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning adopted by the Council of the European Union in 2011 emphasizes that adult education is a key component of lifelong learning and covers a range of formal, non-formal and informal educational activities, both general and vocational, that adults engage in after completing initial education and training.  <https://www.asoo.hr/en/> |
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| 2. How is the quality assurance structure of the certificates in your countries?  According to ASOO and Ministry of Science, Education & Sports in Croatia schools within the VET sector independently and with full responsibility assess the quality of their own work. This self-assessment includes the following priority areas: work planning, teaching and learning support, student achievement and learning outcomes, material conditions, human resources and professional development of employees, cooperation within the vocational education institution and cooperation with other stakeholders as well as institution promotion and management and the wider governmental agencies implementing VET quality and standards. Each priority area is further divided into several quality areas that are described by quality criteria. According to the quality criteria, schools assess the level of their success in the implementation of the educational process and plan to improve their work. ASOO and other governmental agencies are there to help improve standards within the institutions and across the whole country.  Each VET institution has access to the online self-assessment tools via ASOO and its website ([e-kvaliteta.asoo.hr](https://e-kvaliteta.asoo.hr/pages/public/login.xhtml?v=#%7Bnow%7D)). Over a 100 pages self-assessment manual is also available via the ASOO website. In addition to self-assessment, VET institutions are required to be externally evaluated as per the Primary and Secondary School Education Act and the Vocational Education and Training Act Chapter VIII Article 88.  The above Act states that *in order to improve the quality of educational activities, external evaluation and self-assessment is carried out in school institutions, and it refers to conducting national exams and measuring the level of quality of all components of the national curriculum. It is also stated that external evaluation is conducted by the National Center for External Evaluation of Education and that schools are required to use the results of national exams and all other indicators of educational performance for analysis and self-assessment, to permanently improve the quality of school work. The manner of conducting external evaluation and using the results of evaluation of school institutions shall be prescribed by the Minister. (*[*https://www.asoo.hr/en/quality-assurance*](https://www.asoo.hr/en/quality-assurance) *)*  The Vocational Education and Training Act, Art. 9., states that the system of quality assurance of vocational education is established at the level of vocational education providers and at the level of qualifications. It is also defined that the quality assurance system is based on self-assessment and external evaluation procedures. Self-assessment and external evaluation procedures are carried out in individual vocational education institutions, including direct insight into the work of vocational education institutions and on the basis of national or special exams. The results of self-assessment and external evaluation of vocational education institutions must be used to improve the quality of work and achieve better results. The methodology of external evaluation of vocational education institutions is adopted by the National Center for External Evaluation of Education in cooperation with the Agency.  *Croatian Strategy of Education, Science and Technology foresees further development of the quality assurance system and the process of external and internal evaluation. From the Strategy: “Various forms of external evaluation of students’ educational achievements are carried out at the national level (national exams and State Matura exams), and certain models of school self-assessment have been tested. It is estimated, however, that these procedures are also insufficiently interconnected and are not used sufficiently to improve school practices.*  At VET institutional level, a number of them were affected during the major earthquake that took place in Croatia, especially in Zagreb on 22 march 2020. This, unfortunately left some VET institutions unable to deliver programmes as they intended as many were destroyed or affected from the shock of the earthquake which were already in a dilapidated state. |
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| Education | Age | Years | Comments |
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| Primary | 6-14 | 8 | Primary- Osnovna škola |
| Secondary | 14-18 | 4 | Secondary- Gimnazija Certificate/diploma awarded: Svjedodžba o maturi |
| Vocational | 14-18 | 4 | C Strukovna škola (Vocational School) Certificate/diploma awarded: Svjedodžba o završnom ispitu and a vocational qualification. |
| Tertiary | 18+ | 3-4 | Tertiary University various fields and specialities |

**References:**

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<https://www.asoo.hr/en/quality-assurance>