

VET TEACHER TRAINING SYSTEM IN CROATIA

I. BACKGROUND

From 1945 until 1990 Croatia was a Republic in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1990 through disintegration of Yugoslavia, Croatia became a sovereign, independent state which acquired international recognition at the beginning of 1991 and became a member of the United Nations and the Council of Europe. During the period of becoming independent, the Republic of Croatia unfortunately passed through a seceding war, with huge human and material losses. Today Croatia is in the process of stabilisation and integration; Croatia began full EU membership talks in October 2005 and is now on the road to becoming a member of the European Union.

Simultaneously with its becoming independent, the Republic of Croatia changed its socio- political profile from a one-party communist, so-called 'self-regulatory socialism', towards a pluralistic Parliamentary democracy and a capitalist free market economic system. The economy goes through a radical restructuring and the process of privatisation and modernisation, which is imposed, by globalisation and the pressure of competition.

It is anticipated that in the period until 2020 there will be a decrease of the population in Croatia by 5% which amounts to a decline from 4 380 000 in 2000 to 4 158 000 inhabitants in 2010. It is anticipated that there will be a decrease of the age group from 11 to 18 years by approx. 24% until 2010 with the tendency of decline even afterwards. The state, which is aware of that fact, is taking certain measures in order to increase childbirth rate.

In 2004 the public expenditures of Croatia added up to more than 50% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) that is a high percentage in comparison with other countries, especially members of the European Union. In 2004 the percentage of expenditures in GDP for the educational system in the budget of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport amounted to 4,1% of the GDP. If

we add investments of other ministries and local authorities, then the expenditures for the system of education amount to 4,3% of the total GDP in 2004. The anticipated growth during the next years will be at the rate of at least 0,5% until the average rate of public expenditure in developed countries is reached.

Unemployment in the Republic of Croatia is big and amounts to 18% of which about 30% are young unemployed people. The government and the local self-administration take a whole range of measures in order to improve employment as well as system of education. Goal of those measures is to enable the young ones to acquire necessary competencies for the market of labour and the whole-life education.

II. CURRENT SITUATION IN VET TT

1. VET IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

The system of upbringing and education in the Republic of Croatia is composed of 4 sub-systems:

1.1. Sub-system of the pre-school education is conducted according to the Act on Pre-School Upbringing and Education. It is affected in kindergartens from the age of 6 months until enrolment at school. Children who are not comprised by programmes in kindergartens obligatorily attend the pre-school programme in duration of 250 hours in the year preceding the enrolment at school.

1.2. Sub-system of the elementary/obligatory education is conducted according to the Act on Elementary Education. Obligatory elementary education is effected in a unique eight-year school. The elementary school teaching plan and programme is based on the class-subject-lesson system. 98% of the enrolled pupils, as a rule, finish the elementary education, and about 80% continues education in some of the secondary schools.

1.3. Sub-system of the secondary education is implemented according to the Act on Secondary Education. In Croatian secondary school sub-system there are:

1.3.1. Grammar schools - secondary schools of general orientation in duration of four years

1.3.2 Vocational schools - technical schools in duration of four years in various areas.

1.3.3. Vocational schools – schools for professions (for artisans, industrial schools and similar ones in various areas) in duration of three years.

1.3.4. Vocational schools – of lower qualifications in duration from one to two years.

1.3.5. Professional improvement – short programmes from 120 to 200 hours.

1.3.6. Professional improvement – from 150 to 500 hours

1.3.7. Art schools in the area of the art of dance, music, drawing and design in duration of 4 years

1.3.8. Schools for the children with special needs

Grammar schools are finished by a final exam, and all other schools are finished by an exam that is composed by Croatian language, vocational-theoretical contents and practical work.

The total number of pupils in the vocational education is 141 407 pupils or 73,72 %

In the Republic of Croatia there are 401 secondary schools of which: 78 are independent grammar schools, 82 mixed schools, 209 vocational schools, 22 music schools, 2 ballet-dancing schools and 8 with adapted programmes for children with difficulties in development.

368 schools are owned by local administration – counties, 11 schools are owned by religious communities and 22 schools are private.

Financing of schools is of two types. Salaries of personnel at schools are provided from the state budget, and funds for regular material expenditures are provided by the local budget. Private schools are co-financed from the state budget. Greater, capital investments are provided for by the state and the local budget, as a rule, 50:50.

Higher education (duration from 2 to 6 years) enrolling 31% of the young ones from 19 to 24 years of age, approx. 34% of these students finish their studies. The Republic of Croatia in 2001 signed the Bologna declaration and starting from the 2005/2006 school year a new system is introduced of three cycles of studying: *the pre-graduate, the graduate and the post-graduate*

study (as a rule, 3+2+the system of studies) and the system of points of the European Credit Transfer System will also be implemented.

2. TEACHERS WORK

In the secondary education system *the number of the school personnel* amounts to 18 755, of whom 14 466 are teachers, 387 are managers, 576 are expert-pedagogical personnel, 1085 administrative personnel and 2 238 persons are technical personnel. The total number of the **vocational teachers** is **6 465**, of whom 1 543 are teachers of practical work and 378 are instructors in practical teaching.

In the Croatian VET system there are *several categories of teachers* involved in different types of VET provision. Basic education of teachers in secondary VET schools comprises three educational levels: *Teachers with university degree, Teachers with pre-graduate degree, and Teachers with a secondary education degree.*

According to the type of the teacher's assignments, teachers in VET schools are divided into the following groups:

1. Teachers of general educational subjects
2. Teachers of vocational theoretical subjects
3. Teachers of practical education
4. *Instructors in teaching – assistants to teachers of practical education*
5. *Masters – expert teachers in art*
6. *Instructors in companies*
7. *Teachers for work with children with special needs education;*

Working conditions of VET teachers differ according to their different functions in the system. The recruitment of teachers is performed by public competition. The working time is distributed between direct educational work (teaching) and other tasks within a five-day working week of 40 hours. The weekly teaching load for teachers of general educational subjects and vocational theoretical subjects amounts to 20 to 22 hours. For practical teaching 28 hours and for the work of the instructors in the workshops from 32 to 36 hours.

The norm of work and the corresponding qualifications for single subjects is prescribed by the minister. Teachers are guaranteed the freedom of work and teaching within the framework of determined plans and programme,

and working conditions, compensations, etc. are regulated through collective negotiating agreements.

The teacher is obliged to professional-pedagogical improvement as well as having medical examinations every three years. Teachers are entitled to an annual leave from 18 to 30 working days, depending on the duration of the work place experience.

Salary scales are determined for each category of teacher by the government regulation on public services and on the basis of the collective agreement for public officials; there is seniority supplement of 0.5% for each year of work experience. Senior teachers and teachers-advisors are entitled to special supplements.

Teachers start with work as interns and during a two-year period they are obliged to pass a state expert exam upon which they can be permanently employed in the vocation of a teacher of a particular subject or a group of subjects. The work of teachers is monitored and assessed by an experienced teaching supervisor, the principal of the school and the Institute for Education. There is a career promotion system: teachers may get promoted and acquire the title of vocation senior teacher and teacher-advisor. Conditions for acquiring those professions are prescribed by the minister.

3. INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

Teachers of general subjects finish four years university study during which they acquire a parallel pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodical education.

Teachers of vocational subjects finish university expert study in duration of four years in the basic profession.

Teachers of practical work finish a specialist study lasting two years in the profession, and for some subjects, secondary education.

Instructors in teaching finish secondary education.

All vocational teachers are obliged to finish within one year an additional education of pedagogy, psychology, didactics and methodics of teaching. Starting from 2005/2006, there will be a transfer to a new way of studying according to the Bologna process.

Institutions for basic education of teachers are various faculties at the Universities in Zagreb, Rijeka, Osijek, Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik. Additional pedagogical – psychological – didactic – methodical education of vocational

teachers is acquired at Pedagogical faculties and teacher's academies in 10 institutions.

The minimum programme of the additional education is prescribed by the minister of education and sport. The ministry of economy and work for masters – vocational teachers. The programmes have not been standardised, this refers specially to the methodology of the teaching process.

Exams are conducted by institutions, which effect additional professional improvement; those are the pedagogical faculties and teacher's academies which issue confirmations regarding additional education. The artisan's chamber conducts examinations for masters – vocational teachers.

4. IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING

The current in-service public VET teacher training in Croatia is based on the „Act on Secondary Education“ (2003), the „Act on Artisanry“ (2003) and a package of respective by-laws and other normative acts. A number of policy papers have been published recently as this is seen as a priority area. Important among these are „The plan of development of education 2005 – 2010“ (MoES 2005) and „The decision on founding expert councils of teachers of vocational areas (Institute for Education of Croatia).

Many *institutions* are involved in delivering continuing professional development for VET teachers. In-service education of teachers is implemented by the Agency for Vocational Education, the Institute for Education and pedagogical faculties, open educational institutions, Croatian Artisan and Crafts Chamber and NGOs. Some programmes are implemented by institutions from abroad such as: Kulturkontakt, Austria, for the economic subjects, Goethe Institut and the Crafts Chamber of Munich and Upper Bavaria and the Federal Republic of Germany for the German language and crafts professions.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport passes yearly programmes for professional improvement on the proposal of the Agency for Vocational Education; they are implemented by the Agency and are *financed* from the state budget. At the level of local administration, programmes of professional improvement are implemented through expert associations for certain groups of teachers in co-operation with the Institute for Education, partly financed from the state budget, and partly from local administration funds (the county). The Croatian Chambers finance professional improvement of masters (vocational teachers) and participates in the professional improvement of school workshops teachers in practical work. Professional continuing training im-

plemented by the NGOs are financed from own sources. Professional competence development are implemented by various vocational associations of teachers are financed from the funds of the school, and sometimes by teachers themselves.

Public In-service training programmes for teachers and trainers are made for each year by the Agency for Vocational Education and the Institute for Education in co-operation with interested partners, as stated above.

III. CHALLENGES, DEVELOPMENT AND TRENDS

The *main current initiative* in 2005 is formulated in „*The plan of development of the system of education 2005 – 2010*“ by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport which anticipates making a coherent national strategy for the education of teachers, coaches and instructors in companies and teachers for education of adults. The strategy contains an integral process of education in three phases: *initial education, internship and permanent improvement*. Initial education will be implemented according to the new curriculum in accordance with the Bologna process. Concerning the system of continuing professional development the plan anticipates making a work programme with new technologies and the introduction of contemporary teaching methods as well as initiation of a project of licencing teaching professions, subject to renewal.

The new *Agency for Vocational Education* plays a central, national role in the innovation of teaching and learning. In the course of 2003/04, 75 schools have been equipped with contemporary teaching technology (EUR 9.000.000); programmes for instructing teachers– multipliers for work with new technologies have been made or are being made, with the task to educate their colleagues. For 72 schools a licence was provided for the computer programme in machine building ‘*Solid Edge*’. For 80 schools a licence was provided for the electrotechnical engineering computer programme ‘*CADdy+*’ and courses set up to train teachers. Besides training the vocational profession, there has been systematic work on development of pedagogical competences by introducing new methods in student-directed learning. Special attention will be paid to development of *the network of practice training premises* for reception of learners – future teachers as well as their senior teachers.

In Croatia there are in particular *challenges in the education of adults*. In 2004 a „*National strategy for Education of Adults*“ was tabled with the proposal of activities and terms of implementation. The strategy was made with

all the partners from the economy, trade union and the Croatian Institute for Employment with the aim of improving competences and employment.

There are *weaknesses in the relation between universities, VET schools and companies*. So far there has been, as a rule, a weak relationship between universities and vocational schools; it could be established within the broad framework of the ministry's attempts to develop a renewed vocational schooling system. The *relationship between schools and companies*, i.e. the challenge of integrating theory and practice, exists only in the education for artisan professionals which builds on solid transmission links between the Croatian Artisan and Crafts Chamber – School – Artisan Master Vocational Teacher. For the time being there is no legal framework or a project for co-operation between schools and other companies. A barrier is the fact that instructors in relevant companies are not trained for receiving VET students. The Agency for Vocational Education has the task in its programme to initiate such a co-operation. To promote this initiative the Agency has now formed a Department of Partnership.

VET teachers play an increasingly active role in the ongoing VET reform in Croatia. Vocational teachers will now attend education to qualify for participating in making the National Standard Classification of Professions as co-operators of the partners from economy and science and will help making the National Educational Standards.

Social partnerships in VET TT is established, but there is still plenty of room to improve it with all partners. In particular the partnership with the Chamber of Crafts is excellent; the training for teachers in charge of practical education in schools and licensed trainers employed in firms is organized in cooperation with the Chamber of Crafts. Supported by the Chamber of Crafts for the Bavaria region, the Croatian Chamber of Crafts organised three courses in Germany for approx. 200 teachers to be trained as multipliers in their fields of work.

In order to improve *quality and efficiency* of education, special attention must be directed towards modernisation of contents and methods of work in schools, assessment of achievements and permanent professional improvement of teachers. An evaluation system will be established with standardised procedures with a view to develop, supervise and improve the efficiency of adoption of knowledge, skills and attitudes and will include the monitoring of work of schools and work of teachers. For that purpose the *State Examining Centre* has been founded, with the aim of external evaluation of achievements of students, and the *Agency for Vocational Education* has been established to

promote and develop vocational education. *The National Council for Vocational Education* is also under establishment with experts from key ministries and institutions as well as economic-social partners. *The Agency for Science and Higher Education* has also been founded with the aim of promoting higher education, including empowerment of vocational studies, ensuring quality and excellence of teaching at university level which, in principle, will enable recruitment of quality personnel for VET schools.

IV. DONOR REFORM INITIATIVES AND OWN RESOURCES

In the implementation of the development of the integral system of education in the period from 2005 to 2010, Croatia expects to receive the necessary support from the European Union and its accession funds. Special support is expected from the CARDS programme and from the loan for education by the World Bank. The national plan for development of the education system will be supported by considerable investments of own resources as stated by the readiness of the government to gradually increase the funds for education by increasing allotments from the GDP up to the rate of 4.9% in 2010.

V. LIST OF RELEVANT ADDRESSES

- The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, Trg Hrvatskih Velikana 6, Zagreb
- Institute for Education of the Republic of Croatia, Badalićeva 24, Zagreb
- Agency for Vocational Education, Savska cesta 41/XXIV, Zagreb
- Agency for High Education, Savska 41/VIII, Zagreb
- Croatian Artisan Chamber, Ilica 49/II, Zagreb,
- Croatian Economic Chamber Rooseveltov trg 2
- State Institute for Statistics, Ilica 3, Zagreb
- Institute for Employment, Radnička cesta 1, Zagreb