

Project no. 572663-EPP-1-2016-1-HR-EPPKA3-SUP-APPREN

Agreement no. 2016-2017 /001-001-572663-EPP-1-2016-1-HR-EPPKA3-SUP-APPREN

Erasmus+ Key Action 3

GET INVOLVED IN EP4A: EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIPS FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

Synthesis Report

WP number:	1
Document type:	Report
Deliverable number:	1.4
Dissemination level:	PUBLIC
Editor:	Boris Bílek
Document state:	Final
Document version:	3
Contributing partners:	P1, P2, P3, P4
Number of pages:	23
Date:	29th May 2017



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1. Introduction

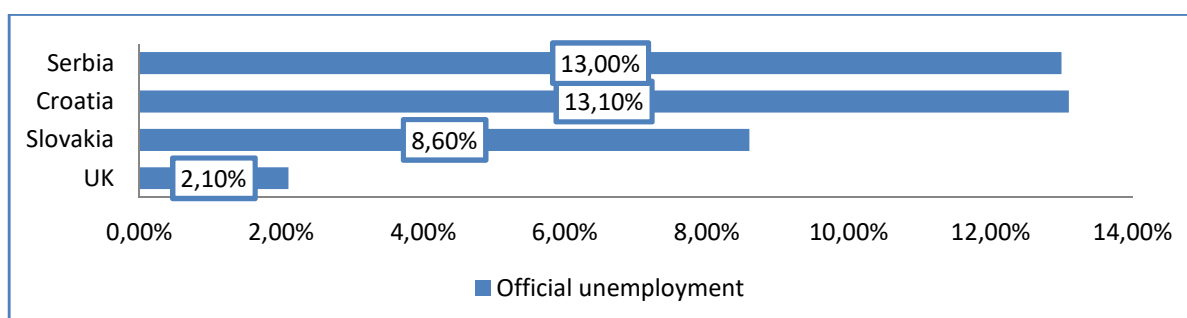
Common challenges across Croatia, the UK, Slovakia and Serbia include: tackling labour force skill mismatches and increasing the employability of young people, including via the expansion of apprenticeships in small and medium enterprises (SME). Many SMEs are reluctant to recruit apprentices due to various factors, including internal shortfalls, burdensome or incomplete regulatory frameworks and inadequate awareness of the real benefits of work-based learning (WBL) for companies. Hence, all project countries have recently launched policy reforms aiming at further promoting apprenticeship programmes. The project “Get Involved in EP4A: European Partnerships for Apprenticeships” specific objective is “to promote apprenticeships by building partnerships between intermediary bodies, companies, VET providers, public authorities and social partners” in project countries.

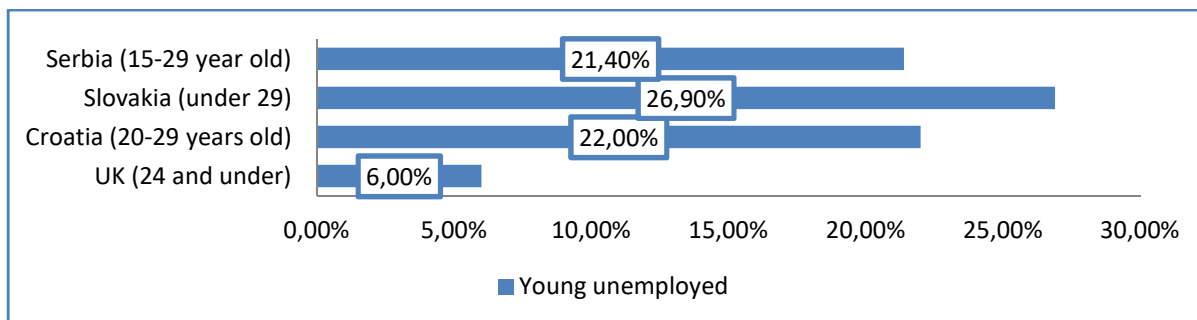
The Synthesis Report provides a comparison overview of the current situation in partnering countries in relation to the labour market situation and unemployment, education systems with emphasis on vocational education and a specific focus on the apprenticeship practices.

2. Background chart of the countries

Countries unemployment and labour market situation comparison

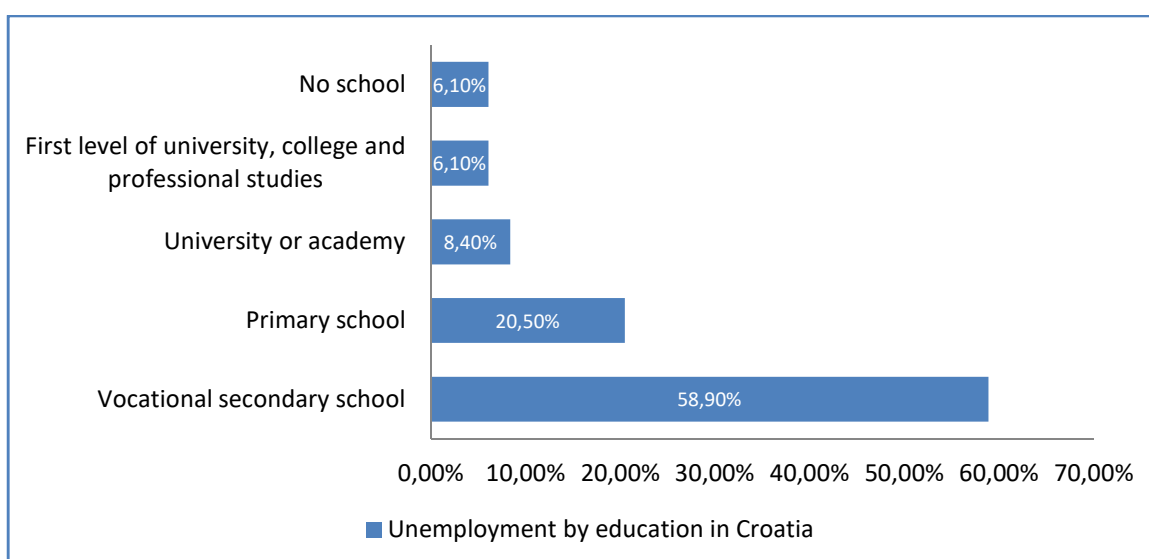
Unemployment rates vary greatly in the partner countries. According to the latest official statistics, the lowest unemployment rate is in the United Kingdom - 2.1%, of which 6% are young (24 years old and under). Unemployment rate in Serbia is 13.6%. The share of young people in Serbia who neither work nor are included in any education system amounts to 16.5% (youth population aged 15 to 24). This amounts to 21.4% in among young people aged 15 to 29. In Croatia, the unemployment rate is 13.1%, of which 22% of the unemployed are classified as young people (20 to 29 years old). As for the Slovak Republic, the unemployment rate in January 2017 was 8.6%, of which 26.9% are young people (under 29 years).



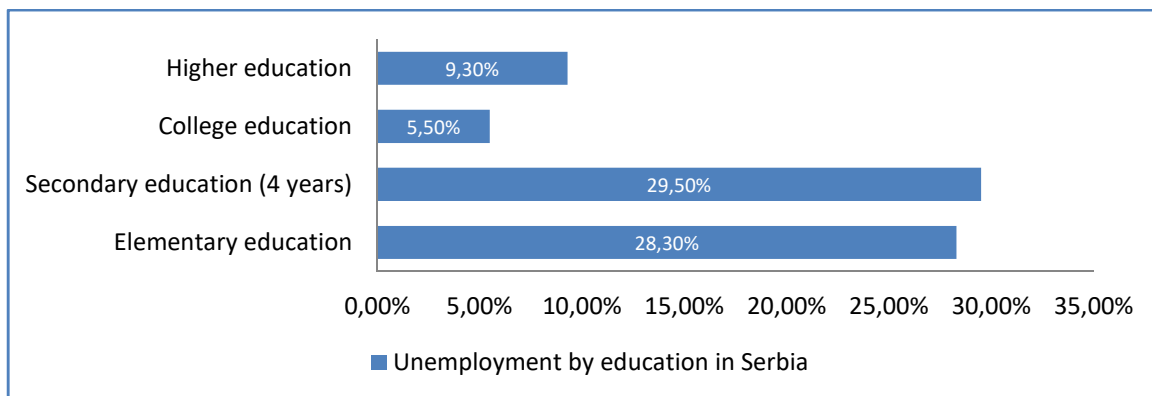


Source: The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Croatian UK Office for National Statistics, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

The largest number of unemployed people in **Croatia** has completed vocational secondary school for up to three years and school for skilled and highly skilled workers – 30.3%, followed by people who have completed vocational secondary school of four or more years and grammar school – 28.6%. There exists no detailed employment data available on VET graduates in Slovakia or Serbia. High unemployment statistical rates of people who have completed vocational education does not necessarily indicate that the general education graduates have a smoother transition to the job market, as many of those students continue education to a higher level. On the other hand, high unemployment among those groups can signal a mismatch in supply and demand in the labour market.



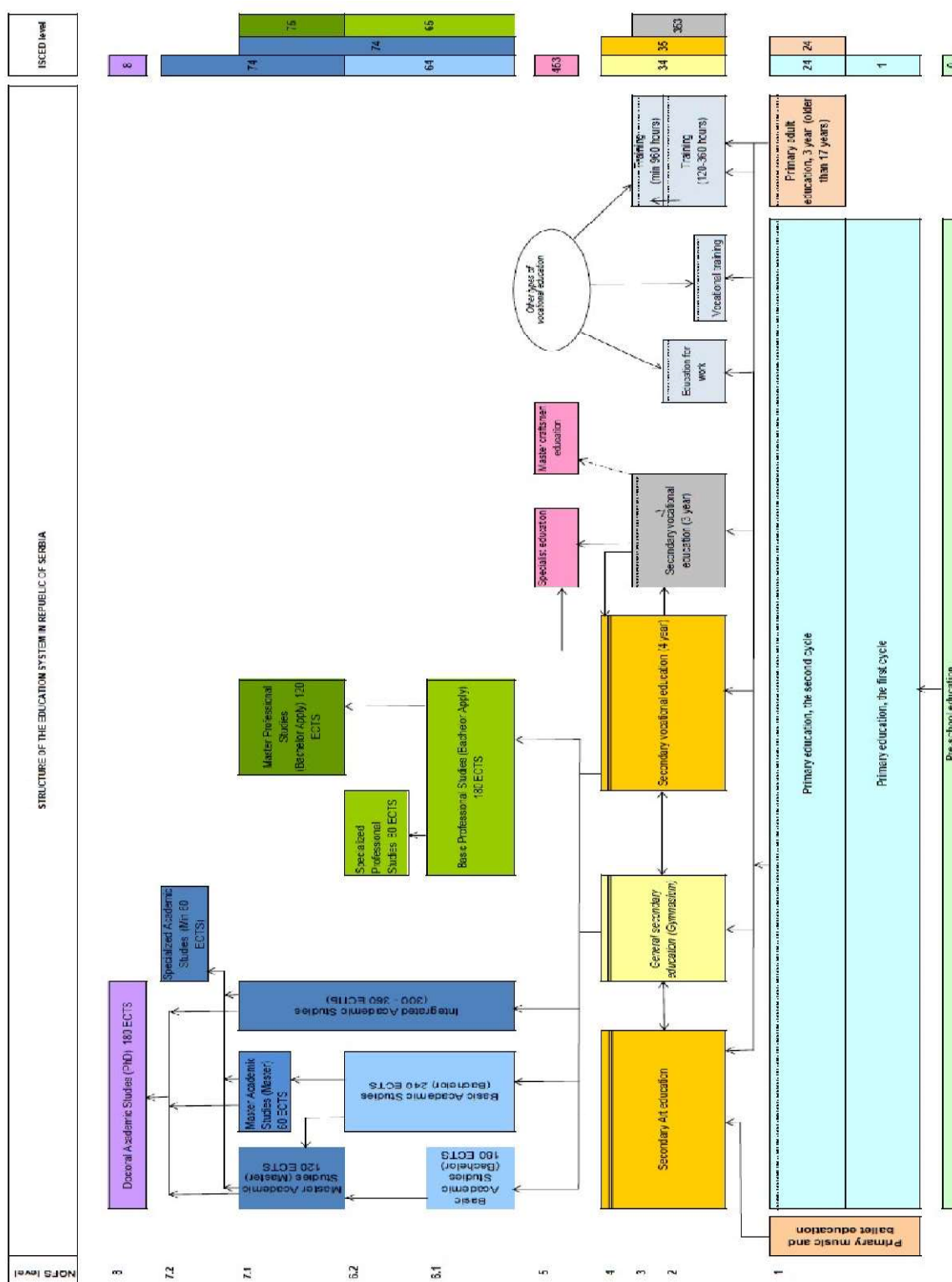
Source: Croatian Employment Service



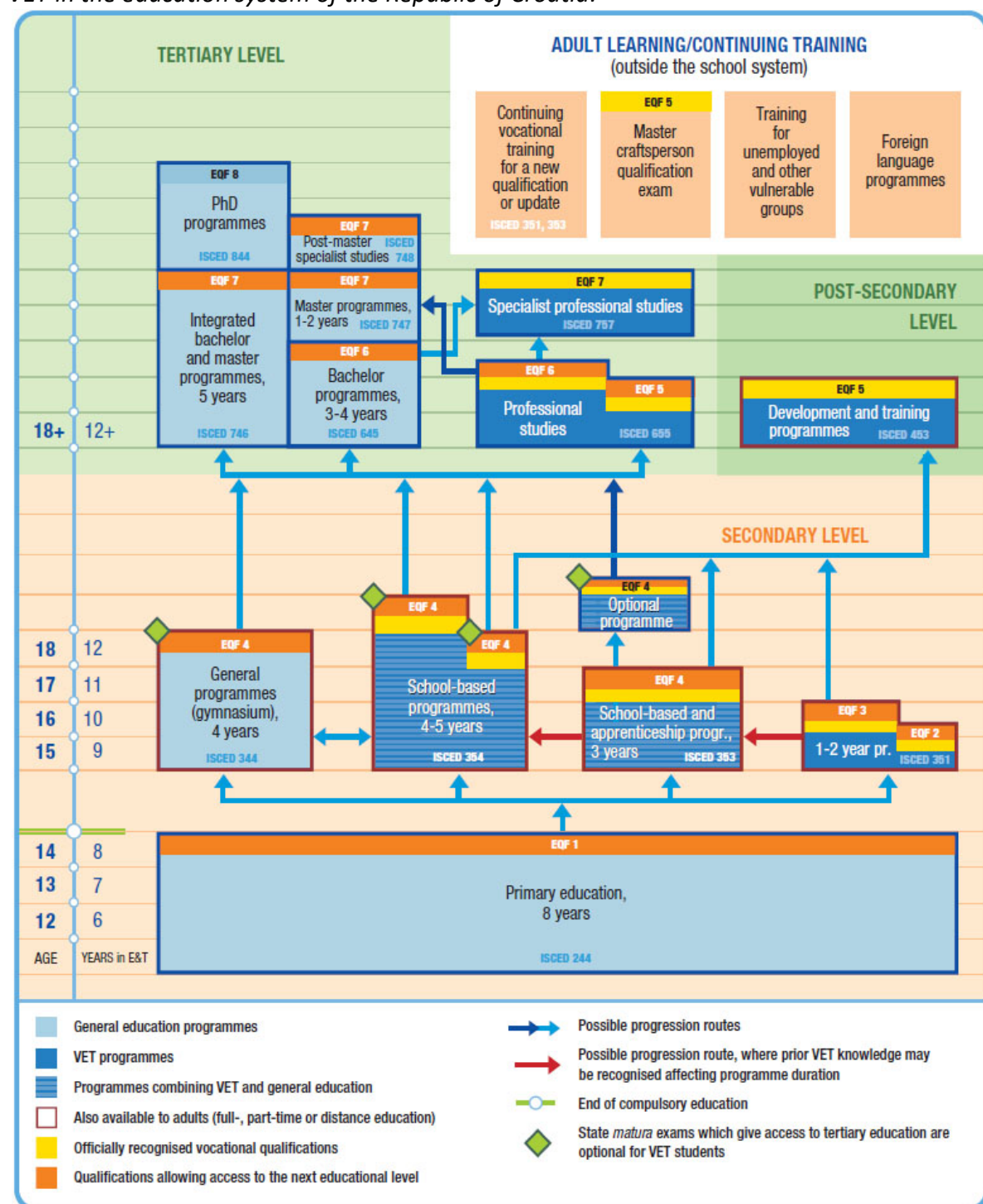
Source: National Employment Service of the Republic of Serbia

3. Education schemes of the countries

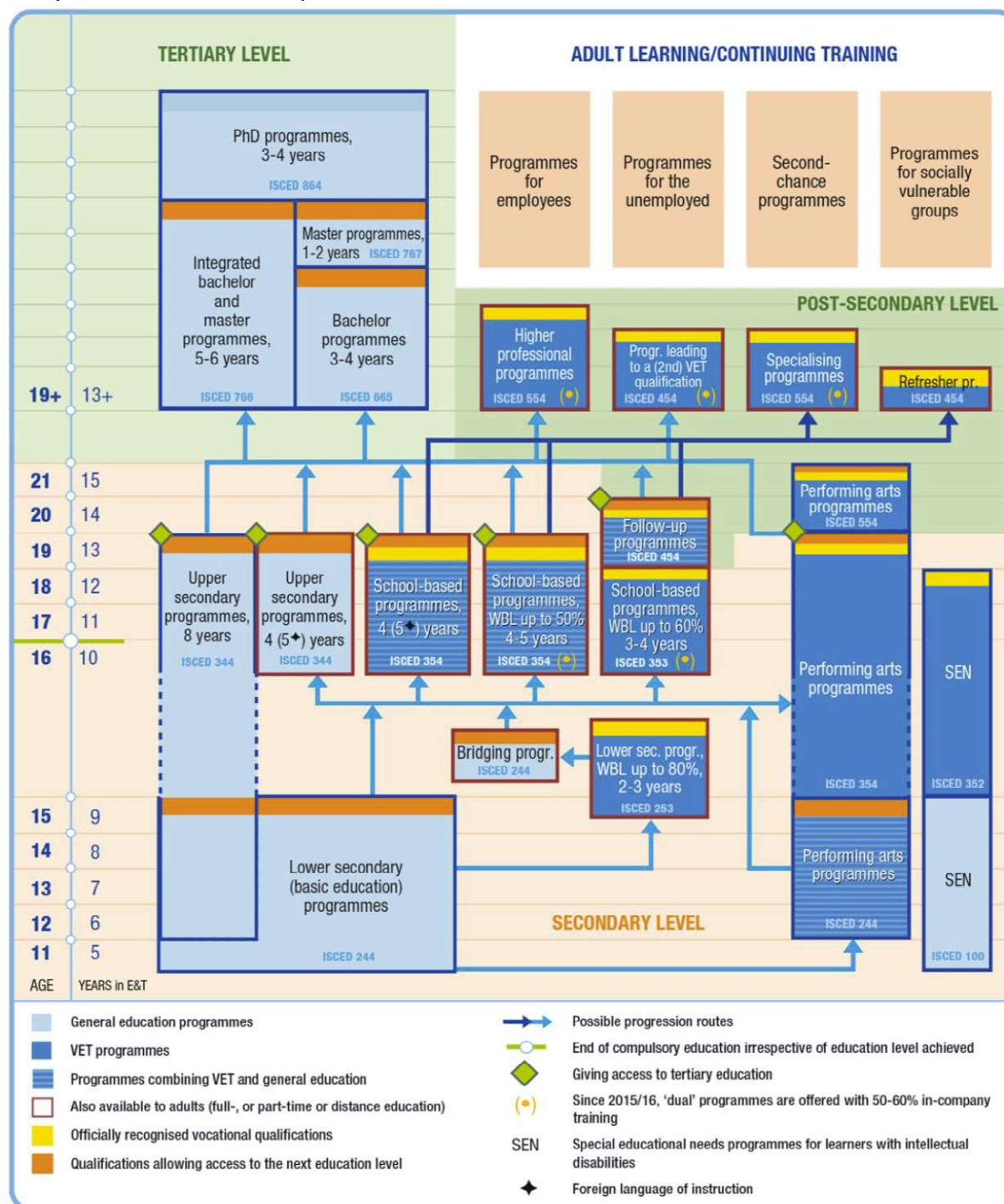
Structure of the education system in the Republic of Serbia:



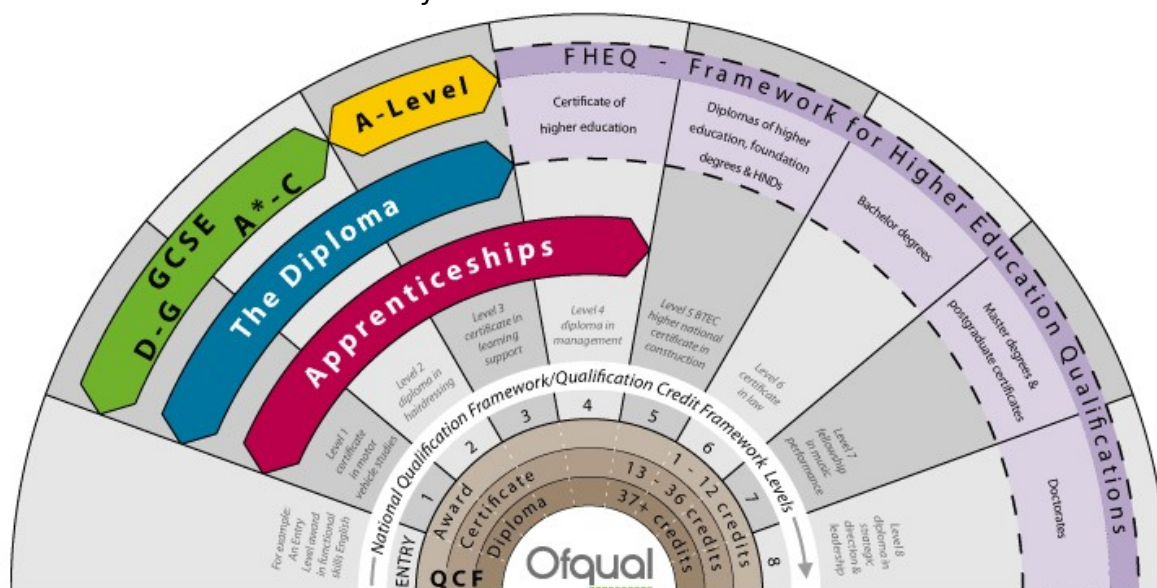
VET in the education system of the Republic of Croatia:



VET system in the Slovak Republic:



Overview of how the National Framework in England and Wales works between Academic, Vocational and wider educational frameworks:



4. Apprenticeships in Croatia, the UK, Slovakia, Serbia

4.1 Apprenticeships in project countries – distinguishing features

Apprenticeships in **Croatia** today are only carried out in the crafts sector within the unified model of vocational education. Unlike the “school” model, the unified model of education is characterized by the insistence that the larger part of practical training (around 70%) is carried out in business, i.e. licensed crafts workshops and legal entities. Apprenticeships last for three years. The minimum number of learning hours varies depending on the occupation, but all apprenticeships must include 2,600 hours of practical training. Apprentices receive allowances for their work during practical training in a craft workshop. Allowance is provided by the employer. A student completing the apprenticeship acquires qualifications at level 4.1 of the Croatian Qualification Framework or at level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework.

In **Serbia**, the introduction of the dual education system is in its initial phase and the preparation of the Law on Dual Education and Training is commencing. Dual education will be a part of the secondary vocational formal education system. It shall be applied to three-year profiles primarily and to four-year ones in a smaller extent. In the current Law on Secondary Education, pursuant to article 30 of the law practical classes and apprenticeship may be implemented by the school in cooperation with a business company, institution or another organisation or legal entity. Time, manner and conditions of the implementation of practical classes and apprenticeships are specified in a contract. Research has shown that employers more often organize trainings to cover the deficiencies during schooling of the young than implement trainings for professional improvement and development.

Recent legislation changes in **Slovakia** have also introduced a dual style apprenticeship system in order to tackle the lack of work-based learning and weak labour market outcomes among school-based VET programmes. There is no genuine apprenticeship programme in Slovakia although learners in school-based three-year programmes comprising high share of work-based learning were sometimes called apprentices. This term,

however, disappeared from legislation which denotes all initial VET learners as students and not employees of companies where the training takes place. This also applies to the newly introduced dual VET.

In the **UK**, apprenticeships take between one and five years to complete and are available in 1,500 occupations across 170 industries varying from construction to manufacturing through to IT and the creative and digital sectors. The apprenticeships legal regulations, qualifications and accreditation bodies are designed and organised differently for each country within the UK. Alongside the countries qualification and accreditation bodies, exist the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). NAS is responsible for apprenticeships in England. NAS' main role is to work with employers, helping more of them take on apprentices, and to work with those who advise learners so that more young people and adults are able to benefit from the experience of work-based learning and can become occupational competent.

4.2 Apprenticeships legal frameworks overview

COUNTRY	LEGAL FRAMEWORK		ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Croatia	Main acts	The Crafts Act (1994, 2013)	The new Crafts Act of 2013 stipulates that vocational education for trades and crafts is subject to regulations in the field of education as opposed to the first Crafts Act of 1994 which stipulated that vocational education for trades and crafts is subject to regulations in the field of trades and crafts and the field of education, which provided a better synergy between those two sectors and resulted in a better quality VET.
	Other relevant acts and national documents	Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (October 2014)	Strategy of Education, Science and Technology defined several measures to improve VET system development.
		Programme of VET Development (December 2016)	The Programme of VET Development developed VET priorities and measures in more detail. The Program among other foresees the development, adoption and implementation of a National Curriculum for Vocational Education with an emphasis on the importance of vocational education and on the easier transition from education into work. The foregoing imposes the development of a work-based learning model tailored
		National Curriculum for Vocational Education	

			to the national/regional context.
		Croatian Qualification Framework Act (2013)	The prerequisite for creating new programs is the methodology for creating curricula, which has to be based on methodologies for developing occupational standards and qualification standards, as prescribed by the Croatian Qualification Framework Act adopted in 2013.
Serbia		Law on Secondary Education (2013)	Pursuant to Article 30 of the Law on Secondary Education, practical classes and apprenticeship may be implemented by the school in cooperation with a business company, an institution, another organization or another legal entity. Time, manner and conditions of implementation of practical classes and apprenticeship are specified in a contract.
		Law on Secondary School (2009)	
Slovakia	Main acts	Act on VET (2015)	Currently the updating of the act is being discussed and prepared. Act on VET stipulates all the processes, roles related to VET, including dual education
		Education Act (2008)	
		Lifelong Learning Act (2009)	
	Other relevant acts and national documents	The Act on employment services (2004, 2015)	An amendment (2015) of the Act on employment services (5/2004) stipulates the right to access employment and provision of 'second chance' education (completion of primary school, acquiring qualification), and training for self-employment
		National youth guarantee implementation plan (2014)	Addresses the young (up to 29 years) people not in employment, education or training (NEET)
UK	Main acts – UK	Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009	This piece of legislation covers both Apprenticeships and wider Educational systems. Key areas in relation to

			Apprenticeships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides for a statutory framework for apprenticeships and creates a right to an apprenticeship for suitably qualified 16-18 year olds • Introduces a right for employees to request time away from their duties to undertake training, and places a corresponding duty on employers to consider such requests seriously and to be able to refuse them only for specified business reasons
	Other relevant acts and national documents	Apprenticeship Levy	This policy strategy – further details in the Study Guide, changes the way funding is distributed to Apprenticeship providers

4.3 Management and Governance structure overview

In **Croatia**, the new Crafts Act of 2013 stipulates that vocational education for trades and crafts is subject to regulations in the field of education. The vocational curriculum for acquiring vocational qualifications for associated trades and crafts is adopted by the Minister of Education with the prior consent of the minister responsible for crafts. General-education and professional-theoretical parts of the apprenticeship are carried out at secondary school. Practical classes and apprenticeship exercises are carried out in secondary school, at a crafts business or another legal entity. The craftsman and the legal entity need to have a permit (license) for the practical part of the apprenticeship. The permit (license) for executing the practical part of apprenticeship is issued by the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts (HOK).

The government of the **Republic of Serbia** is responsible for regulation of the VET system at the (upper) secondary education level. The principle statute for the VET system is the Law on the Foundation of the Education System (further referred to as Law on Education) and the Law on Secondary Education. The Law on Education does not exclusively regulate the VET system, but comprises regulations regarding preschool, elementary, secondary education and therefore regulates the VET system as part of the secondary education level. The Law on Secondary Education, which entered into force in 2013, regulates the organization of the VET system, including teaching and the organization of the involved actors, institutions, etc., in detail. In general, VET is delivered by vocational schools. The law does not regulate in-company training, but it creates opportunities for work-based training.

To monitor, enable the development and enhance the quality of the education

system, the Law on Education establishes the National Education Council (NEC), the Council for Vocational and Adult Education (CVAE) and the Institute for Improvement of Education

In **Slovakia** the VET governance (established in 2009 and revised in 2015) comprises the following coordinating and advisory bodies:

(a) the National VET Council is the coordinating body affiliated to the government that discusses VET policy (such as regional and sectoral strategies). A total of 17 working groups covering selected study fields support adjustments in VET programmes to match them better to labour market needs;

(b) regional VET councils (eight) composed of representatives of State, self-government, employers and employees prepare regional policy documents related to VET, such as regional VET strategies;

(c) sectoral (skills) councils established originally as part of an ESF project provide expertise to policy-makers and support the creation of a national occupations system according to the Act on employment services (5/2004) since 2013;

(d) institutions of the world of work, selected from chambers and employer associations ('sectoral assignees'), are set by legislation (64/2015) to represent employer interests by VET study field as professional counterparts to education authorities and experts. Sectoral assignees are to play a prominent role in adjusting VET to labour market needs and in assuring its quality;

(e) an umbrella organisation, Employer council for dual VET, encompassing seven 'sectoral assignees' will coordinate their activities when established.

Since 2015, developing curricula for dual VET has been in progress based on requirements from chambers and employers' representatives. Although the new VET Act (61/2015) uses the term 'dual system', in fact it stimulates provision of work-based learning in school-based secondary VET. Practical training is expanded and offered under the supervision of companies based on adjusted curricula. Eleven supplements to the respective State education programmes were issued by the Education Ministry for 2015/16 covering 42 VET programmes.

For 2016/17, an additional 22 programmes are to be offered as dual VET. The State Institute of Vocational Education is responsible for designing national curricula and also for dual VET, cooperating with respective sectoral assignees.

In the **UK**, the apprenticeships legal regulations is designed and organised by the UK individual VET departments for each country:

England: Apprenticeships are managed by Department for Education (DfE), with Ofqual responsible for the qualification in line with QCF.

Wales: Apprenticeships are managed by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) in line with QCF.

Northern Ireland: Apprenticeship qualifications are managed by the Department for the Economy, with CCEA responsible for the qualification in line with QCF.

Scotland: Apprenticeships in Scotland are managed by the Minister for Education and Young People and the Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning. This is further overseen by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) and the Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong learning Department (SEELLD). Apprenticeships are in line with SCQF: Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework and regulated by the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA).

4.4 Training content and learning outcomes

In Croatia the programme content was developed within the Unified model of education by joint working groups comprising representatives from the education sector (VET teachers) and business representatives. The curriculum was developed as a catalogue of knowledge, skills and abilities according to the subjects of each qualification. Each school subject contained the objective and the tasks. The content of the school subject was divided into teaching units with specified expected results (knowledge and skills) and the content used to acquire that knowledge and skills. Methodological instructions for teaching and the students' basic obligations were also specified.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technical Development (MoESTD) and the Institute for Improvement of Education (IIE) in **Serbia** are responsible for issuing curricula, as is the case with elementary education and general secondary education. Curricula are nationally standardized and vary from field to field. A part of each curriculum is congruent with general secondary education curricula and is accordingly devoted to general subjects, such as mother tongue, math, ICT, foreign languages, etc. This general part amounts to 35% of curricula in the case of 3-year schools and 45% in the case of 4-year schools. Vocational subjects varying with the respective area and featuring practical instruction make the remainder.

According to the Law on the Foundations of the Education System, practical learning should make up a significant amount of VET programmes. In reality, however, VET programs in Serbia are practically school-based, as the law does not specify how the implementation of practical learning should work. Work-based learning in cooperation with companies only exists to a very small extent.

In Slovakia educational standards are composed of so-called content and performance standards, as stipulated by the Education Act. Performance standards can be seen as learning outcomes that students are supposed to achieve during their studies and demonstrate when completing them. Since 2013/14, there have been 23 State education programmes replacing the original 83. They cover all major VET fields under the responsibility of the Education Ministry and include specific framework requirements for all relevant levels and educational standards for individual programmes. Since 2015, developing curricula for dual VET has been in progress based on requirements from chambers and employers' representatives. Although the new VET Act (61/2015) uses the term 'dual system', in fact it stimulates provision of work-based learning in school-based secondary VET. Practical training is expanded and offered under the supervision of companies based on adjusted curricula. Eleven supplements to the respective State education programmes were issued by the Education Ministry for 2015/16 covering 42 VET programmes.

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In the UK the training content is developed by the Accrediting body. In some cases, training providers can design their own qualification, and send it to their Accrediting body for it to become accredited.

Learning outcomes are identified by the staff at an accrediting body, who is generally qualified Assessors, IQAs and EQAs in their own right. The accrediting body identifies the QCF from the unit to the overall qualification. To identify the unit, the following elements must be agreed: Value of the unit in Credits, Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and

Assessment Guidance.

Core units of each qualification are identified, followed by the optional Units.

4.5 Cooperation between learning venues

Although the cooperation between different learning venues is regulated by law in **Croatia**, the quality of cooperation depends on the individuals - people from schools and from the crafts workshops. The main challenges are the reluctance of schools to cooperate and the lack of licensed apprenticeship places offered by the economy.

Also the main challenge in **Slovakia** is the (lack of) willingness of the VET schools to participate in the dual system. This is also visible in the imbalance between the amount of offered apprenticeship places by the employers and the actually filled places. According to current legislation, the VET school's burden of education is lowered when it enters the dual system; therefore its budget is also lowered. That is not motivating for the schools. Another issue is resistance to change in the education system in general.

In **Serbia** practical classes and apprenticeship may be implemented by the school in cooperation with a business company, an institution, another organization or another legal entity. Research has shown that employers more often organize trainings to cover the deficiencies during schooling of the young than they implement advancement trainings. Although practice is part of the curriculum in most "traditional" educational profiles in secondary vocational education, the general impression is that the manner it is implemented is inadequate, i.e. it does not lead to the results wanted in terms of adopting skills and developing competencies with students. As stated before, The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS) has started the initiative to introduce a dual education model in the Serbian educational system in order to match staff education with the economy needs and reduce unemployment of youth.

In the **UK** the cooperation between the employer and Apprenticeship provider really depends on how the relationship is managed. Over 80% of apprenticeship places come about due to the decision by the employer to recruit an apprentice. In these cases, employers are made aware of their responsibilities as an employer and the apprentice's responsibility as a learner and what to expect by way of support by their Apprenticeship provider. In these cases, cooperation is successful and will often result in benefits to all parties.

4.6 Company participation and support

Currently, the **Croatian** apprenticeship system has at its disposal 10,262 permits (licences) for executing the practical part of apprenticeships, or 59,902 apprenticeship places at 8,237 licensed workshops for all three years of education. Since 2001, the ministry responsible for crafts in Croatia provides grants for craftsmen and SMEs that implement apprenticeships. The ministry provides financial support for crafts businesses and SMEs that covers compensations for apprentices and co-finances approximately 70-80% of the costs of issuing a permit (licence) to carry out practical training and exercises for apprenticeship. From 2015, compensation for mentors is also covered. There is a possibility of tax exemption based on the Act on State Aid for Education and Training. The entrepreneur ensuring

practical training and exercises for one to three students may reduce its tax base or self-employment income referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article by 5%. The entrepreneur ensuring practical training and exercises for more than three students may increase the percentage of the reduction of the tax base or self-employment income by one percentage point per student, up to 15% of the tax base or self-employment income

Dual education in **Serbia** is in its preparatory phase and it will be regulated by the new Law on Dual Education. Dual education will be defined as the learning at a work place in a company and in a secondary vocational school. Students will be in a special educational-employment relationship with an employer and they will receive certain revenue for that. The companies are expected to appoint instructors who will be licensed to work with the students.

Slovakian national project “Development of vocational secondary education in VET schools” was carried out to design and support the system of dual education in Slovakia. Within the project, the manuals of the participation in the Dual Education System have been developed for employers and also for schools. The Council of Employers for the System of Dual Education carries on the activities designed in the national project and provides continuous support and regular trainings for employers interested in certification for the system of dual education. The support includes also regional contact points, which provide email, telephone, personal consultations, organize meetings and workshops in the region. Council also organizes 2-day trainings for certified employers on how to operate in the system.

The **UK's** National Apprenticeship Service has led on the promotional campaigns and in engaging employers and young people. On top of the marketing campaigns, the UK government continues to offer an Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) who appoint an apprentice aged 16 to 24 years of age. Over 250,000 companies offer Apprentices in the UK.

4.7 Requirements and support to teachers and in company-based trainers

In order to implement apprenticeships in **Croatia**, a craftsman or a legal entity needs to have a permit (license) to carry out practical training and exercises for an apprenticeship. The permit (license) is issued by the HOK and it can be obtained by people who have passed the Master Craftsman's exam, people who have the same rights as those with a Master Craftsman's exam, people with an appropriate higher or university education, or people who had a registered crafts business by December 2013, appropriate vocational secondary education and at least 10 years of experience in the occupation for which they are implementing apprenticeships. All of the above persons who have not passed the Master Craftsman's exam must pass another exam to prove they possess the basic knowledge on teaching students and the acquired pedagogical competencies. In addition, a craftsman or a legal entity must have an adequately equipped workshop to carry out practical training and exercises for apprenticeship in accordance with the vocational curriculum for a given occupation. Until 2013, the exam on basic knowledge for teaching apprentices was applied by the HOK, according to the programme for taking the Master Craftsman's exam. After the new Crafts Act was adopted, the responsibility for preparing a special programme for acquiring a basic knowledge on teaching students and pedagogical competencies was transferred to the ministry responsible for education. The program was adopted in January

2016, but is not adequate for mentors in the business community because it requires ten months of studying at a higher education institution. This situation has contributed to the reduction in the number of licensed places for the practical part of an apprenticeship because, since the Crafts Act of 2013 entered into force, the permit (license) to carry out practical training and exercises for apprenticeship may only be obtained by those who have passed the Master Craftsman's exam for the occupation for which they wish to carry out apprenticeships.

In **Serbia**, places for the implementation of practical classes (companies) is secured in advance – depending on the educational profile and in compliance with the agreement with the companies, training may be implemented in school workshops in the first year, and in a company in the following two or three years, or all three or four years in a company. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS) shall specify and check the conditions in companies for the possibility to accept students for practical classes before the beginning of student training, and monitor the compliance with the conditions after the beginning of training.

Prior to the beginning of implementation of practical classes, a company will be obliged to provide a required number of licensed instructors/mentors. An instructor/mentor shall be obliged to undergo pedagogic-didactic training in order to be able to train students in a company, and they will have to pass an exam, i.e. acquire an instructor license. The Education Advancement Institute shall develop training programmes and exam programmes for instructors/mentors, and the CCIS shall participate in the development thereof. The CCIS shall organize or provide venues for the implementation of instructor/mentor training and will implement the exam, issue the license and keep a register of instructor/mentor licenses.

In initial VET in **Slovakia** there are (a) teachers of general subjects, (b) teachers of vocational subjects, (c) trainers in school (nationally referred to as 'masters of practical training') and (d) in-company trainers (nationally referred to as 'instructors', which are company employees). These instructors are not considered pedagogic staff according to the definition of the Pedagogic Staff Act (317/2009). They can train up to three learners in cooperation with the supervising trainer of VET school. Since the introduction of dual VET in 2015, in-company trainers are required to have at least a certificate of apprenticeship in the respective study field. In contrast to trainers in VET schools, they do not need to have a "*maturita*" school-leaving certificate or completed pedagogic studies. Instead, three years of practice as fully qualified worker in the respective occupation and instructor training completed within one year of their first appointment are required.

In the **UK** all Apprenticeship assessors must hold assessor qualifications, such as the A1 qualification and also be experienced in the field they are assessing on. For example, an assessor supporting Apprentices working towards an apprenticeship qualification in Fundraising, must be experienced in the Fundraising sector. An assessor supporting Apprentices working towards an apprenticeship qualification in Engineering, must be experienced in the Engineering sector. Their level of experience should also be in a job role equal to the level of qualification they are assessing.

IQAs must hold an internal quality assessors qualification, such as an IAQ/V1 to do their role of an IQA. They must also be an experienced and qualified Assessor, experienced in the sector they are working in.

Alongside these qualifications, all staff working in the delivery of apprenticeship qualifications should be regularly developing themselves through Continuing Professional

Development activities. Whether it be through completing training programmes in their fields, participate in courses on apprenticeship delivery or another form of learning, Assessors and IQAs must be constantly developing themselves to ensure they have the skill-set to support new learners. In particular, Apprenticeship delivery staff must ensure they are continuing to develop their sector skills, if not, their experience may become no longer relevant. This is akin to other professions such as Legal; Medical; etc.

4.8 Financing and cost sharing mechanisms

In **Croatia** the costs of carrying out apprenticeships are divided between the state and the business sector, leading to savings in the Government budget necessary to carry out VET.

Part of the apprenticeships carried out in the business sector is financed by the employers themselves. Employers are required to provide allowances for the students. Monthly allowances should be at least 10% of the average net salary in the business sector in Croatia in the previous year for the first year of apprenticeship, 20% for the second year of apprenticeship and 25% for the third year. The award is paid for the realized hours of practical training and exercises towards the apprenticeship. Students themselves finance the costs of insurance against accidents. Aid for apprentice compensation that is available to the employer has been mentioned earlier, but it does not constitute a systemic solution because it does not cover all occupations, only a scattering of them (in accordance with the Ministry's decision for each year). Individual employers, the HOK and certain county chambers of trades and crafts equip school workshops, but there is no systemic support. The HOK has continuously co-financed state competitions of students in occupations of associated trades and crafts.

In **Slovakia** employers are motivated to take part in VET by fiscal incentives in form of tax exemptions, which are per pupil based and fixed according to the extent of provided work based training. Most of the expenses account for tax incentives (reduced tax base by € 3,200 per pupil for 200 – 400 hours of work based learning per year, or € 1,600 for less than 200 – 400 hours).

According to experience from practice and also research conducted in EP4A, this is not relevant for SMEs. Most of them already have their tax base at the minimum, even if they do not enter the dual system, so the incentive is not applicable to them and therefore becomes irrelevant.

There exist 4 key funding routes for Apprenticeships in the **UK**: statutory funding, self-funding, employers and government Loan schemes. Apprenticeship schemes funding in the UK is based very much on eligibility criteria. A learners' eligibility influences whether they can participate in a funded or non-funded Apprenticeship scheme. Eligibility criteria include age, citizenship, location and qualification levels.

For example a young person aged 16 to 24, is eligible for a free Apprenticeship programme. 24+ are not eligible. If a learner is not eligible, then self-funding options are available, in which many Apprenticeship providers will offer a payment plan, in where the learner can pay over a 12 to 18 month period. An alternative to self-funding and statutory funding is employers supporting learners to complete an Apprenticeship. This is particularly popular for older learners, where certain qualification and experience is essential for their job roles. In certain cases, the employer may be supported by a statutory development grant. This has become available since 2010. Government Loan Schemes: are popular options for learners

who cannot access Apprenticeship funding. On the Apprenticeship and Work-based Learning front, 24+ Loans were launched in 2014/2015 to support older learners to complete work-based learning programmes. The funding is managed by Apprenticeship providers and the Student Loans Company, but has not been as popular as expected.

4.9 Quality assurance

In **Slovakia**, the national/regional quality assurance approaches applied so far are traditional in terms of governance and methodology. European quality assurance in VET (EQAVET) principles have not yet been implemented, but a new strategy paper for implementing quality assurance responding to international impulses has been prepared by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

Control of practical training in the dual education system is performed by professional organizations through a qualified person, who is also involved in verifying the eligibility of the employer for performance of practical training in the dual education. The State school inspectorate is a main stakeholder that checks VET quality.

In accordance with the relevant legislation in **Croatia**, the HOK issues permits (licenses) for the implementation of apprenticeships for the purposes of checking the personal and material conditions in crafts business and SMEs that wish to implement apprenticeships. If a craftsman or the legal entity stop fulfilling the conditions for obtaining the permit (license) prescribed by the Crafts Act, e.g. if the craftsman or legal entity violates its contractual obligations towards the student or prevents the student from attending classes regularly, the HOK's Court of Honour may impose a measure of written warning, or temporarily (up to three years) or permanently take away their right to receive students for practical training and exercises for apprenticeship.

Regarding the VET system in **Serbia**, the MoESTD has the following responsibilities: research, planning, inspection and development of secondary education; participation in the development, equipping and maintenance of facilities; professional evaluation and inspection of skills upgrade of staff at education establishments. Furthermore, the MoESTD accredits VET institutions and programmes, as the Law on the Foundations of the Education System and the Law on Secondary Education specify. The Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation is responsible for setting up educational standards and to evaluate the schools' performance.

The **UK** has a robust Quality Assurance system throughout the Vocational, Education and Training sector. Key points on the UK's Quality Assurance system: *Internal Quality Assurance systems and procedures* - a training provider has internal quality assurance systems and procedures. *External Quality Assurance* involves the accreditation body sending an External Quality Assurance professional to check the overall quality of the organisation's work, and the assessment of individual learners' portfolios. *Funder Quality Assurance* - occasionally, as part of the funders' quality checks and/or audits of an organisation, the Funder will request to check learners' portfolios, providers' Quality processes and procedures and the funding distribution.

4.10 Apprentice's working and learning conditions

In **Croatia**, students may enter the apprenticeship process after completing compulsory primary education at the age of 14. The selection and enrolment of candidates into three-year education programmes for vocational qualifications for associated trades and crafts is based on:

- The candidate's success in primary school (the last two years);
- The candidate's health status and his/her ability to work and carry out work activities in the selected occupation; and
- A Signed Apprenticeship Contract.

The Apprenticeship Contract is signed by the employer and parent/guardian of the minor (apprentice). The Contract includes the obligations and responsibilities of the employer and apprentice, as well as ways of terminating the contract.

In Croatia the craftsman or legal entity shall organize practical training and exercises for apprenticeship in accordance with their working hours, but no more than eight hours a day and 40 hours a week, and in accordance with the established annual work plan and programme of the school.

The student may not attend classes at school and practical training and apprenticeship exercises at the crafts business or other legal entity in the same day.

The craftsman or legal entity shall organize practical training and apprenticeship exercises in the period from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. Exceptionally, regular students in first grade cannot attend practical training and apprenticeship exercises for longer than 4 hours a day and 20 hours a week. The schedule for practical training and apprenticeship exercises, or the start and end time for all days is determined by the implemented curriculum for practical training and apprenticeship exercises separately for each year. If the practical training and apprenticeship exercises last for more than four hours continuously, the student has the right to daily rest for at least 30 minutes.

The student must be provided with a daily rest period between two consecutive days spent in practical training and apprenticeship exercises that last at least 14 hours without interruption and must be provided with a weekly rest period of at least 48 hours without interruption. During the school year, the student shall have 45 working days of rest ensured.

The conditions of engaging an apprentice in **Slovakia** are stipulated in the Apprenticeship treaty that is obligatory and legally binding. The employer and the legal representative of the underage pupil or adult pupil discuss the particulars of an apprenticeship treaty and conditions of practical training in the system of dual education. When a pupil carries out his or her practical training on the workplace of the employer, the employer must provide him or her with the personal protective equipment and must conduct the assessment of health, sensory and psychological capabilities of pupil if it is required by the nature of the practical training. The pupil who produces a productive work at the employer's workplace receives a reward for his or her productive work, which can be from 50% to 100% of the wage of real employees of employer. The amount of the reward of productive work depends on the quality of the work performed and the behaviour of pupil.

According to the forthcoming Law on Dual Education in **Serbia**, students (apprentices) could be in the company during the whole school year, from 8.00 till 20.00, working a max 8 hours per day i.e. max 35 hours per week. Working/learning conditions are

the same as for the employed in the company which ensures placements are according to all necessary safety and health standards prescribed by the laws.

Official Employment laws in relation to an Apprentices' wage, as well educational standards are applied in the **UK**. All Apprenticeship Providers and Employers must agree to these laws through the creation of an Apprenticeship Agreement. These rights and obligations of the Employer to the Apprentice, are held in this agreement, while the Apprentices responsibilities are included in their Learning Agreement which they sign when they enrol onto the programme. The Apprenticeship Provider is responsible for this area, as well as providing Information, Advice and Guidance. Furthermore, an Apprentice and an Employer can contact the National Apprenticeship Service for further information. Furthermore, a part of the Apprentice's learning involves the completion of the Employment Rights and Responsibilities workbook.

4.11 Responsiveness to labour market conditions

At the moment, **Croatia** has no procedure for monitoring the harmonization of VET programmes, including apprenticeships, with labour market needs. However, the realisation of apprenticeships enables the better monitoring and evaluation of learning outcomes according to the labour market's needs, given that apprentices need to spend 70% of their apprenticeship in a real working environment. Unfortunately, the percentage of apprenticeships in the entire VET system has been significantly reduced since 2013.

Slovakia introduced a new procedure for the purpose of analyzing and forecasting labour market development in 2016. Newly created regional platforms composed of specialists from self-governing regions, labour offices and sectoral assignee representatives validate the annual forecasting data. In addition to Job vacancy analyses, two models of macroeconomic forecasting are available. They are used to inform national and regional authorities on anticipated labour market changes rather than for regulating initial VET in the regions. The forecasts are used to inform self-governing regions maintaining secondary schools on additional labour market needs. These indicative data are expected to be translated into the numbers of new entrants needed in the respective fields of study at secondary schools. Subsequently, self-governing regions are expected to calculate how many new classes should be opened based on nationwide aggregated data.

At the moment, **Serbia** has no procedure for monitoring the harmonisation of the VET programmes, including apprenticeships, with the labour market needs, but expectations of introducing dual education based on the abovementioned Law are to go in that direction – matching education with the economy i.e. labour market needs.

There is no official strategy to align the apprenticeship programmes with labour market needs in the **UK**. However, the UK government has identified a number of targets such as to increase the number of Public sector (jobs in Government departments, Local Authorities and other institutions funded by the tax payer). The Government aims to increase Public sector Apprenticeships to 2.3% per annum.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Information collected by surveys, interviews and focus group discussions in **Croatia** showed that crafts and SMEs would be more actively involved in apprenticeship schemes if the following was ensured:

- Curricula containing the learning outcomes of practical training, the optimum number of hours of practical training and the continuous implementation of practice in the economy;
- Encouraged partnerships on the local, regional, national and the EU level;
- Better knowledge of craftsmen and SMEs about the benefits of apprenticeship and existing incentives;
- Better recognition of employers that participate in apprenticeships;
- A developed aid system for employers participating in apprenticeships and for those employers wanting to participate in apprenticeships (financial aid, tax breaks, etc.);
- Payment for business sector mentors for their mentoring activities;
- Incentives for the procurement of materials, tools, business departments, equipment for training apprentices, payment of water or electricity, covering the damage to devices by apprentices (insurance policies);
- The availability of information and tools for any employer that wishes to participate in apprenticeships or already participates in apprenticeships;
- The exchange of good practices between employers on the national and EU level;
- The promotion of vocational education in order to increase student interest to enrol in VET programs.

Based on the information gathered through the research in **Slovakia**, these are the recommendations for fostering the SMEs participation to apprenticeship schemes:

- While respecting contractual relationship (contract on dual education and a teaching contract) giving the SMEs the opportunity that the students can attend vocational training only in vocational school or any other company in the system of dual education;
- Exempting small businesses from the requirement to have their own instructor;
- Possibility of providing instructor from larger companies operating in the system of dual education based on agreement with the SMEs;
- Professional and consulting support in the performance of dual education from the professional organizations, in a form of campaigns, visits to vocational schools, clustering in the region;
- Access for SMEs to centres of vocational education and training, in which the small and medium enterprises can pool resources to provide practical training;
- Opportunity for the employer to terminate the apprenticeship contract with a student for repeated violations of the obligations arising from the apprenticeship contract by the student, and the possibility of concluding the apprenticeship contract with other students who studied under the same programme. In this case, the apprenticeship contract may be concluded with the students of higher grade (as the employer has incurred costs per pupil through the system of dual education, and the apprenticeship contract has ended because of repeated violations of obligations);
- Introduction of a system of informing SMEs in the system of dual education (use of national project Dual II);
- Establishment of a transitional period for SMEs entering the system of dual education, during which the state financially supports the SMEs.

- Reliefs and benefits graded according to the number of employees,
- Introduce financial norm per pupil for the company, which the SME receive for the duration of training in the company, and following the completion of training, the tax deductions for three years if the student stays in work with a particular employer.
- Revise the amount of state subsidies for employers for the implementation of dual education,
- Possibility of direct subsidies for employers (small entrepreneurs and craftsmen) instead of tax deductions
- Build regional employers' structures,
- Adaptations to the material-technical and spatial requirements for the workplace in the premises of the employer (material-technical and spatial requirements are met during the existence of the specific needs for education, not permanently).

Based on the information from **Serbia** (polls, interviews and discussions on focus groups) it is evident that companies would participate more actively in the process of future dual education implementation if:

- Secondary vocational schools would be rationalized primarily in compliance with the needs of the economy, labour market and student abilities;
- Employers would be included in the development and functioning of curriculums in secondary vocational schools;
- Capacities of trades schools would be increased as a direct response to the needs of the economy – craftsmen education;
- Apprenticeship and practical classes would be modernized and developed both in secondary schools and educational institutions and companies in compliance with the competent ministry and local government;
- Workshops would be organized for training in certain secondary vocational occupations that would employ top craftsmen (e.g. retired persons) in addition to the existing teaching staff for the purpose of better development of apprenticeship and practical classes;
- Work of education planning and development services in local governments would be organized
- Partnerships would be supported at the local, regional and national levels;
- Identification of employers participating in the process of implementation of practical classes in their companies would be secured;

In the **United Kingdom**, the barriers to SME organisations recruiting an apprentice include:

- Experience in how the apprenticeship sector works and how to recruit a job-ready apprentice;
- Awareness of the costs & support available;
- Time availability.

The main reasons for encouraging SMEs to participate in the apprenticeship scheme and recruit an apprentice to join their organisation would include:

- An employee that can be trained to an SME's individual needs, without too many previous influences;
- An employee which is willing to learn and develop;

- An employee which is approximately only 25% the costs of other employees;
- By taking on an apprentice, SMEs can gain a free government grant; and
- Staff can complete a free qualification, including current staff under the age 24(depending on individual qualifications).