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# VET@HOME

*Piloting Virtual Practical Trainings for Culinary Arts VET*

## Roadmap for integration of distance-mode practical training learning outcomes in VET qualifications

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Project Ref. No. 2020-1-BG01-KA226-VET-095185

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## List of abbreviations

AVETAE (ASOO/AVITAE)	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education of Croatia/ Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje i obrazovanje odraslih
EC	European Commission
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ESCO classification	Classification of European Skills, Competences, and Occupations
EU	European Union
F&B	Food and beverage
NQF	National Qualification Framework
R&D	Research and Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VET@HOME	Project "Piloting Virtual Practical Trainings for Culinary Arts VET", Ref. No. 2020-1-BG01-KA226-VET-095185

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## I. Foreword

The presented document (Roadmap for integration of distance-mode practical training learning outcomes in VET qualifications – “the Roadmap”) is developed in the framework of project “**VET@HOME - Piloting Virtual Practical Trainings for Culinary Arts VET**”, Project Ref. No. 2020-1-BG01-KA226-VET-095185, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices.

## II. Project background

**VET@HOME** project is designed to reinforce the ability of vocational education and training (VET) institutions to provide high quality, inclusive digital education in culinary arts adapted to the post-COVID-19 operation standards in the food-and beverage industry.

The project idea came in a response to the changes in the educational and training process imposed by the pandemic worldwide. The main challenge in the VET sector for all education and training providers was related to the urgent need of adapting the in-presence and in-class training, to distant and on-line mode of delivery. In this, many failed due to the lack of effective methodologies, infrastructure, instruments, communication and coordination mechanisms and even skills and competences of the teachers and trainers to transfer the vocational education and training in a digital environment.

Therefore, the VET@HOME project was jointly developed and implemented by a consortium of 6 organizations from 5 countries as follows:

### Project Partners:

- International College Ltd. (IC), Bulgaria
- Proandi Consultores Associados LDA (PROANDI), Portugal
- Formacion Y Asesores En Seleccion Y Empleo, SL (FASE), Spain
- Zdruzenie Institut Za Razvoj Na Zaednicata (CDI), Republic of North Macedonia
- National Agency for VET of Croatia / Agencija Za Strukovno Obrazovanje I Obrazovanje Odraslih (ASOO/AVITAE), Croatia
- Leantick Ltd., Bulgaria

Our goal was to create and pilot a standard unit-based syllabus model for **virtual practical training courses** (training practice) within the VET for the profession “Cook”. The focus of the project on this profession in particular is chosen because, like most of the professions from the culinary arts and F&B sector, the quality of the VET and the achievement of the learning goals is highly dependent on the hands-on experience and skills gained by the learners during the practical training. During the lockdown regimes imposed by the pandemic, these training activities - usually performed in the training kitchen or in the actual business (in restaurants) - were disturbed or fully cancelled and thus deprived the students and trainees of the opportunity to train fully and effectively to become cooks and to acquire a qualification. At that time not many VET providers, even VET authorities, were prepared to propose adequate alternatives - due to the sudden nature of the events that occurred. Even if some managed to transfer the training process to an on-line environment, it was mainly for the theoretical parts of the curriculum, and the practical training performance remained unsatisfactory.

However, during the research and survey among the VET providers and the teachers/instructors for practical training in culinary arts done within the VET@HOME

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project, some very interesting unconventional solutions for sustaining the practical lessons and activities in the courses for the “Cook” profession were identified as shared by the stakeholders. All of them include active usage of the information and communication technologies (ICT) – for transmitting information and training contents to the learners, but also the usage of alternative training environment that was usually the home kitchen of the students/trainees. So, even the process was not guided and/or regulated by any existing means at that time, it gave some opportunity for the teachers and students to continue the teaching-learning process. Some of these practices are described in one of the key project outputs - *Protocol and Guidebook for trainers and company tutors in culinary arts on how to conduct on-line VET practical training courses (O3)*, that could be accessed on the VET@HOME project website: <https://vet-at-home.eu/>.

All of this comes to show that for one of the main challenges for the on-line and distance-mode practical training - its physical transition to digital environment – could be solved by developing and applying the respective methodologies and instruments. Hence, another major issue remains in front of the successful accreditation and certification of the virtual practical training – namely, its **recognition and integration in the formal learning paths** in line with the regulatory frameworks and state education requirements in the different countries. VET systems and legislation though based on common political objectives differ across the European countries, but in most of the cases digital or distance-mode training is recognized only for teaching of theoretical subjects, if recognized at all. Moreover, for the professions related to the food and beverage sector, VET-schools and centres providers are expected to provide more than 50% of the training in the form of vocational practices. Another obstacle to acquiring a full professional qualification through learning in an electronic environment are the requirements set in the state regulations for the organization and conduction of the examination process. E-assessment is not popular when it comes to evaluation of practical skills and competences and even not possible for acquiring full qualifications according to the current legislation in the countries represented in this project.

This leads us to the current *Roadmap for integration of distance-mode practical training learning outcomes in VET qualifications*, that outlines the possible scenarios for integration of the knowledge, skills and competences, acquired via on-line guidance in a home environment, in VET qualifications and suggests some recommendations for small-scale policy reforms in VET in the partners’ countries that facilitate the delivery of VET practical training in distance mode and alternative learning environments.

### III. Research and development methodology

The VET policies, strategies and regulations in Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, North Macedonia and Croatia were analysed in detail by experts’ team of researchers who focused on the qualifications for the professions in the food-and-beverage industry, in particular ESCO 3434 (Chef) and ESCO 512 (Cook) or equivalent, depending of the national classifications of professions for vocational education and training. The researchers had the task to review the current legislation and to assesses the possibilities for the virtual practical training (in the case for the profession of Cook) to be organized and recognized (incl. certified) within the VET systems. They searched for gaps in the current regulations, e.g.: act/s that forbid the practical VET to be organized and conducted in a distant or on-line mode; or regulations are allowing it (not forbidding it), but there is no such practice or guidelines for the VET providers; or lack of regulation of the subject at all. Once understanding the barriers, the researchers were asked to outline the ways out of the situation by developing possible scenarios and to propose what needs to be changed and done so that the virtual



practical training (for Cook) may result in official recognition and certification of the qualification (or part of it). Finally, small-scale reforms that will allow VET-providers to sustain the indispensable practical training in extreme circumstances are proposed as to the country-specific context and current legislation in force.

Thus, the VET authorities in the countries represented in the project may use the suggested solutions for integration pathways and policy proposals in this Roadmap as bottom-up solutions coming from agents who are implementing the VET policies in practice and account for their impact on a daily basis.

#### IV. The digital transformation in VET in the European context

The regulatory systems for VET in all European countries and in the countries in this project are already in the process of adaptation. Following the need to react to the pandemic a series of policy reforms and measures were adopted by the European and national authorities - including concerning the VET - that mitigate the consequences of the pandemic, create a new more flexible legislation framework allowing for the use of alternative learning methods and environments, and also help the VET systems to remain sustainable in the long run.

These efforts are supported and boosted by the shared EU countries vision that the time for change has come and new approaches and policies are needed. In the middle of 2020, the European Commission put forward an ambitious agenda to guide COVID-19 recovery efforts in the fields of employment and social policy with a strong focus on skills and VET. In that the substantial disruption of apprenticeship, WBL and practical training “supply chain” was recognized and a set of reforms were proposed referring inter alia to modularisation of the VET-programs (incl. microcredentialling and partial qualifications), increase of learner-centred VET programs and increasing the digital readiness of VET institutions, by promoting new learning environments, tools and pedagogies in particular linked to digitalisation, catering for both VET-specific and transversal curricula and content.

A major step in that direction was the adoption of the *Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)*<sup>1</sup> - a renewed EU policy initiative that sets out a common vision of high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe. The DEAP aims to support the adaptation of the education and training systems of Member States to the digital age. In the light of the European skills agenda and the DEAP the *Structured Dialogue with Member States on digital education and skills*<sup>2</sup> started in October 2021 and adoption of the *Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training*<sup>3</sup> was fact in April 2023.

Another positive sign of the readiness of the European VET systems for the new approach for learner-centered education and training was the adoption of the *Council*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>

<sup>2</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan/action-1?focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan/action-1=#StructuredDialogue>

<sup>3</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan/action-1?focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan/action-1=>



*Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts<sup>4</sup>* recognizing the European approach to micro-credentials as flexible, inclusive learning opportunities.

All of these come to demonstrate that the common problems faced in the different countries brought a drive and will for a change at European level that is also followed by national governments and authorities.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022H0627%2803%29>

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## v. Country reports with the main findings and conclusions

*In this part of the document the main findings and conclusions of the project partners' research work are presented, together with proposals for reforms and measures that will facilitate the delivery of VET practical training in distance mode and alternative learning environments.*

### Bulgaria

#### 1. Analysis of the national situation

##### 1.1. Review of the national legislation

In Bulgaria, VET is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the **Vocational Education and Training (VET) Act**<sup>5</sup> (last amended in October 2023). VET is provided only by professions included in the **List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training** (LPVET). The LPVET is developed and updated by the **National Agency for Vocational Education and Training** (NAVET), which is the competent institution for maintaining it in accordance with the needs of the labor market. It contains all professions for VET and for each profession here is at least one speciality (usually more) that details the professional profile of the graduate and indicates the applicable areas, sectors as well as level of work. Each specialty, then, is linked to a particular EQF level defining the type of the graduation certificate (diploma or certificate of professional qualification/professional training) that the graduates will receive after the successful completion of the training.

A **State Educational Standard** (SES) is developed for each profession in the LPVET. The SESs in Bulgaria are approved by an order of the Minister of the Education and Science. Following the process of adoption of the EU legislation in the Bulgarian VET system the Unit of Learning Outcomes (ULOs) were set out as one of the main elements of the SESs. Further, the Curriculum for the professions are prepared on the basis of the State Educational Standards transferring the ULOs into training units (modules or disciplines) and assigning a specific workload and delivery methods for each training unit.

The LPVET is obligatory for all types of licensed VET providers in the country irrespective of their form of ownership (public or private, state schools - professional gymnasiums and colleges or VET centers for adult learning) or the qualification they offer (from EQF2 to EQF5). Respectively, once a profession and/or specialty is accredited and included in the LPVET, any VET provider (licensed for the particular EQF level) is allowed to include it in the training offer as long as it develops curriculum in line with the approved SES for the profession and receives a permission to deliver the qualification by the NAVET.

Here we would like to highlight the difference between vocational education and vocational training. While the education is provided only in the vocational schools (for students), the vocational training is provided in (private) Centers for vocational training (VET centers) only for adults (aged 16+ years).

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#### HYPERLINK

[https://www.ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus+media/docs/46d8fa71cda79dfa5940a4b43f2408d274603937.p](https://www.ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus+media/docs/46d8fa71cda79dfa5940a4b43f2408d274603937.pdf)

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There are many documents regulating and guiding the VET system in Bulgaria, but here we will review only these that are related to the main goal of this Roadmap, namely, to introduce the virtual practical training (for the profession of Cook) and the possibility for e-assessment of the learning outcomes acquired in distance online practical training as recognized forms and principles in the regulations:

**Vocational Education and Training (VET) Act**, in force since 2016, last suppl. amend. October 2023<sup>6</sup>

This is the main law that regulates the way VET is conducted in Bulgaria (for vocational s  
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According to the texts of the Law, the forms of training for persons aged 16+ are: *full-time, evening, part-time, independent, individual, **distance** and work-based learning (dual training system)*. The forms of training, the study time and the number of trainees per course are determined by the training institution. These may be agreed with the Requestor of the vocational training /Art. 17, paragraph (3)/.

In a draft amendment to this law of May 2023, it was proposed to be introduced the following new paragraphs to Article 17, concerning distance learning in an electronic environment (DLEE), presumably in line with the above-mentioned changes to the *Preschool and School Education Act*:

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„(4) At the discretion of the director of the institution and if technically feasible for persons aged 16 years and over, distance learning may be organised in an electronic environment in subjects of vocational training in the theory of the profession.

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„(5) Where, due to extraordinary circumstances, the attendance of the training process in institutions providing vocational training for persons aged 16 or over is suspended, following an order of the director of the institution, the training of those enrolled in full-time, evening, part-time, individual and dual training shall, as far as and if possible, be carried out remotely in an electronic environment using the means of information and communication technologies.”

In the latest published amendment of October 6th, 2023, **the proposed above paragraphs were deleted (not accepted)**. Thus, this law lacks any specification on the distance learning.

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**Law on pre-school and school education<sup>7</sup>**

This is the main law that governs the vocational education (applicable for the vocational schools only). Here we find an explanation of the **distance form** of learning as follows:  
Distance learning is implemented through the means of modern information and communication technologies and includes **distance learning classes**, self-study, ongoing feedback. The law also provides for **attendance exams** for a schooling under the private VET centers (subjects of the schedule), as well as the professional colleges (that provide VE at higher EQF levels, e.g. EQF5), and other accredited or licensed providers.

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/norms\\_2134673921\\_38.pdf](https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/norms_2134673921_38.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://web.mon.bg/bg/57>



The requirements for distance learning in **schools** are regulated here in more detail. It is categorically stated: „**Vocational education cannot be organised in distance learning.**“ /Article. 113, paragraph (3)/.

Further there are more paragraphs concerning the distance learning in vocational education:

„Distance education is taught according to a school curriculum developed on the basis of the relevant distance education framework curriculum. / Art. 113 (4)/. ...

... Distance learning can be organized by a school that has the necessary technical and technological conditions in accordance with the state educational standard for the physical environment and information and library provision of kindergartens, schools and centers for support of personal development. For distance learning, the pupil shall independently provide the necessary technical and technological means. / Art. 113 (7)/.“

An amendment to the 2020 Act also defines another form of **non-presence education** imposed by the pandemic restrictions of COVID-19:

„Distance learning in an electronic environment includes distance learning classes, self-study, ongoing feedback on learning outcomes and assessment.“ / Art. 115a (6)/.

„„Distance learning in an electronic environment“ is learning that takes place through the use of information and communication technologies, since the trainer and the trainees are not physically located in the same place.“ /Additional Provisions, § 1, item 17/.

And it is added: „Synchronous distance learning in an electronic environment“ is learning from Distance learning in an electronic environment, where the trainer and the trainees interact in real time, simultaneously, present, through visual contact via an electronic platform.“ /Additional Provisions, § 1, item 23/.

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It is in the **State Educational Standard** for the organization of activities in **school education** /Regulation No. 10 of 1 September 2016 on the organization of activities in school education in force since 01.09.2016, amended and supplemented Official Gazette No. 19 of 28 February 2023/ distance learning is described in more detail, as well as the requirements to schools for the implementation of distance learning: distance learning, as well as the requirements to schools for the implementation of distance learning:

„- Distance learning can be synchronous or non-synchronous. / Art. 38 (2)/.

- In synchronous distance education, distance education classes include synchronous lessons and synchronous teacher-student interaction as well as synchronous ongoing feedback on learning outcomes. / Art. 38 (3)/.

- Non-synchronous learning is distance learning when distance learning classes involve observation of a lesson without interaction with the teacher and other students. / Art. 38 (4)/.

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The organization of training in full-time, evening, part-time, individual, independent, distance and combined forms of training, as well as **distance learning in an electronic environment** and the conditions and procedure for switching from one form of training to another shall be regulated by **The State Educational Standard** for the organization of activities in school education, and training through work (the dual system of training) shall be organized and implemented under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Vocational Education and Training Act.“ 116 (1)/.

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- Where a school on the list referred to in par. 15 provides distance education to students from another school, the education shall be synchronous. / Art. 38 (5)/."

/ Art. 38, par. (6)/:

„1. have the necessary technical and technological conditions in accordance with the DOS for the physical environment and information and library provision of kindergartens, schools and centres for support of personal development;

2. provide a web-based system for publishing the school curriculum, weekly timetable, e-lessons, homework and projects, registration of students and teachers;

3. e-lessons are published on the web-based system according to the weekly timetable of the class."

In the following texts of the Ordinance on the organisation of activities in school education, the procedure for determining the schools that provide distance education is regulated:

„- By 20 August each year, schools shall apply to the regional education department for the possibility of providing distance education by stage and level. / Art. 38 (13)/.

- The Head of the Regional Education Department shall publish on the website of the Regional Education Department, by 25 August of each year, information on schools that provide distance education. / Art. 38 (14)/.

- Distance education may be provided by a school referred to in par. (13) and by a school which meets the requirements of Article 113 of the Education Act and is included in a list approved by order of the Minister of Education and Science. / Art. 38 (15)/.

- Assessment in the various forms of education shall be carried out under the conditions and in accordance with the State Educational Standard for the assessment of the learning results of students. /Preschool and School Education Act, Art. 116 (2)/"

The second topic of concern of the VET@HOME project is the possibility for e-assessment or conduction of online practical assessments and examinations that are recognized as eligible and the conditions set for them. In search of uch information across the existing VET legislation we find the **State Educational Standard for Assessment of Students' Learning Outcomes** adopted according to Article 22, Paragraph 2, Clause 9 of the *Preschool and School Education Act*:

/Art. 1 (2)/: „The state educational standard under par. 1 shall determine:

1. the main components, types and forms of assessment of the learning outcomes of pupils;
2. the **conditions and procedures for the organization and conduct of the assessment of the learning outcomes** of students;
3. the subjects, form, conditions and procedures for the organisation and conduct of national external assessments;
4. the conditions and procedures for the organisation and conduct of the state matriculation examinations;
5. the formation of the overall grade in the secondary education diploma."



/Art. 1 (4)/: „The organisation and conduct of **state examinations** for the acquisition of a degree of professional qualification and of examinations for the acquisition of professional qualification in a part of a profession, as well as the validation of professional knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal education and informal learning, shall be determined under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure of the Vocational Education and Training Act (VET Act).”

Among the detailed description of the criteria and activities under the above paragraphs and points, **there is no regulation/description** of the assessment in the different forms of training /day (full-time), evening, part-time, individual, independent, distance, combined; training through work (dual system of training)/, except for some special cases of transition of students from individual and distance to full-time training, in which they have to take examinations to determine a term grade in a subject or module /Art. 37 (1) and others/.

Respectively, from the texts in the *Law on Pre-school and School Education*, the *State Educational Standard for the Organization of Activities in School Education*, the *State Educational Standard for the Evaluation of Students' Learning Results*, despite the **definitions given for distance and e-learning**, there is **no clear distinction between the two**. The impression remains that distance learning in an electronic environment is an option in the presence of circumstances that prevent learning activities in face-to-face form in schools and only as synchronous learning.

There are numerous secondary legislation normative documents (by-law regulation) – rules, regulations and instructions, which further develop the texts of law and largely centralize the processes in the school system. Management bodies in the Bulgarian education system ensure adaptation of the system to the new challenges, as well as sustainable development in compliance with the European standards and its ability to provide high quality and compatible knowledge and skills.

In the *Framework programmes for initial vocational training* (IVET) with acquisition of the first, second and third degree of vocational qualification, acquisition of qualification in part of a profession and for continuing vocational training for updating and extension of acquired qualification, the options for persons aged 16 and over are specified the following forms of training: day (full-time), evening, distance (in force as of 2017). It is again stated that the forms of training, the study time and the number of trainees are determined by the training institution and these may be agreed with the Requestor of the vocational training (for example an employer).

Here we find the following definition of distance learning given:

*„Distance learning is provided through the means of modern information and communication technologies and includes distance learning classes, **face-to-face classes for practical training**, self-study, ongoing feedback on learning outcomes **and face-to-face examinations** for determining grades in curriculum subjects. Distance learning can be organised in groups for the trainees or for an individual trainee by a training institution which has the necessary technical and technological conditions. For distance learning, the trainee shall independently (self-)provide the necessary technical and technological means.”*

It is evident that the **practical training should be attended in face-to-face mode**, as well as the examinations for determining the grades in the separate subjects of the

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curriculum. It should be interpreted further that the same applies to the **(final) examinations for acquiring professional qualification** in the theory and practice of the profession and specialty.

- *The profession "Cook" in the EQF and the national qualification framework*

As of now the "Cook" profession is included in the LPVET and is available for provision at EQF level: EQF 3 and there are state educational standard and national examination programme developed for it. There are a few existing professions that have similar training contents but are either lower EQF level (such as the Kitchen assistant, EQF 2), or lead to the acquisition of other professions (such as Restaurateur profession, with 2 specialties - at EQF4 and 5). The profession of "Cook" has only one specialty: *Production of culinary products and beverages* at EQF3 and could be taught at VET schools with the respective profile, as well as in licensed VET centers (for adults aged 16+ years) that have the profession validated and included in their licenses. The speciality Production of culinary products and beverages equals the NQF level: NQF 3 and is positioned in the national framework programmes as Second degree of professional qualification.

- *How new curricula/programmes in VET (initial and continuous) are approved in Bulgaria*

New curriculum or proposal for a new programme (Frame Programme), as well as SES or National Examination Programme, could be adopted only by the Minister of education and science. There is no specific regulation regarding the changes in the forms or delivery modes of the VET, as long as they are regulated in the abovementioned documents. Respectively, the change in the legislation is expected to be implemented in the same order like of its initial adoption, respectively the procedures governed by the MES.

## 1.2. Experiences in *online* classes for qualification "Cook".

- *Barriers identified during the research*

Mostly the COVID-19 experiences were negative for all the key actors: the VET providers, the teachers/instructors or tutors for practical training, as well as for the learners themselves. Still some adjustments to the regulations were made as an urgent response to the challenges of the lockdowns the main by-laws regulations made an attempt to explain and regulate the distance and e-learning, still many questions and gaps remain.

However, there are some positive points and progress to be admitted:

1. It is clear that school education takes place either in full-time (day) form or in evening form, for the other forms certain cases are provided;
  2. The characteristics of synchronous and non-synchronous distance learning are described;
  3. The requirements for schools on the necessary technical and technological conditions for distance education, as well as the procedure for their approval are regulated;
  4. It is specified that vocational education cannot be organized in distance mode;
  5. It is regulated that examinations for determining term or annual grades in subjects and modules of the curriculum, state matriculation examinations and state examinations for acquiring professional qualification are attendance examinations.
- *Advantages and disadvantages of introducing the virtual practical training in culinary arts training in the country*

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Some particular **advantages of on-line learning** we could estimate based on the experience of the VET providers and trainees shared during the survey are that:

- *It will give access to education and training for disadvantage groups such as living in distant areas, disabled, etc.;*
- *It allows more flexibility of the delivery concerning time saving for both teachers and trainees/students;*
- *It is appealing for the new generations of learners that have grown up in the age of Internet;*
- *It facilitates instructional scaffolding that reflects each individual learner's needs;*
- *It allows the learner to freely fail and make mistakes, which reduces anxiety;*
- *It increases knowledge retention by enhancing learner engagement and autonomy;*
- *It can warrant compliance with the safety standards in the pandemic period in a cost-efficient way for both the trainers and trainees.*

At the same time there are some disadvantages, or probably more like shortages, that will accompany the distance delivery on online practical training:

- *It will impose additional costs for the learners – to equip the kitchen at home, to buy the products, etc.;*
- *In the case of culinary training in particular some key elements and criteria of the assessment and performance of the learners (such as the possibility to assess the taste of the cooked dish which is a substantial part of the evaluation and an indicator of the successful completion of the course) will still not be possible to be verified in virtual mode, etc.*

## 2. Proposals for changes allowing the implementation of virtual training courses for profession “Cook”

### 2.1. Stakeholder identification

As explained above the institutions involved in the process of introducing the changes will be mainly the The Ministry of Education and Science<sup>8</sup> (MES) and the National Agency for VET (NAVET). Other interested parties in the process of reformation of the VET system that will be affected of the potentially introduced changes are:

- the VET providers (all vocational schools, colleges and vocational training centers);
- the learners (students in vocational schools, trainees in VET centers, as well as any potential future learner who may take advantage of the more flexible options for training if the e-learning is introduced for the practical part of the professions);
- teachers in schools, trainers and instructors, tutors, etc.

### 2.2. Steps to be taken for the official recognition of the virtual practical VET

Conduct a national survey among VET institutions and all stakeholders (employers, potential and current learners, experts) on expanding the possibilities for the applicability

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.mon.bg/>



of distance learning and distance education in an electronic environment, respectively to estimate what will be requirements for technical support, (nationally recognized) training platform, define rules for the different modes of delivery of training and examinations, define mechanisms for tracking, reporting and control. It could be implemented by NAVET (also financed by the national or EU support mechanisms) and the suggestions made to be submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science for changes in the relevant normative documents, respectively development of additional regulations/instructions.

Next step would be The Ministry of Education and Science and/or the National Agency for VET to approve one or more e-learning platforms to be made available to all VET institutions.

The MES and the NAVET to support VET institutions in the implementation of distance learning and e-learning by developing and providing methodological guidelines, training resources: videos, exam materials, etc.

### 2.3. Proposals for changes

How the things could be changed:

First, definitions of distance learning and e-learning need to be introduced and detailly explained in the VET regulations. Additional terms and taxonomy such as synchronous/asynchronous online training, e-assessment, etc, need to be discussed and adopted as needed.

To regulate in detail the requirements for distance learning and e-learning to the training institutions in terms of technical provision, use of training platform (with described minimum functionalities and parameters), methods of training and examinations, mechanisms for tracking, reporting and control, eligible forms and rules for conduction of the exams, respectively for recognition of the acquired qualifications. /in the VET Act, the regulation on the organization of examinations for the acquisition of professional qualifications, instructions/.

To specify for which professions and specialties the distance learning and distance education in an electronic environment in full/partial, theory/practice and theory/practice examinations are applicable.

It would be very useful if the MES and/or NAVET recommend options for e-learning platforms that meet the requirements, or even better - to organize the development of such and made them available for the use of training institutions in the VET system or integrated into the existing VET Information System of NAVET.

In the normative documents concerning the content, organization and conduct of education and training in the Republic of Bulgaria, respectively vocational education and training, are defined the following forms of training: full-time, evening, part-time, individual, independent, **distance**, combined; training through work (dual system of training). / Art. 106 (1). Forms of training, Law on pre-school and school education ; Art. 17, par. (3). Forms of training for persons aged 16 and over, Vocational Education and Training Act/.

Respectively, the distance form of learning is recognized already, just not applicable for practical VET. In this case there is no need of major changes in the laws and by-laws acts, only adding some texts to the main regulating documents will allow for the provision and recognition of the virtual practical training.

A good moment is that having the state educational standards and National Examination programmes developed for each separate profession and speciality, the texts allowing for

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the provision and recognition of distance online practical training may be introduced only for these professional fields and areas, for which the home (or other alternative learning) environment is acceptable, safe and efficient for self-learning, guided or semi-guided

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Hence, there is a need for a change in the legal framework to create opportunities for distance learning of practical vocational training, theory and practice examinations and the recognition of the distance learning form and the results of the examinations. The documents that need to be changed are:

- the State Educational Standards (SES – by professions);
- the Framework Programmes;
- the National Examination programmes (by professions)

#### 2.4. Outlining paths for recognizing the outcomes of practical training in distance mode

At this stage there are two possible opportunities to integrate the relevant learning outcomes in the VET-frameworks in Bulgaria:

- To change the respective by-law acts and introduce changes that will allow for the delivery and/or recognition of learning outcomes acquired in distance online learning for the practical part of the professions (if done, it will be equally applicable to all professions and specialities)
- To implement the e-learning practical courses for Cook as part of the non-formal VET and persive recognition of the learning outcomes through the validation of prior-learning procedure (without breaking the current legislation).

### 3. Action plan for implementation of changes in legislation (curricula/programmes) in VET and Adult Education (IVET and CVET).

Activities	Responsible institution	Estimated period of implementation	Expected outcomes
Creating conditions for the recognition of virtual practical training and development of documentation			
Consultations with nationally recognized employer's organizations and	The Bulgarian partners in VET@HOME	October-December 2023	Nationally recognized employer's organizations to agree to support the proposal of the BG partners for

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/DOS-otsenyavane.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135466179>

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invitation to support the initiative of changing the legislation			the submission of proposals to the responsible institutions for change in legislation
Consultation with the NAVET regarding the procedures and possibilities for piloting the VET@HOME approach within the formal VET system	The Bulgarian partners in VET@HOME	Up to 6 months	Positive opinion from NAVET and opportunity to implement (pilot project/initiative) in the formal VET system
Analyzing the results of the joint pilot initiative and preparing proposals for changes in the regulations	NAVET, supported by the Bulgarian partners in VET@HOME	NA	Results to prove the feasibility of the approach and proposals for changes to be prepared
Consultations with MES on the proposed changes	NAVET, supported by the Bulgarian partners in VET@HOME	NA	MES to assess the proposals for changes as acceptable and obtain a political decision for their adoption

## 4. Expected impact of the changes implemented

### **Option 1 "The proposed reforms/changes are approved"**

- Positive impact

There is undoubtful positive side of the proposed changes for all stakeholders:

- It will bring for diversity of perspectives for both the Vet providers and learners;
- it will allow adaptation of practical training in VET to distance-/blended-mode teaching&learning;
- it will reinforce the ability to sustain quality of distance-mode VET and VET in alternative learning environment;
- it will enhance the ability of the providers to use and valorize digital resources in VET and in particular for the practical trainings
- it will make the VET offer more adapted to the needs of the younger generation who lives in a digital world and easily absorbs digital innovations
- it will provide opportunities for practical education and training to learners with fewer opportunities and/or special needs who can adapt the training to their needs and pace of learning;

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- it will allow for the provision of uninterrupted VET programs which is vital for keeping VET learners in training and for preventing drop-outs, etc.
- Potential risks:

Of course as every novel action the transition of the practical training to digital environment and alternative learning facilities (home) could disturb some of the participants in the process. For example, the technical assurance was a major issue mentioned by all interviewed groups of stakeholders, meaning that if the transfer is made without the proper preparation it will bring more stress and not be so efficient as planned. Additionally, the costs and responsibilities for the organization and implementation of the distance learning online need to be distributed between the providers and the users of the VET in a reciprocal and fair way without any of them having to bear the entire financial and/or administrative burden.

**Option 2 "The proposed reforms/changes does not receive support and are not approved"**

- Negative impact: the practical training will remain to be inaccessible in a distance mode and in similar circumstances as these during the lockdown regimes because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the system will still be unprepared to shift to digital education in full and will disturb the training process once again. In addition, the practical training in the Cook profession will remain still difficult for disadvantaged learners who can not attend physically classes or reach the training premises at the VET provider (such as with physical disabilities or living in a remote area).
- Corrective measures: Still, other options can be identified and applied if only part of the proposed changes are unacceptable, these suggestions may be adapted to the requirements of the regulations and resubmitted.
- Possible solutions:

The VET@HOME e-learning platform, the developed syllabus and training materials can still be offered by the VET centers as part of the Cook profession training, but only as distance learning for the theoretical part of the qualification and supportive materials for the in-presence practical part of the courses. There is no problem the VET schools to use the platform, too, as a resource for independent preparation of the students at home, just without legislation changes the e-assessment function would be not eligible.

Selected training units (modules) from the VET@HOME syllabus could be adapted and tailored to the needs of the learners and delivered as short professional courses (usually such courses are implemented by a request from employers) by the VET centers for adults and certified as partial qualification (part of profession Cook) as to achieved learning outcomes that match the SES for the profession.

Another possible solution is to include selected training units/modules of the developed syllabus and materials into the existing curricula implemented by the VET centers for other related professions in the professional fields 811: Hotels, restaurants and catering or 541: Food and beverage Industry technologies as part of the *elective vocational preparation* (there is a particular workload dedicated to elective training modules or disciplines that the VET centers can offer by their choice, in addition to the obligatory vocational preparation prescribed by the SES for the different professions).

Finally, the recognition of the skills acquired outside the formal VET system in Bulgaria is at the center of the Employment Strategy and National Action Plan 2013-2020 and the National Strategy for Continuing Education and Training 2015-2020. It is regulated by

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Ordinance No.2 concerning validation of professional skills, competences and expertise issued by the Minister of Education and Science. The assessment and validation carried by a competent authority results in acquiring (part of) a professional qualification and takes form of documents such as certificates or diplomas. Those documents ascertain that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to a given standard. The validation is aiming at facilitating the access to further vocational education or training or to the labor market opportunities. The institutions allowed to validate skills and competences within the Bulgarian VET system are:

1) professional and general schools, art schools, sports schools; 2) professional colleges and 3) vocational training centers (VET centers). So, all of these could organize a validation of prior-learning/experience procedure and after the respective examinations, to recognize and certify the learning outcomes acquired in the e-learning mode through the VET@HOME approach and platform.

## 5. Potential of the VET@HOME approach application in the country

COVID-19 pandemic brought to the agenda many topics and problems that were anyway to be discussed in the public space and forced the responsible policy makers and authorities to take accelerated measures and decisions, in view of the urgency of the situation. But the process of reformation and modernization of the Bulgarian VET system started long before that. The *National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2014-2020)* was adopted with *Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 12 of January 10, 2014*. It sets out the strategic framework of the government's policy in education and training during the 2014-2020 period. The main aim is to contribute to the attainment of the European goal for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In 2021, the *Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030)*<sup>11</sup> was adopted. The strategic framework has been drawn up in sync with current strategic documents at global and European level, which outline a vision for high-quality, inclusive, value-based and lifelong learning, education and training. It sets goals for inclusion at each stage of education, including (inter-alia):

- Using educational platforms and sharing effective models to support high-quality and inclusive education and lifelong learning;
- Creation of an integrated system for career guidance and professional education and training for students and adults.

Also in 2021, a grant agreement was signed for project No. BG05M2OP001-5.001-0001 "Equal access to school education in times of crisis" implemented by the MES under the Operational Programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth" 2014-2020, co-financed by the European Union through the European Structural and Investment Funds. More than 30 thousand students from the educational system have been involved in training for acquiring skills for distance learning in an electronic environment (DLEE) and working with educational platforms. This set the beginning of solving one of the problems raised by the pandemic, namely, the lack of readiness and preparation of the students (including in VET) for distance e-learning. Short-term trainings were also conducted to improve the teaching skills of the pedagogical specialists at DLEE to ensure quality and

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1399>

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seamless training. Hence adults (in their quality of Vet trainees), as well as many other students in VET schools were not concerned by the measure. The project is aimed both at supporting the technical provision of the education system and at providing the conditions for the conduct of the DLEE: more than 80 thousand portable technical devices for students and teachers were delivered.

In 2022, the *National Vocational Education and Training Programme*, is aligned with the strategic priorities of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021-2030 and is in line with the *Action Plan to the Functional Analysis of Vocational Education and Training Policy*, 2020. It has been developed in line with Priority Area 7 "Realization in the Professions of the Present and the Future" of the *Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030)*. It aims to provide material facilities in accordance with the modern labour market requirements, to provide quality vocational training in actual working conditions and to facilitate their realisation on the labour market, to modernise vocational education and training curricula at national and sectoral level, as well as to develop and update national examination syllabuses for the compulsory state examination for the acquisition of vocational qualifications.

Also in 2022, a number of *state educational standards* have been set for the acquisition of qualifications in occupations, according to the List of Occupations for Vocational Education and Training of the Vocational Education and Training Act. This enables the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individual learning outcomes in VET achieved in formal, non-formal and informal contexts.

The *National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Bulgaria*, adopted in May 2022, foresees further modernisation of the regulatory framework in the field of vocational education and training. The modernisation process is ongoing and by the *Vocational Education and Training Act* will be introduced **changes** to the **VET Occupations List**; training in fewer but broader spectrum occupations aiming to create employment conditions in similar occupations, including pass-through to similar sectors; preparation, guidance and motivation for entry into vocational training, including the provision of vocational education and training for those who have dropped out of the system; defining and implementing **flexible pathways and forms** to reach and train different groups of learners, **incl. offering online and distance learning**; reforming the content and updating state education standards and plans and programmes to include and build on knowledge and skills requirements for 21<sup>st</sup> century occupations: digital, green, transferable, key competences.

The *National Plan* by "Investment 3" foresees the provision of **digital skills training** and the creation of an **adult learning platform**. The project aims to increase access and quality training opportunities for adults (persons aged 16+) by leveraging the potential of digital technologies for **online training** on the one hand, and increasing the overall digital skills and competences of the workforce to enhance employability and participation in online training on the other. The project will be implemented in two components, including the development and implementation of a **national virtual platform for online adult learning** (not launched yet) and the delivery of training to the workforce to acquire basic and intermediate level digital skills and competences.

The reforms and efforts towards the modernisation of the VET continued in 2023 when the Council of Ministers adopted the *Action Plan* until 2024 to the *Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030)* by Protocol Decision No. 13.1 of 22 March 2023. With the adoption of this document, the country's commitment under Component 1 - "Education and Skills" of the National Recovery and Sustainability Plan is fulfilled.

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The Action Plan should lead to improved quality and relevance of education, to comprehensive education reform, to strengthening and building skills and key competences among children and students. It is also intended to increase interest and motivation for learning, the involvement of all in the educational process, the level of skills acquired, adaptability to the environment and the labour market, and to accelerate the inclusion of every child and pupil in the educational process. The plan sets out activities for the different priority areas of the *Strategic Framework*, deadlines for their implementation, funding sources, as well as indicators for monitoring and analysis of implementation. These activities will implement the objectives and measures set out in the *Strategic Framework*, which cover all the major challenges in the education and training system, including: the introduction of **educational innovation, digital transformation** and sustainable development, realisation in the professions of the present and the future, **lifelong learning**, efficient management.

In 2023 the *National Programme "Vocational Education and Training" No. 14* within the 21 *National Programmes for the Education Development* has been designed in accordance with Priority Area 7 "*Realization in the Professions of the present and future*" of the Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030). It aims at providing facilities in line with the current requirements of the labour market, providing **qualitative vocational training** in real working conditions and facilitating their realisation on the labour market, **modernising the curriculum content** for vocational education and training at national and sectoral level, as well as developing and updating national examination programmes for the compulsory state examination for the acquisition of vocational qualifications. The Programme foresees two modules under implementation: Module 1 "Modernisation of the facilities and material base" and Module 2 "Modernisation of teaching and examination content".

Another step in a positive direction was done in 2023, when a number of state educational standards have been set for the acquisition of qualifications in professions according to the **List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training**. This enables the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individual learning outcomes in VET achieved in formal, non-formal and informal contexts.

**The modernisation of vocational education and training in Bulgaria is ongoing and also supported by the** Ministry of Education and Science (MES) that is currently implementing a project of strategic importance and is aimed at modernising vocational education and training in order to prepare a skilled and sustainable workforce prepared for the challenges associated with the transition to a digital and green economy. The initiative is funded by grant procedure BG05SFPR001-3.001 "Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training" within Priority 3 "Linking Education with the Labour Market" of the Education Programme and foresees to implement activities for:

- development and implementation of a **new List of Vocational Education and Training Occupations** and a new curriculum;
- the introduction and implementation of flexible pathways, micro-qualifications and credits in VET;
- improving the skills and competences of vocational teachers and students;
- developing and introducing educational resources with innovative digital learning content;



- conducting student placements in real work environments and increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and training among students and parents.

Another very promising initiative started in 2023 is the procedure BG-RRP-1.014 "*Establishment of Centres of Excellence in Vocational Education and Training*" which is open for investments under the *Recovery and Sustainability Mechanism*. The procedure is in implementation of the policy of the MES in the area of education and is funded under Component 1 "*Education and Skills*", Investment 2 (C1.I2) "*Modernisation of Educational Infrastructure*" of the *National Recovery and Sustainability Plan*. The main objective of the procedure is the provision of modern and high-tech facilities in vocational schools with a view to transforming them into Centres of Excellence in Vocational Education and Training ("CoE VET"), which will provide the opportunity for modern vocational training of students within the school education, responding to the societal transformations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the changing requirements of the labour market. Twenty-eight vocational secondary schools have been identified to receive the status of CoE VET.

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## Spain

### 1. Analysis of the national situation

#### 1.1. Review of the national legislation

The Spanish regulation concerning VET is described in the Organic Law 5/2002 of 19 June 2002. Afterwards, the Royal Decree 34/2008 and 1147/2011, established the general organization of vocational training in the education system. The Law 30/2015 of 9 September 2015, which regulates the Vocational Training System for employment, had undertaken a comprehensive reform of this system. But as for including new training specialities, it is the Order TMS/283/2019, of 12 March, which regulates the Catalogue of Training Specialities within the framework of the vocational training system for employment in the labour field.

Concerning the distance learning, the Order ESS/1897/2013 and Order ESS/722/2016, which implement the Royal Decree 34/2008, detail the conditions for the distance learning of the VET training which can be defined as follows: *"For the purposes set forth in this order, tele-training is understood as the implementation of training actions through information and communication technologies, enabling the interactivity of students, tutors-trainers and resources located in different places"*.

The mandatory aspects are the following: *"The training of the certificate by means of tele-training will be the same as in the face-to-face modality with respect to the modular structure, duration of the training module and, if applicable, training units, capacities, evaluation criteria and contents, as established in each of the Annexes of the Royal Decrees establishing the certificates of professionalism"*.

Moreover, the virtual platform should propose a systematized learning process and *"comply with the accessibility and design requirements established by the State Public Employment Service, and which shall necessarily be complemented with tutorial assistance."*

But *"the training referred to the certificates of professionalism susceptible of being delivered by e-learning may be offered completely, for the whole certificate, or partially, for certain modules or training units", nonetheless, the most important is that "in no case may the practical training module in work centres be taught by means of tele-training"*.

As for the evaluations, it is mandatory that *"In all the training actions, for each module, a final evaluation test of face-to-face character will be applied, which will be developed in centres accredited by the labour administration in the corresponding certificate of professionalism and whose duration will be included within the total hours of the module"*. (Official State Bulletin, 17/10/2023 which published the Order ESS/1897/2013, of October 10, art.4)<sup>12</sup>.

- *The profession "Cook" in the EQF and the national qualification framework*

The Royal Decree 1376/2008, of 1 August 2008, amended by RD 619/2013, of 2 August 2013, establish and updates, among others, the certificate of professionalism level 1 H0TR0108 Basic Kitchen Operations (BOE nº 216, of 6.09.2018 and BOE nº 220 of 13.09.2013), according to which the maximum online training hours are the following, depending on the Training Units:

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2013-10861>



<b>MODULE1: Culinary supply, pre-processing and preservation.</b>			
	<b>Total hours</b>	<b>Max online training hours</b>	<b>Hours of face-to-face tutoring</b>
<b>Training Units</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>50</b>	
Application of hygiene, sanitary standards and conditions in the restaurant industry	30	20	
Procurement of raw materials in the kitchen	30	20	3
Culinary pre-processing and preservation	60	10	6
<b>MODULE 2: Basic culinary preparation</b>			
<b>Training Units</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>90</b>	
Application of hygiene, sanitary standards and conditions in the restaurant industry	30	20	
Carrying out basic and elementary kitchen preparations and assisting in the culinary elaboration	90	30	9
Preparation of mixed dishes and appetizers	60	40	6
<b>MODULE 3: Practical Traineeship in basic kitchen operations</b>			
	<b>80</b>	<b>0</b>	

So, for this specific Certificate of professionalism level 1 in Basic Kitchen Operations, out of 300 hours of the Training Units (not counting the 80 hours of Traineeship in a company), 140 can be carried out in distance-learning modality, i.e. 46,6%.

- *How new curricula/programmes in VET (initial and continuous) are approved in Spain*

In the Order TSM/283/2019 which regulates the Catalogue of Training Specialities in the framework of the vocational training system for employment in the labour field, in its Article 6 section 1, Management of the Catalogue, states that the “*the management of the processes of registration, modification, cancellation and reactivation of specialities, including training itineraries, will be carried out by the Public Employment Services, both at state and autonomous community level, by means of the computer system for managing the Catalogue of Specialities that the State Public Employment Service will set up for this purpose and make available to the Autonomous Communities*”<sup>13</sup>.

## **1.2. Experiences in *online* classes for qualification “Cook”.**

- *Barriers identified during the research*

Due to COVID-19 situation, many schools had to close during some critical weeks, but after opened and decided to implement a mixed system that guaranteed compliance with the maximum number of health and hygiene safety measures in order to avoid any problems that might prevent the practical classes from taking place. So, the barriers were related to keeping a balance between the compliance with the measures imposed due to

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2019-3642>





COVID-19, and trying to offer mixed classes: online mostly and face-to-face when possible.

At national and regional level, the measures to prevent infecting with COVID-19 were drastic and imposed such restrictions which made difficult to impart cooking classes as before. Nonetheless, the **online was allowed** but **only partially** and under **special circumstances**: proving that all the students were connected in the same time as the teacher (synchronous), how much time took the connection, in order to monitor and ensure real quality online training.

Not all the Training centres were able to implement such e-learning platforms to ensure transmitting and monitoring in real time, and some preferred to close since didn't have the means to organize online quality training which would be accepted by the National Public Employment Agency.

Since not all Training centres were able to create the online platform to have online courses, they closed or split the trainees in as many groups in order to fit in the restrictions per class, which meant more teaching hours for the Trainers and difficulty to organize courses multiplied by 2-3 in different kitchens.

- *Advantages and disadvantages of introducing the virtual practical training in culinary arts training in the country*

Introducing the online training permitted more trainees to attend since during COVID-19 the students had no classes; some parents (adult learners) couldn't go either to face-to-face classes because they had to take care of their children at home. Not being able to have the "Cook" training online, it would have meant for them to lose the training started before COVID-19. On the other side, the flexibility for the online courses proved very beneficial family/work/course balance.

The negative aspects were related to the home kitchen' dimension since each trainee had to have in their kitchen the basic utensils and raw materials in order to be able to cook with the teacher.

So as to general advantages of online training, we can mention the following:

- a. It is possible to massify the teaching and learning processes;
- b. It is possible to respect the pace of each student, without delaying some or accelerating others;
- c. The levels of infrastructure of formal systems are not required, with the consequent reduction of costs (in time and money);
- d. It stimulates individual initiative and leads to better selection;
- e. It allows the active participation of all learner;
- f. It ensures continuous supervision by the tutor;
- g. Permits the practice of computer, information and communication techniques;
- h. It has the possibility of concentrating direct lessons, both in terms of content and learning time;
- i. Gives the possibility of supervising a large number of geographically separated learners;
- j. The courses are designed on a learner-driven basis;
- k. It is a future-oriented way of teaching.

So as to general disadvantages of the online training we can list some:

- a. The need for computer equipment implies an economic and learning investment in new skills to handle the system autonomously (both for the teacher and the student);

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- b. The reduction, or loss, of socialisation processes in the classroom and the group;
- c. The lack of immediate response to the questions that arise in the learner;
- d. The fact that styles and patterns of classroom education are often maintained which are dysfunctional for distance education;
- e. The relative scarcity of didactic tools designed for, and appropriate to, the proposal.

## 2. Proposals for changes allowing the implementation of virtual training courses for profession “Cook”

### 2.1. Stakeholder identification

In order for a qualification to be accredited nationally in Spain, there are 2 possibilities:

1. The state administration is the only competent to publish new certificates of professionalism, so, the regions or communities cannot publish their own certificates.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Economy manages the State Public Employment Service. This service acts in accordance with the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications and the guidelines set by the European Union, with the collaboration of the National Reference Centres, prepares and updates the **certificates of professionalism**, which have to be approved by Royal Decree and published in the Official State Gazette.

Royal Decree 34/2008, of 18 January 2008, regulates the certificates of professionalism which are official and valid throughout the national territory and do not constitute a regulation of professional practice.

2. All vocational training agents or centres have the possibility to register or publish a new speciality. But, prior to this, its acceptance and inclusion must be proposed by the public bodies that are competent to do so:

- State Public Employment Service /SEPE/;
- Ministry of Labour;
- Autonomous Regions;
- Vocational training bodies of the regional administrations.

The following bodies can propose new specialities:

- National Reference Vocational Training Centres (CRN);
- Sectoral Joint Structures of the Social Agents through the FUNDAE State Foundation for Employment Training (Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo);
- Other administrations;
- Accredited training centres and entities;
- Companies;
- Others.

### 2.2. Steps to be taken for the official recognition of the virtual practical VET

Following the above described opportunities and procedures it is clear that, given the current situation in Spain, FASE (as VETprovider and licensed adults training center) can propose that the “Cook” qualification and training programme in distant online delivery



mode developed for the VET@HOME project, to be integrated in the framework of training for employment within the SEPE's Catalogue of Training Specialities, fully or partially.

Another possible procedure is to suggest the online "Cook" qualification and training programme to be part of the existing training offer as a complement to the certificate of professionalism HOTR0108 "Basic Kitchen Operations". The current certificate of professionalism of "Basic Kitchen Operations" does not include among its training modules specific international recipes which could be interesting for all future "Cooks" to know, and is part of the VET@HOME online training, as well as other aspects related to the online training which can be benefited from.

### **2.3. Proposals for changes**

As shown above, according to the Spanish legislation, a part of the "Cook" training speciality can be done online: out of 300 hours of the Training Units (not counting the 80 hours of Traineeship in a company), 140 can be carried out in distance-learning modality, i.e. 46,6%. But since the VET@HOME training can be done entirely online, FASE (as well as any other VET center) could propose to include it as a specific "Cook" training online either totally or in major percentage than how it is right now. Nonetheless, since there are specific face-to-face tutorials (totalling 24 hours) mandatory for this training, the proposal should include a minimum of 24 face-to-face tutorial hours. On the other side, since the evaluation should be also done face-to-face, the proposal should also include it as mandatory.

### **2.4. Outlining paths for recognizing the outcomes of practical training in distance mode**

Ministry of Labour and Social Economy and its department of National Public Employment Service published the procedure in the Order TSM/283/201914 for proposing a training specialty. First, the establishment who wants to propose a new training specialty should fill in the Speciality Proposal Justification which includes 2 main sections: justification and competences.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE SPECIALITY PROPOSAL should include one of the main reasons here below:

- Territorial needs
- Sectoral needs
- Cross-cutting needs
- Needs detected by the Public Employment Services
- Specific needs of people with special difficulties in finding employment:
  - Young people
  - Women
  - Long-term unemployed
  - Over 45s
  - People with disabilities
  - People at risk of social exclusion
  - Immigrants
  - Others
- Recruitment commitment
- Supplementary training in training and apprenticeship contracts
- Technical upgrading of trainers and tutor-trainers
- Others. Which?

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2019-3642>



COMPETENCES ADDRESSED should be among the following:

- Technical/specific vocational competences
- Transversal competences (only one can be ticked, the most representative of the speciality)
- Key Competences
- Digital/ Office automation/ ICTs
- Languages/ Linguistic
- Personal and social skills
- Organisational/methodological skills
- Prevention of occupational hazards and occupational health
- Orientation
- Entrepreneurship
- Environment
- Ecological transition
- Food safety
- Equality promotion
- Other Which?

The Justification of the specialty proposal should also include the identification of the speciality by Code (assigned by the State Public Employment Service), name and level of professional qualification, together with the type of training (formal, non-formal), the competences addressed (technical/specific professional competences: Professional family/ Professional area).

It should also include the Technical-pedagogical specifications, relating the speciality from the Certificate of professionalism competences with the duration of the associated training, the modules and training units, as well as the minimum requirements for space, facilities and equipment in order to implement the training. The number of trainers, the prescriptions for trainers and tutors as well as the learning outcomes and evaluation, have to be listed also.

The second requirement, apart from the Justification of the specialty proposal, is to write a Report justifying the specialty proposal, in especially the motivation for it and a brief indication of the added value it brings to the catalogue, in the family/occupational area or in the corresponding transversal competences. In addition to the above, the training programme designed for the aforementioned speciality must be added.

### 3. Action plan for implementation of changes in legislation (curricula/programmes) in VET and Adult Education (IVET and CVET).

- *The steps for the recognition of virtual practical training for "Cook"*

Activities	Responsible institution	Estimated period of implementation	Expected outcomes
Creating conditions for the recognition of virtual practical training and development of documentation			

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Studying the formal ways to present the proposal to the competent authorities	FASE SL (VET@HOME project partner)	01/04/2023-30/09/2023	Analyse the possible forms and choose the proper procedure to present the qualification proposal
Submission of the proposal to SEPE	FASE SL	02/10/2023	Review of the training qualification proposal and positive decision expected
Qualification to be integrated in the framework of training for employment within the National Public Employment Service' Catalogue of Training Specialities	SEPE - National Public Employment Service	After positive assessment of the proposal	The qualification to be listed in the National Public Employment Service' Catalogue of Training Specialities

#### 4. Expected impact of the changes implemented

Following the proposed actions 2 possible scenarios could be expected:

##### **Option 1 "The proposed reforms/changes are approved"**

- Positive impact:

If the training qualification is approved by the National Public Employment Service, then the course can be applied for by public and private training centres that participate in the calls for applications opened by the public administrations that manage vocational training in Spain:

- SEPE (National Public Employment Service) and FUNDAE (State Foundation for Training in Employment);
- Public Employment Services of the Spanish regions, such as INAEM in the region of Aragon.

As for the positive impact of the participants in the courses, they can obtain a diploma certifying that they have taken advantage of the training according to the qualification which will help a lot for mobility in the labour market or to find a new job in Spain or in Europe.

For the accredited vocational training centres, the positive impact is that they will have a new training speciality to offer their students/trainees.

- Potential risks:

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Effect on the administrative burden for the legal entities in preparation of applications or not enough interest of individuals for the fully online and distant training if they prefer the in-presence mode. Hence, it will remain a feasible alternative to be applied in extreme circumstances or for disadvantage learners who can not access physically the training premises.

**Option 2 "The proposed reforms/changes does not receive support and are not approved"**

- Negative impact: if the qualification is not approved, FASE (or other VET providers who apply for it) will not be able to include it among its approved certificate of professionalism training courses;
- Corrective measures: The National Public Employment Service can require FASE as applicant to make the appropriate corrections which will ensure the approval of the qualification later;
- Possible solutions: FASE (and other VET centers) can impart the training as non-formal learning and follow-up validation procedure may be initiated for the recognition of the learning outcomes, which upon successful completion may lead to certification of (part of) the qualification.

## 5. Potential of the VET@HOME approach application in the country

As shown above, even before COVID-19, Spain already had regulations concerning the distance learning, the Order ESS/1897/2013 and Order ESS/722/2016, which implement the Royal Decree 34/2008, detail the conditions for the distance learning of the VET training.

But due to COVID-19, those conditions had to be implemented in such a very short time that the Training centres which didn't have them before, encountered difficulties in organizing online classes in streaming or at least monitored, in order for the National Public Employment Service who granted the subsidy for those courses, to be able to check the reality and good-implementation.

Nonetheless, COVID-19 taught all that we have to be prepared to that kind of situations, so many training Centres have implemented online training since then. In this regard, the VET@HOME online training will benefit to many, since there still is a long way to go in the direction of offering high quality online practical training for "Cook" in Spain.



## Portugal

### 1. Analysis of the national situation

#### The National Qualifications System in Portugal

The education and training system in Portugal is structured according to the Basic Law of the Educational System (Law No. 46/86, dated October 14, subsequently amended, in some of its articles, by Law No. 115/97 of 19 September, and Law no. 49/2005, of August 30) and Decree-Law no. 396/2007, of December 31, which regulates the National Qualifications. The Basic Law organizes the education system in pre-school education, school education (for divided into basic education, secondary education and higher education) and out-of-school education. Decree-Law no. 396/2007, of December 31, creates the National System of Qualifications and defines the framework for the regulation of basic, secondary and post-secondary education and training for young people and adults.

The education and training system has recently undergone a significant set of reforms, essential to the creation of the National Qualifications System.

The process of reforming the Portuguese education and training system began in 2007 with the so-called "Reform Agenda for Vocational Training". The reform process emerges as a way to find innovative solutions in order to raise the qualification level of young people and adults.

The reform process is based on the creation of the National Qualifications System in 2007 (Decree-Law no. 396/2007, of December 31), which aims at linking education, vocational training and employment, creating new instruments and modernizing the regulatory structures.

Firstly, the National Qualifications System assumes, as a political objective, the promotion of the generalization of the secondary level as a minimum qualification of the population. The importance of this generalization is clearly assumed by the European Union (EU). There are also OECD proposals for strengthening schooling as a means of increasing labor force productivity.

In line with the objective set out in the context of the creation of the National Qualifications System and the policy recommendations at EU and OECD level, in 2009 Portugal signed into law 85/2009 of 27 August, compulsory schooling up to 18 years.

As a way of increasing qualification levels in Portugal, a strategy was developed based on both the increase in secondary completion rates by young people and the recovery of qualification levels by adults.

#### 1.1. Review of the national legislation

VET is part of the education system when it is promoted by the Ministry of Education and in the employment market when it is carried out (or supervised) by the Ministry of Labor and Solidarity, by other sectoral ministries, and by other entities.

One of the characteristics of VET in Portugal resides therefore in an expressive sectoral training offer (supervised by public services) which, based on the concrete needs felt in the sectors of activity, was constituted as adequate to them and, in many cases, as an alternative to the large systems nationals.

VET is legally framed in the Basic Law of the Educational System (LBSE) and in DL 401/91 and 405/91. These diplomas differentiate professional training included in the Education

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System from professional training included in the employment market. Both are distinguished by institutional support and predominant tutelage, respectively the Ministry of Education (ME) and the Ministry of Labor and Solidarity (MTS), but also by the purposes, typology of training offer, target audiences and levels of prioritized training, pedagogical assessment and certification.

Each one of the systems differs, internally, in sub-systems, equally with distinct characteristics.

Particularly in "training within the employment market" a large number of entities operate, with public or private status, co-financed by the various support programmes. The existence of a very diversified and differentiated training offer, due to its characteristics and its own management, increasingly raises the problem of the internal and external articulation of the respective systems and sub-systems.

Initial training included in the education system covers courses developed by secondary education establishments. These are, in particular, technological courses, courses in professional schools, education-training courses, and recurrent education courses (with a vocational or vocational training component).

Although keeping in common the horizontal and pluri-sector perspective, the structures and the training action under the tutelage of the area of work (MTS) present, in their genesis, assumptions that differentiate them from the educational structures. The Employment and Professional Training Institute (IEFP) is the public entity responsible for implementing the employment and VET policies defined by the Government. The VET carried out by the IEFP adopts a more intensive action model, as such of shorter duration than that of the ME, and closer to real working conditions, which include apprenticeships, or the alternating training system, constitutes a program aimed at the professional training of young people.

The body responsible for certifying private entities, by areas of VET, within the scope of Professional training is the Directorate General for Employment and Labor Relations (DGERT). Training entities can only provide training in the areas of education and training certified by DGERT, however there are regulated professions, subject to specific regulation, whose responsible bodies approve the approval of qualifications, such as the Initial Pedagogical Training of Trainers, among others. When there are no specific regulations, entities resort to the rules of the certifying entity, which is DGERT.

Distance Learning is currently one of the most used modality, given the Pandemic and the emergence of collaborative platforms that allow courses to be carried out under the e-learning and b-learning regime. This type of training is recognized and follows the regulations and quality assurance of the various bodies that are responsible for the certification and approval of courses.

Currently, in Portugal, it is possible to perceive the concern regarding the use of learning systems supported by the latest technologies. This refers to the enrichment of classroom/training spaces using technology, the option for the hybrid system or even the fully online system. These trends require validation and accreditation processes, essentially due to the need to guarantee the quality and reliability of these environments.

On a macro level, until very recently there was no clear policy of consistent investment or regulation transversal to Portuguese society, which was transparent and effective for these environments. The existing e-Learning regulation field in Portugal seemed to be incipient or insufficient when compared to other European Union countries.

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Below is presented a review of the regulations that need to be considered for the implementation of virtual practical courses:

**Order No. 17 035 / 2001, of August 14 (Despacho n.º 17 035 / 2001, de 14 de Agosto)**<sup>15</sup> establishes the specific regime of support for professional training carried out at a distance. In this Order, in Chapter II - Organization of training, in Article 3 - Continuous training of active workers, it is described:

*“1 - In the continuous training of active workers, level 2 of training will be considered as the minimum level of access.*

*2 - The continuous training of actives must have face-to-face sessions, where, namely, practical work can be assigned, solving problems and validating the acquired knowledge and guiding paths.*

*3 - Face-to-face sessions cannot exceed 25% of the total workload, nor have a maximum daily duration of more than six hours.*

*4 - The annual workload cannot exceed five hundred hours.*

*5 - Training should preferably be organized in modular units with a workload never exceeding one hundred hours.*

*6 - When specific circumstances so justify, distance training may exceptionally be accepted for target audiences with lower qualifications than those referred to in paragraph 1.*

Article 4 - Training of other audiences reads:

*“1 - In the training of other audiences, other than active employees, the methodology of distance training must be used, as a specific and partial component of the training path.*

*2 - The workload of the distance learning component, both synchronous and asynchronous, must not exceed 25% of the total duration foreseen for the course, and cannot, under any circumstances, exceed two hundred hours.*

*3 - Distance training included in other training pathways must respect the stipulations in paragraphs 2, 3 and 5 of article 3.”*

**Law No. 9/2009, of March 4 (Lei n.º 9/2009, de 4 de março)**<sup>16</sup>, which establishes the national qualifications framework, provides that vocational education and training (VET) can be provided face-to-face, blended or at a distance. The **distance regime** can be implemented through information and communication technologies (ICT), but must ensure that trainees have access to adequate means and resources for their success.

**Decree-Law No. 10-A/2020, of March 13 2020 (Decreto-Lei n.º 10-A/2020, de 13 de março)**<sup>17</sup> establishes exceptional and temporary measures regarding the epidemiological situation of the new Coronavirus — COVID 19, which are included in CHAPTER IV - Suspension of teaching and non-teaching activities, Article 9 - Suspension of teaching and non-teaching and training activities, in point 6 — In compulsory or certified professional training, namely that relating to professional access and practice, **face-to-face training may exceptionally be replaced by distance training**, when this is possible and the conditions for this purpose are in place, with the necessary adaptations and flexibility of the respective requirements, subject to authorization by the competent authority.

<sup>15</sup> [https://elearning.iefp.pt/pluginfile.php/47236/mod\\_scorm/content/0/ons01/03ons01d.htm](https://elearning.iefp.pt/pluginfile.php/47236/mod_scorm/content/0/ons01/03ons01d.htm)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.dgert.gov.pt/regime-de-acesso-e-exercicio-de-profissoes-e-de-atividades-profissionais>

<sup>17</sup> <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/10-a-2020-130243053>



From March 2020, a mandatory pandemic, in a forced and regretful way, to the widespread adoption of distance learning methodologies. Directorate-General for Employment and Labor Relations (DGERT) issues an opinion on distance training and professional training<sup>18</sup>, it does not qualify to reinforce that the strategy of moving from face-to-face training to e-learning training is an appropriate bet, taking into account the suspension of educational activities and face-to-face training, by Decree-Law No. 10-A / 2020, of 13rd March. However, DGERT warned that this commitment should be accompanied by strict compliance with the requirements of the DGERT Certification for e-learning training, in the case of entities certified by DGERT.

Therefore, **national laws do not prohibit online classes/training** in initial or continuous VET in Portugal. However, they impose some conditions for these classes/training to be considered valid, namely access to adequate means and resources for trainees.

Training entities do not need authorization from DGERT or specific certification to develop training in the form of distance organization, however they have to "*guarantee a level of quality for these interventions identical to that which characterizes face-to-face training.*" This means it is not enough to use videoconferencing systems or provide manuals for reading. It means much more than that: it involves having an e-learning platform, an adequate pedagogical model, a tutoring and assessment system suitable for e-learning training.

It also means having human resources with adequate training. It also highlighted, in this context, that when opting for this new way of organizing training, entities must update their documentation relating to the DGERT Certification, that is, reformulate and add the documentation relating to the e-learning component, to be available for later DGERT audit.

This press release also shares the opinion issued by National Agency for Qualification and Professional Education (ANQEP), with regard to the development of distance training, within the scope of the National Qualifications Catalog. If the entity decides to carry out its training activity in a structured and regular way in this format, it must meet the **specific requirements indicated in the Certification Quality Framework for distance training**, essential to ensure a level of quality of these interventions identical to that which characterizes training presential. The essential requirements are human resources, processes in the development of training, the pedagogical model, tutoring and assessment system and the Training Operational Regulation. Subjects of a practical nature and in training in a work context, namely because they require the use of specific spaces, instruments and equipment, cannot occur through distance learning or simulated practice in order to guarantee compliance. All other disciplines continue to work remotely.

Certification is a recognition granted by areas of education and training, and there is no additional validation process for this form of organization.

**Ordinance No. 70/2022, of 2<sup>nd</sup> February** (Portaria n.º 70/2022, de 2 de fevereiro), Regulates the learning courses provided for in paragraph b) of paragraph 1 of article 9 of Decree-Law no. 396/2007, of December 31

- *The profession "Cook" mentioned on the EQF and the national qualification framework*

In Portugal, the profession of "Cook" is available, in 3 levels NQF/EQF, namely Level 2, 4 and 5.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://certifica.dgert.gov.pt/aviso-anqep.aspx>



- a. **Level NQF/EQF – 2, Code – 811177, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, in the following qualifications/Education and training modalities<sup>19</sup>:**

#### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING COURSES (CEF) – for young people**

- Reference for School Training - Education and Training Courses 811177 Cook, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 2; Total Credit Points: 50, Condition of access: Less than 6<sup>th</sup> grade;
  - Training in the Work Context (FCT) - Referential for Training in the Work Context (FCT) - Education and Training Courses, 811177 Cook, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, NQF/EQF: Level 2 Total Credit Points: 10;
- PROFESSIONAL SKILLS, Reference for Technological Training - 811177 Chef, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level: Level 2 | Total Credit Points: 84.25;
- Double Certification Training Reference - Education and Training Courses, 811177 Cook, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level QNQ/QEQ: Level 2; Total Credit Points: 134.25.

#### **EFA COURSES / MODULAR TRAINING (EFA) – for adults**

- School Training Reference - Adult Education and Training Courses, 811177 Cook, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level QNQ/QEQ: Level 2; Total Credit Points: 50;
  - Training in the Work Context (FCT) - Adult Education and Training Courses, 811177 Cook, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 2; Total Credit Points: 134.25;
- School Skills Benchmark - Recognition, Validation and Certification of Skills, 811177 Cook, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 2 | Total Credit Points: 50;
- Double Certification Training Reference - Recognition, Validation and Certification of Skills, 811177 Cook, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, NQF/EQF Level: Level 2; Total Credit Points: 134.25;
- Reference for the Recognition, validation and certification of competencies (RVCC) - Professional Skills - 811177 Cook, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 2;

- b) **Level QNQ/QEQ – 4, Code – 811183, EDUCATION AND TRAINING AREA: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, in the following qualifications<sup>20</sup>:**

#### **PROFESSIONAL COURSES (CP) – for young people**

- Reference for School Training - Professional Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Decree-Law 55/2018, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 70;
  - Workplace Training Framework (FCT) - Professional Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Decree-Law 55/2018, Education and Training Area:

<sup>19</sup> <https://catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/qualificacoesDetalhe/7327>

<sup>20</sup> <https://catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/qualificacoesDetalhe/7332>



811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 20;

- Double Certification Training Reference - Professional Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Decree-Law 55/2018, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 198;
- Professional Skills, Reference for Technological Training -811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 128.

#### **APPRENTICE COURSES (CA) – for young people and adults up to 29 years old**

- Reference for School Training - Learning Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, QNQ/QEQ Level: Level 4 | Total Credit Points: 70;
  - Workplace Training Framework (FCT) - Learning Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 20;
- Double Certification Training Reference - Apprenticeship Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, NQF/EQF Level: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 198;
- Reference for Technological Training -811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 128.

#### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING COURSES (CEF) - young people**

- School Training Reference - Education and Training Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4 | Total Credit Points: 70;
  - Reference for Training in the Work Context (FCT) - Education and Training Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 20;
- Double Certification Training Reference - Education and Training Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, NQF/EQF Level: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 198;
- Reference for Technological Training -811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 128;

#### **EFA COURSES / MODULAR TRAINING (EFA) – for adults**

- School Training Reference - Adult Education and Training Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, NQF/EQF Level: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 70;
  - Workplace Training Reference (FCT) - Adult Education and Training Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 20;

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- Double Certification Training Reference - Adult Education and Training Courses, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, NQF/EQF Level: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 198;
- Reference for Technological Training - 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, Level NQF/EQF: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 128;
- Core Competencies for Adult Education and Training – Secondary Level;
- Reference for the RVCC - Professional Skills - 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, NQF/EQF Level: Level 4;
- Double Certification Training Reference - Recognition, Validation and Certification of Skills, 811183 Kitchen/Pastry Technician, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, NQF/EQF Level: Level 4; Total Credit Points: 198.

**c) Level NQF/EQF – 5, Code – 811183, EDUCATION AND TRAINING AREA: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, in the following qualifications<sup>21</sup>:**

**TECHNOLOGICAL SPECIALIZATION COURSE (CET)**

- Reference for School Training 811287 Technician Specialist in Management and Kitchen Production, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 5; Total Credit Points: 15;
- Reference for Technological Training, 811287 Technician Specialist in Management and Kitchen Production, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 5; Total Credit Points: 91.5;
- Reference for Training in the Workplace (FCT) - Technological Specialization Courses, 811287 Technician Specialist in Kitchen Management and Production, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 5; Total Credit Points: 15;

**APPRENTICE +**

- Reference for School Training 811287 Technician Specialist in Management and Kitchen Production, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 5; Total Credit Points: 15;
  - Workplace Training Framework (FCT) - Aprendizagem+, 811287 Technician Specialist in Kitchen Management and Production, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 5; Total Credit Points: 15
- Training Reference for Double Certification - Aprendizagem+, 811287 Technician Specialist in Kitchen Management and Production, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 5; Total Credit Points: 106.5;

**MODULAR TRAINING**

- Double Certification Training Reference - Modular Training, 811287 Technician Specialist in Kitchen Management and Production, Education and Training Area:

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<sup>21</sup> <https://catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/qualificacoesDetalhe/1662>



811 - Hotel and Restaurant Industry, NQF/EQF Level: Level 5 | Total Credit Points: 106.5.

- Work Context Training Reference (FCT) - Modular Formations, 811287 Technician Specialist in Kitchen Management and Production, Education and Training Area: 811 - Hospitality and Restaurants, Level NQF/EQF: Level 5.

### 1.2. Experiences in *online* classes for qualification “Cook”

In Portugal there were substantial measures undertaken at national level in the field of education and training in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in a series of acts regulating the processes as follows:

- Decree-Law No. 22-D/2021, of March 22 – establishes exceptional and temporary measures regarding the COVID-19 disease pandemic in the area of education;
- Decree-Law No. 22/2020, of May 16 – amends the exceptional and temporary measures relating to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Decreto-Law No. 20-H/2020, of May 14 – establishes exceptional measures for the organization and operation of educational and training activities, within the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Decree-Law No. 14-G/2020, of April 13– establishes exceptional and temporary measures in the area of education, within the scope of the COVID-19 disease pandemic;
- Decree-Law No. 10-A/2020, of March 13 - establishes exceptional and temporary measures regarding the epidemiological situation of the new Coronavirus – COVID 19
- Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 10-A/2020, of March 13 - approves a set of measures regarding the epidemiological situation of the new Coronavirus – COVID 19.

Other legislation was also adopted in the last years. not only as a response to the challenges faced during the pandemic in the VET sector, but also in effort to facilitate the digital transformation of the education and training sector:

- Ordinance No. 246/2022, of September 27 – creates the second phase of the «Employment + Digital 2025» Programme, a professional training program in the digital area;
- Ordinance No. 62/2022, of January 31 – regulates the creation and organization and functioning of centers specializing in adult qualification;
- Ordinance No. 194/2021, of September 17 – defines models of diplomas and certificates in electronic format for educational and training offers in basic and secondary education;
- Portuguese Charter of Human Rights in the Digital Age (Lei nº 27/2021, de 16 de maio);
- Decree-Law No. 23/2021, of March 22 – determines the cessation of validity of decree-laws published between 1986 and 1991;
- Normative Order No. 10-A/2021, of March 22 – determines the approval of the Regulation of External Assessment Tests and Tests of Equivalence to Attendance of Basic and Secondary Education for the academic year 2020/2021;

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- Order No. 3262-A/2020, of March 12 – planning procedures for the network of dual certification training offers, namely Youth Education and Training Courses (CEF), Professional Courses (CP) and Courses with their own dual certification plans (CPP);
- Ordinance 250-A/2020, of October 23 – creates the Jovem+ Digital Programme, a training program for acquiring skills in the digital area;
- Ordinance No. 198/2020, of August 18 – approves the general regulation of special competitions for holders of dual certification courses at secondary level and specialized artistic courses for registration and enrollment in private higher education establishments;
- Ordinance No. 183/2020, of August 5 – creates the Portuguese Host Language (PLA) courses, as well as the rules governing their organization, operation and certification;
- Ordinance No. 359/2019, of October 8 – Regulates the **distance learning modality**, provided for in Decree-Law No. 55/2018, of July 6;
- Order No. 6954/2019, of August 6 – establishes the guidelines that govern an intervention program for young people who have dropped out of the education system and are at risk of social exclusion, called «Second Opportunity»;
- Order No. 1088/2019, of January 31 (Despacho nº 1088/2019, de 31 de janeiro) – creates and regulates the Digital Competence Dynamic Reference Framework (QDRCD).

**On 29th November 2023, National Agency for Qualification and Professional Education (ANQEP) presented the process of reformulating and updating the National Qualifications Catalog (CNQ).** This project, which involved several phases and a wide range of sectors of Portuguese society, namely the **Sector Qualification Councils (CSQ)**, aims to build a training framework capable of responding to emerging technological transformations and the new qualification needs that arise from them. Adapting to the challenges of the future and the unpredictability that is inherent to them requires greater training in skills associated with lifelong learning.

### **Legislative changes to the SNQ**

- Autonomization of level 5 and reinforcement of intermediate qualifications
- Flexibility in accessing modalities and the possibility of combining them
- Autonomy of the Centros Qualifica teams and training entities

### **CNQ**

It is a dynamic instrument, for the strategic management of dual certification qualifications, at not higher – N2, N4, N5 of the NQF, recognized at European and international level

- Regulates the SNQ dual certification modalities, aimed at young people and adults
- Promotes the effectiveness of public, national and European funding for training (access to FSE)
- Guarantees a public, free and formal training offer
- Integrates unique references regarding the technological component of qualifications
- Distinguishes the result – Qualification – from the ways to achieve this result – training, RVCC and recognition of foreign titles
- Allows the capitalization of Competence Units and flexibility between modalities

### **Complementary measures to update the CNQ**

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- legislative changes
- creation of short and medium duration routes (PCMD)
- new methodology for designing qualifications
- new reference of key skills for adult education and training - basic level

### Short and Medium Duration Paths (PCMD)

- Faster response to professional updating and retraining needs
- Allow autonomous certification
- They can capitalize on obtaining a qualification

### New methodology for designing qualifications

- Qualifications based on Learning Outcomes and not on training content
- Skills reference becomes the core element of qualification
- Represents and introduces a paradigm shift in training, aligned with European recommendations

### New reference of key skills for adult education and training

- The first fully aligned with the new methodology (UC)
- With more current skills, more inclusive
- Responds to adults with very low literacy levels

### The current National Qualifications Catalog (CNQ)

- 392 qualifications
- 45 areas of education and training
- 4069 UC
- 8670 UFCD (25h and 50h)
- 41 short and medium-term paths

EQF/NQF levels	No. NQF Qualifications
2	110
4	231
5	51

### Mapping of qualifications proposed for the new CNQ

NQF Qualification Levels	Existing Qualifications in the CNQ	Proposed Qualifications for New CNQ
Level 2	110	38
Level 4	231	164
Level 5	51	92
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>294</b>

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PCMD at QNQ	PCMD Proposals
41	60

### Main challenges of updating the CNQ

- Changing training organization models
- Adjustment of community financing mechanisms
- Adaptation of IT systems to support the training certification record (SIGO)
- Training of trainers and teachers for skills-centered training practices

- *Barriers identified during the research*

All of these come to demonstrate that the need of reform in the VET system is recognized at state level and respective regulations are adopted as needed to guide the process. Thus, the main difficulties and barriers identified during the research in front of the full

re-  
c-  
o-  
g-  
n-

Thus, the challenges in Portugal besides the regulations, shared by the stakeholders were related to:

i-  
t-  
i-  
o-  
n-  
o-  
f-  
t-  
h-  
e-  
v-  
i-  
r-  
t-  
u-  
a-

- Lack of Equipment: some people did not have access to the equipment needed to maintain the online classes and implement training practice in their home, such as a computer, a stable Internet connection, and a well-equipped kitchen (since the practice was related to cooking);
- Lack of motivation: learning to cook online appeared to be challenging as it requires self-discipline and motivation;
- Lack of interaction: online classes proved to be less interactive than face-to-face classes, mainly due to technologies' limitations, and it makes the learning difficult, especially for people who learn best through interacting with others;
- Lack of computer skills: some people may not have the necessary computer skills to follow an online course;
- Lack of Internet access: some people may not have internet access. This could be due to factors such as location, income or lack of infrastructure;
- Lack of financial support: online cooking classes can be expensive if the learners need to supply all needed products and materials for the practical lessons from their own money. This can be an obstacle for people on a budget, etc.

l-

- *Advantages and disadvantages of introducing the virtual practical training in culinary arts training in the country*

B-  
F-  
a-  
C-  
E-

During the pandemic lockdowns, teleworking became mandatory. Public and private entities in the training area, and all companies that need training activities for their workers, had to adapt to the new times. Distance training has become not just an option, but the only option for training activities. It was a challenge that presented new difficulties,

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r-  
a-  
i-  
n-



but also new lessons were learned. Teams learned to communicate without everyone sitting next to each other. Distance training is a modality that is increasingly used due to its ease of access and diffusion. In addition, the costs normally required in training activities are substantially reduced while allowing for a personalized form.

One of the main reasons for the adoption of this modality by organizations has to do with the distance, since it allows the trainee to carry out the training from any location. Based on recent studies, it is now in the public domain that the use of IT tools increases knowledge retention by 25% to 60%, as the trainee is more involved, focused and receptive.

In addition to the possibility of access through multiple devices, reinforcing its accessibility, e-Learning allows for consistency in the contents presented since they are transmitted equally to all trainees, something that will never happen with the realization of multiple face-to-face sessions. There are many different factors that can make training actions different, despite having the same pedagogical content.

It also makes it possible to reduce training costs, since this is carried out without the need for a physical space. On the other hand, it allows the trainee to carry out learning at his own pace. According to some studies, trainees reduce their learning time by 40% to 60% compared to traditional face-to-face training.

Distance training allows you to reach a target audience that is geographically distant from you and the organization, as it allows access anywhere. Featuring reduced costs compared to face-to-face training, it has thus been a lower cost solution increasingly used by organizations and trainees. It is also important to point out that this is a touch of modernity. Due to its potential, distance training allows organizations to take on an innovative position vis-à-vis other 'players' in the market.

In the case of virtual practical training in culinary arts training we find these advantages, however we have to bear in mind that as it is a training that requires a set of equipment, work instruments and materials, the costs are higher and it requires a set of material, physical requirements and financial for its implementation.

When we talk about disadvantaged groups such as those who live in remote areas, people with disabilities, the disadvantages are more evident and a set of physical, material and financial support is needed so that they can have access to training in line with the provisions of the Skills Agenda for Europe, to ensure that the right to training and lifelong learning becomes a reality across Europe, from cities to the most remote rural areas, with a view to achieving the objectives of increasing the participation of young people and low-skilled adults in LLL actions.

## **2. Proposals for changes allowing the implementation of virtual training courses for profession “Cook”**

In general, the Portuguese VET system is quite flexible in terms of variety of different forms and levels of qualification in each professional area. It falls into the concept of the National Qualifications System established in the country and is constantly evolving following the European and national priorities and politics.

### *Objectives of the National Qualifications System*

The objectives of creating the National Qualifications System in Portugal are diverse and diverse. To a large extent, these objectives comply with the roadmap of expectations theoretically associated with the constitution of qualifications. It will be important to retain only some of these goals.

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- i. to strengthen the integration of education and training offerings into the general and vocational fields,
- ii. Establish mechanisms for access to the certification of school and vocational skills acquired through informal and non-formal.
- iii. Facilitate access to qualification in lifelong learning contexts, promoting the flexibility of the offer through its modularization in autonomously certified and capitalizable short-term units.
- iv. Qualify the mechanisms for monitoring and monitoring the quality of the education and training courses enrolled in the National Qualifications System.
- v. Promote the relevance, certification and recognition of the provision of education and training, including strengthening its articulation with the needs of the productive fabric.
- vi. Strengthen the integration between academic and dual certification pathways, in particular through the deepening of mechanisms of permeability and articulation of competences.

#### *Main instruments of the National Qualifications System*

As stated above, the achievement of the objectives set out above has been closely related, on the one hand, to the emergence of a new institutional model and, on the other, to the development of some instruments, including:

- The Training References;
- The Short Term Training Units (UFCD);
- Proof of qualifications;
- Recognition, validation and certification of competencies (RVCC);
- Double certification;
- Entities of the National System of Qualifications;
- The Individual Competency Booklet
- The National Qualification Catalog
- The National Qualifications Framework

#### *The Training References*

The Training References correspond to the set of information that guides the organization and development of the training, depending on the professional profile or the associated reference framework, referenced in the National Qualification Catalog (NQC).

The training references identify the reference designation, the level of qualification, the area of education / training, the training itinerary and the training modalities in which they can be developed. They also integrate the output profile, the organization of the training reference, training methodologies, the development of basic training and technological training and a suggestion of didactic resources.

#### *The Training Units*

The Short Term Training Units (UFCD) are learning units, capable of autonomous certification and integration into one or more training courses referred to in the National Qualification Catalog (NQC), allowing the acquisition of certified skills. The technological training is structured in UFCD with the duration of 25 or 50 hours. A UFCD is defined by its name, duration, objectives and contents.

#### *The proof of obtaining a qualification*

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The proof of obtaining a qualification provided for in the National Qualification Catalog is done through a qualification diploma. The qualification diploma must indicate the corresponding qualification level, according to the NQF and, when applicable, the professional activity for which qualification was obtained, according to the NQC.

The completion of one or more Short Term Training Units (UFCD) of the NQC training references, which does not immediately allow for the qualification or completion of a process of recognition, validation and certification of competencies, is evidenced by a certificate of qualifications.

The conclusion with the use of a certified training course not included in the NQC is proven by a certificate of professional training.

The diplomas and certificates are issued by the training entities that integrate the network of the National System of Qualifications (NSQ).

#### *Recognition, validation and certification of competencies (RVCC)*

The RVCC is the process that allows the individual with at least 18 years of age the recognition, validation and certification of skills acquired and developed throughout life (informal and non-formal learning).

#### *The double certification*

The double certification corresponds to the recognition of competences to carry out one or more professional activities and a school qualification, through a qualification diploma. In this way it is possible to attend courses of initial double certification training, actions of "double certification continuous training", corresponding to training references or Short Term Training Units integrated in the NQC, developed by training entities certified for that purpose or by recognized educational establishments, which at the same time confer a professional and academic qualification. The dual certification is applicable to the professional activities integrated in the NQC either in the training courses or in the RVCC processes.

### **2.1. Stakeholder identification**

#### *Entities of the National Qualification System*

The structure of the National Qualification System - NQS is essentially based on the following entities:

- **The National Agency for Qualification and Professional Education, IP** is a public institute integrated in the indirect administration of the State, with administrative, financial and pedagogical autonomy.

ANQEP I.P. has joint supervision and supervision of the Ministries of Education, and of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, in coordination with the Ministry of Economy and Sea. It is this Agency's mission to contribute to improving the qualification levels of young people and adults in Portugal, promoting both a growing demand for academic and professional qualifications (double certification), at non-university level, and an offer of initial and life-long learning that is broadly attractive, of quality and relevant to the labor market (Decree-Law n.º 36/2012, of February 15).

Under the National Qualifications System, ANQEP I.P. has the following duties<sup>22</sup>:

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<sup>22</sup> <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/portaria/168-2019-122446606>



- a) Design and permanently update the National Qualifications Catalog, an instrument that regulates non-higher level dual certification qualifications;
- b) Regulate and streamline the offer of education and vocational training with dual certification aimed at young people and adults, the offer of specialized artistic education and the system of recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC), at both school and professional level, aimed at adults;
- c) Promote and guarantee the necessary information and guidance devices, the complementarity and flexibility of education and professional training systems and the quality of the aforementioned offers, in conjunction with the other entities responsible for these matters;
- d) Coordinate the design of pathways, curriculum development and specific methodologies for double certification vocational education and training aimed at young people and adults and the RVCC processes;
- e) Participate in the development of initial and continuous training references for teachers, trainers and other professionals involved in the qualification of young people and adults;
- f) Contribute to the international comparability of qualifications and to mobility between youth and adult education and vocational training systems, through representation and cooperation mechanisms at European and international level.

ANQEP I.P. is also responsible for managing the network of Centers for Qualification and Vocational Education, for organizing and rationalizing the training offer, monitoring the system and for information and guidance on qualification and employment.

- **The Sectorial Councils for Qualification (CSQ)**, regulated by Order No. 6345/2020, June 16, are advisory bodies that support the ANQEP, IP in updating the National Qualifications Catalog, which have as its main task the identification of strategic and essential qualifications for the different sectors of the economy in response to the challenges of the labor market.

It is up to the CSQ:

- Identify needs to update the CNQ, depending on the specialized technical knowledge they have about the sector or professional activity they represent;
  - Present a proposal for inclusion, exclusion or alteration of qualifications to ANQEP, IP and give an opinion on the proposals presented by ANQP, IP;
  - Support ANQEP, IP in the design of qualifications, based on the methodological guidelines defined by it;
  - Facilitate articulation with relevant entities in each sector of economic activity or professional activity;
  - Mobilize efforts, in cooperation with ANQEP, IP, to enhance and disseminate the work carried out within the CSQ;
  - Promote the CNQ as a strategic instrument of the National Qualifications System and contribute, in conjunction with ANQEP; IP, for its continuous development and improvement.
- **The Qualifica Centers** ensure that young people and adults are referred to training modalities, the recognition and validation of competences for the purposes of positioning in education and training, as well as the recognition, validation and

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certification of acquired throughout life. The Qualifica Centers are centers specializing in the qualification of adults that aim to promote lifelong learning and the improvement of recommendations, both school and professional in the population, valuing the individual paths of each person. These centers assume a decisive role in guiding and directing adults towards qualification paths based on the complementarity between recognition, validation and certification of competences and the attendance of certified training, depending on the profiles and needs of individuals (Ordinance no. 62/ 2022, of January 31).

- **Certified training entities, with legal personality**

Public or private entities with formal recognition by the Directorate-General for Employment and Labor Relations (DGERT) that they have adequate skills, means and resources to develop training activities in certain areas of education and training.

These entities have resources and technical and organizational capacity to develop processes associated with training, subject to evaluation and official recognition in accordance with the quality benchmark established for this purpose.

- **Schools** - a network of public and private education establishments, which includes basic and secondary education establishments, professional schools and private and cooperative education establishments. This network of schools offers professional courses, youth education and training courses, adult education and training courses and certified modular training. Specialized artistic courses and technological specialization courses can also be developed in public education establishments and in private and cooperative education establishments.
- **IEFP - Professional Training Centers** a network of training centers directly managed and jointly managed by the Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, I.P., which offers apprenticeship courses, technological specialization courses, adult education and training courses and certified modular training.

## 2.2. Steps to be taken for the official recognition of the virtual practical VET -

According to the information mentioned above, particularly with regard to the official recognition, Proandi as a VET center with certified training areas, including the Cooking training, we can request the competent entities to certify the course and insert it in the catalog national qualifications.

Another idea is, this VET training course VET@HOME, if approved by the competent authorities, could also be included in our professional course in the learning system, level IV, EDUCATION AND TRAINING AREA: 811 - Hotel and Restaurant Management, code 811183, Cooking and Pastry Technician.

It should be noted that if we intend to organize this course privately, it can be done completely online, trainees receive a Professional Training Certificate issued through the SIGO Platform (Educational and Training Offer Information and Management System).

However, a learning system course like Proandi does, but with the objective being to do it completely virtually, has to:

- Sending information about the course to be approved and pedagogical instruments and evaluation to ANQEP and IEFP - Institute of Employment and Professional Training, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity and Social Security and requesting analysis of the inclusion of this course in the national qualifications catalogue;



- Wait for approval and final word from ANQEP (National Agency for Qualification and Professional Education) which coordinates the implementation of education and professional training policies for young people and adults and ensures the development and management of the system of recognition, validation and certification of skills. After analysis by ANQEP, it may be subject to approval or not at a meeting with the Sectoral Councils for Qualification (CSQ) council in the course training area;
- Communication of approval or possible changes to Proandi, so that it can be approved in the national qualifications catalog.

### 2.3. Proposals for changes

In case of Proandi, what could be subject to change would be the fact that VET@HOME training, according to the modules, replaced the Short-Term Training Units (of 25 or 50 hours) in person and were carried out entirely at a distance. For example, the module we developed "Soups" could be applied to the professional course Cooking and Pastry Technician, in the 2nd academic year, within the scope of UFCD Confeção de Sopas (Making Soups), maintaining the forms of assessment but using virtual resources.

Another proposal will be to insert the course into a hybrid system, with an online course load including practical sessions, and a face-to-face component (including assessment) at the end of the module.

To insert the course completely online, there are some constraints regarding the total hours of the course, so in the case of Proandi, the number of hours should be as close as possible to our national catalog of qualifications.

### 2.4. Outlining paths for recognizing the outcomes of practical training in distance mode

To request a possible update of the distance course, within the VET scope, as mentioned, entities must contact the IEFPP - Institute of Professional Employment and Training, request authorization with justification to carry out the UFCD's remotely.

As predicted in the pandemic phase of COVID-19, it's mandatory that entities who use online training must keep all evidence (prints during all hours of training, registration on the attendance list platform and verification of time spent on the platform).

## 3. Action plan for implementation of changes in legislation (curricula/programmes) in VET and Adult Education (IVET and CVET).

Activities	Responsible institution	Estimated period of implementation	Expected outcomes
Preparation of online practical training course recognition and development of necessary documentation			
Creation of the curriculum and adaptation to the reality of VET	Proandi	2 months	Having a VET@HOME curriculum adapted, according to the existing methodologies in the Apprentchip

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system and Proandi			system courses, but for online training course.
Sending the necessary documentation to the competent authorities to present the proposal	IEFP - Institute of Employment and Professional Training ANQEP - National Agency for Qualification and Professional Education	5 months	Having gathered and verified the necessary and correct documentation before send to the entities
Wait for considerations and analysis from the competent authorities	IEFP - Institute of Employment and Professional Training ANQEP - National Agency for Qualification and Professional Education	5 months	Include possible post-analysis changes regarding the curriculum and course structure
Implement the course in the institution, according to what was defined	Proandi	After positive analyse from competent entities	Working with national entities to implement the changes

#### 4. Expected impact of the changes implemented

Following the proposed actions 2 possible scenarios could be expected:

##### **Option 1 "The proposed reforms/changes are approved"**

- Positive impact:

If the course is approved by the competent authorities, it will be a very significant change for the educational and professional system in Portugal, being completely taught virtually. It also means that the responsible authorities are open to making changes and adapting to the virtual reality that exists in the world, increasingly present after the COVID-19 pandemic in particular. For training VET centers, this is very positive, as they will have a more training offer for trainees who want to obtain a Chef qualification but are only able to fulfill the requirements online.

- Effect on the administrative burden for individuals and legal entities:

Inclusion of changes to the qualifications system that could lead to more time-consuming processes in terms of administration and the adaptability of competent institutions, and more time to adapt to new resources and methodologies.

- Potential risks:





The fact that the courses are carried out completely remotely may not cover people with fewer technological resources and who cannot or understand how to access the course.

**Option 2 "The proposed reforms/changes does not receive support and are not approved" -**

- Negative impact:  
Failure to approve means that the project partners are unable to implement this type of course in their training offer, failing to comply with digital development criteria.
- Corrective measures:  
Propose new measures to change the course that may meet what the national authorities want and intend.
- Possible solutions:  
Despite not being approved, Proandi and partners can apply this course in UFCD's sessions in Cooking and Pastry Technician, corresponding to the modules developed in the project to carry out a test to verify suggestions for improvement according to feedback from trainees and trainers.

## 5. Potential of the VET@HOME approach application in the country

Although e-learning system in Portugal, already existed before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary to significantly change procedures and methodologies for entities to quickly adapt to the changes that the situation imposed.

The fact that a course can exist completely online and in an area that would not initially be possible, demonstrates the enormous capacity of entities to adapt to extreme circumstances and be prepared to face new possible situations that do not allow for face-to-face courses. Modules were developed by the partners, in a training area where there are many practical sessions, but given the methods, instruments and methodologies imposed by the project, it is possible to be delivered online based on a platform that supports it, allowing the training to reach to all different target audiences. This is an innovative project, where innovative methods are presented that promote the quality of teaching and professional training.



## North Macedonia

### 1. Analysis of the national situation

#### 1.1. Review of the national legislation

The presence of ICT in education has brought significant changes in the learning – teaching process. E-learning is attaining significance in this Internet world due to the obvious advantages of anywhere anytime learning, to reach the unreachable. Nowadays, most of the effort in the area of e-learning are directed towards the educational use of ICT at all levels in the Education system. In the last two decades, the constant imperative of teachers and professors was to introduce the use of ICT in the educational process.

The *Education Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2025* adopted in North Macedonia includes chapters on Education, VET and Adult Learning. The government aims to increase the attractiveness, quality and relevance of VET, introduce standards based on learning outcomes and labour market information, increase work-based learning (WBL) and invest in human and infrastructural resources. Adult learning is recognised as key for improving the overall education attainment of the working-age population. The Strategy prioritises the development of flexible, modular education and training offers for adults, the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) and awareness-raising activities.

The *VET Law* adopted in 2006 is the main legal framework for VET in N. Macedonia. In 2021, a new draft was prepared and submitted for public consultation. The main changes concern better ways for the inclusion of students with special needs, increased levels of work-based learning and practice-based education, and a separate chapter on Regional VET Centres (RVETCs). These will be at the focus of VET reform efforts in the coming years. RVETCs are expected to include both learners with special needs and learners in need of re-skilling and upskilling. They are expected to optimise their resources and provide more training offers that are relevant to regional labour markets and have been identified in collaboration with local employers. RVETCs will include flexible learning options, as well as VNFIL arrangements. RVETCs should eventually become regional centres of excellence. Major efforts are being taken to provide adequate human and infrastructural resources to the centres. This includes needs analyses, equipment procurement and organisational development. Three centres are being established, in Tetovo, Kumanovo and Ohrid so far.

The proportion of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) of around 60% remained constant in the last decade. The *Strategy for Adult Education 2019-2023* is aimed at improving the attractiveness and quality of adult education, strengthening the quality of the training offer, developing VNFIL arrangements and improving partnerships. The *Law on Adult Education* adopted in 2008 has been revised. The main goal was to harmonise it with the *Law on the NQF*. Proposed changes aim at streamlining the process of verifying adult training programmes and providing a conducive framework for VNFIL.

Republic of North Macedonia has had a digital agenda led by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration since 2005. The key players in the development of digital skills in vocational education and training are the Ministry of Education and Science, the Centre for Vocational Education and Training (VET Centre), the Centre for Adult Education, the Bureau for the Development of Education and the State Education Inspectorate. With the VET Strategy 2013-2020 and the number of projects, the Government highlight the value of ICT in teaching and learning for developing digital skills among VET students. Law and curricula reforms promote digital skills as a key competence for lifelong learning.



They opened the way for **digital and online learning** in primary and secondary schools, including **initial VET**. Digital learning is promoted in VET schools mainly through policy and legislation. The *Law on Primary and Secondary Schools* requires teachers to deliver at least 30% of teaching and learning content digitally. The *State Education Inspectorate* is the authority responsible for ensuring this rule is applied through regular evaluations. Despite positive reports, it would appear that VET teachers are not using digital and online learning on a regular basis. This is due the main challenges today - the lack of adequate ICT equipment in some schools and the extra time and effort required to master new skills.

The *VET Strategy 2013–2020* and the *Law on Adult Education* (2008) stress the value of digital technology in **adult distance learning programmes**. Together with the relevant ministries, digital learning in continuing VET is supported by:

- the *Adult Education Centre*, an independent agency whose mission is to promote formal and non-formal adult education that is functional, modern and in line with EU standards;
- the *Centre for Vocational Education and Training* (VET Centre), an independent agency established by the government in 2006, which has a central role in the VET system. In particular, it is responsible for disseminating new ideas, including digital and online learning in initial and continuing VET.

The Organization, School or Institution of adult education that wants to perform adult education for occupations, it is necessary to submit a request for verification of the special program. For that purpose, they need to submit to *Center for Adult Education – Skopje*:

- Form/ request for verification of a special program;
- Document for registered activity – adult education, issued by Central Registrar of Republic of North Macedonia;
- 3 Copies of the Special program that they want to be verified in (The form is available also online on the web page of Center for Adult Education);
- Payment slip for payment of a fee for verification of the special program at the expense of the Center, in accordance with the Price List for Verification of special adult education programs, which is determined by the Board of Directors of The Center;
- Request for modification of a verified special program (also a Form provided by the Center);
- Payment slip for modification of a verified special program;
- Proof of hiring Mentor from the Register of Mentors for Practical Education.

After submitting the Forms, Commission for evaluation is entering the premises where the practical work is planned to be realized to approve that the Organization/Institution meets the special standards for space and equipment standards.

The *Adult Education Centre* quality assures continuing VET programmes and the *Ministry of Education and Science* licenses continuing training providers.

The practical training is organized according to the Specific Program that is given by the *Center of Adult Education*. In that Program all of the conditions and methods are elaborated.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, **online practical training and e-assessment was not considered at all** by the authorities. With the new developments and conditions imposed by the pandemic, the Government and the responsible institutions had to open this issue.

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Compulsory formal education was made with adjustments and deviations from the classical way of assessment and students were allowed to be assessed online through the platforms used by the schools. However, this only applies to the theoretical part of the teaching.

For the vocational schools where there are practical classes, the students were either individually called for assessment with physical presence, of course with respect to all measures of protection from COVID-19, or their grades were duplicated as a result of the theoretical part. For non-formal education, e-assessment is still unknown for the practical part, ie, by conducting this research, we have not encountered any cases or legislation where it is shown.

As far as for the certification, there is possibility in the *Center of Adult Education*, a request to be submitted and to be evaluated accordingly.

Overall, e-learning is recognized in the system of formal and non-formal vocational education, and with the Programs and Strategies of the Government it can be said that in recent years it has been favored. However, in the legislation, despite the detailed guidelines for the use of e-learning as a way of conducting classes, the issue of the practical part of teaching is not fully regulated. That is, for the VET courses where there is a mandatory practical work, it is not specified whether it is allowed or not to be (adapted) online. Although today most of the materials are adapted for online learning, there is still a gap in the practical part.

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- a) Possibilities

The same situation is regarding the e-assessment. Because there are no specific legislation about allowing / permitting e-assessment for the practical part for the VET trainings, the Verified VET Provider can submit a Request where can elaborate on how they plan to conduct e-assessments and let the Commission decide if the e-assessment for that Program is going

Because the *Center of Adult Education* is the main responsible for the verified programs and methodology, they are also responsible for any changes made to the program.

Until now, each program has its own "rules and guidelines" according to which the provider should be guided. For online teaching, there are specific guidelines only for the theoretical part, i.e. in each program, the Center has decided whether it can be transferred online or not. For the practical part, the same would apply, however, for now there is no case to decide on this issue.

- b) Limitations/restrictions
- c) Requirements

According to the *Law on VET* and the *Rulebook of verification of special education programs of adults* there are some conditions that should be met as a provider of practical education:

- First of all, the organization should be registered as VET Provider by the *Ministry of Education* and the *Center for Adult Education* and no bankruptcy procedure nor liquidation procedure has been opened against it;
- Second, the Organization should have registered at least one Mentor from the *Register of mentors for practical education* (there are additional rules about



registering as mentors in that *Register*, for example: they should have Master's degree and have more than 3 years of experience in the field);

- Third, they need to meet the general standards and special standardize equipment and space conditions as they can provide practical training. For every Program there are different conditions that the Organizations should meet.

The evaluation of the standards is conducted by the *Ministry of Education and Center for Adult Education*. This rule applies accordingly in formal and non-formal dual education.

- *The profession "Cook" in the EQF and the national qualification framework*

In North Macedonia, the profession of "Cook" is available in 2 NQF levels- level 3 and level 2. Although, these is an ongoing legislation to try and get the level higher.

According to the *Center for Adult Education* and the *Program for Cook*, the training consists of two parts: Theoretical lectures and Practical work – total of 250 accademic hours (1 hour = 40 minutes). The Theoretical lectures are envisioned to be 20-30% of the training and the Practical part 70-80% of the whole training.

The training can be attended by a maximum of 10 people in a group. If there are more than 10 people who have applied for that training, two groups are formed.

On the other hand, according to the *Curriculum for the educational profile of a Chef*, approved by the *Ministry of Education* with Decision No. 11-5296/1 dated 25.09.2013 for the Formal Education, the numbers are opposite. Namely, the theoretical lectures are envisioned to take not less than 60% of the training and the practical part - up to 40%.

- *How new curricula/programmes in VET (initial and continuous) are approved in the country*

There is a possibility to include the VET@HOME courses as partial qualification courses in the national VET offers. This can be possible by applying the *Request* by the VET Providers for Cook to the *Adult Education Center*. After the submitted request (which describes in detail what changes we want to make from the basic Cooks program), the Commission formed within the Center will decide whether to approve the request and what conditions it will set (if there is a need for additional conditions that VET providers will be required to meet).

## 1.2. Experiences in *online* classes for qualification "Cook"

- *Barriers identified during the research*

The pandemic disrupted the completion of the school year 2019/2020, with greatest effect on VET. Namely, all opportunities for learning skills through hands-on experience (either at the school premises or through practical training in companies/WBL) were made impossible due to government restrictions. Although the MoES and VET Centre have made calls to teachers to develop materials to be shared online on the **EDUINO platform** (initially developed and intended to serve students of pre-school and primary school age), the response for the latter was scarce, so the students follow the classes thanks to the individually organized measures by their schools, for which there is no official information yet (in terms of the effects).

The partly limited digital skills of the staff in the education sector were a challenge, along with the necessary equipment of both teaching staff and the households of the students. The processes of establishing cooperation with the business sector have not been entirely stopped but are currently severely affected due to the economic difficulties of the companies, and the question of mere survival of many. Summer Practice was entirely cancelled for summer 2020, and solutions were considered for its compensation. However, there is no indication that the business sector is being consulted in the process.

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The pandemic has also significant negative impact on the non-formal VET system. As it started abruptly, there was no sufficient time for a proper adjustment to the new situation. The obligations for compulsory health and safety measures additionally worsened the context of the still weak non-formal VET system and the crises spilled on the surface are in fact the drawbacks that were neglected before.

At its 15th regular session (10.03.2020) the Government of the Republic of N. Macedonia discussed the information submitted by the Steering Committee for Coordination and Management at the Crisis Management System for undertaking additional measures and activities for prevention of the spread of the coronavirus upon the suggestion of the Ministry of Health's Infectious Diseases Committee, and adopted the following conclusions<sup>23</sup>:

- i. To increase measures and activities for prevention of the spread of the coronavirus
- ii. To suspend the educational process and teaching in all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and high-education facilities, and in the public science institutes on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in the following 14 days
- iii. All extracurricular programs such as foreign language courses etc. are also temporarily suspended.

The Government of the Republic of N. Macedonia, at the session held on March 23, 2020 year, adopted Regulation with legal force to apply the high law emergency training education. On June 2, 2020 the Ministry of Education and Science announced a Protocol for determination and proceedings of public and private higher education institutions, i.e. units in the composition of performance of exams.

In the period of COVID-19, those institutions / organizations that made efforts to hold trainings, mostly used the dual system (online theory and practice with physical presence) although, more often they started to use online resources and platforms for their work as video-calls, videos with educational content, pictures, presentations, etc. which significantly helped them maintain a level of professionalism and efficiency.

All interviewed organizations and institutions adjusted their premises where the practical work is held for COVID-19 protection and were guided by the measures from the Government.

Only one Institution (Municipal Public Institution - Open Civic University for Lifelong Learning: Joska Sveshtaarot - Strumica) have developed their own online platform for e-learning - elektronskoucenje.mk. They also use MOODLE which is in electronic form. They have courses for bakers, cooks and other professions. In terms of online learning they want to develop a training portal with appropriate instructions, login to the portal via a link to follow the training. It should be noted that this approach to work is not fully regulated by the rules of work for formal or non-formal education, i.e. it is not allowed, but it is not forbidden either.

- *Advantages and disadvantages of introducing the virtual practical training in culinary arts training in the country*

In the new normal era, the world of education continues to improve in order to deliver excellent educational services. Although the harmful consequences of COVID-19 are obvious, new opportunities may emerge. The lessons learned during harsh times will surely lead to more online services, a greater understanding of the impact of loneliness on the student experience, and a greater need to diversify services to meet the needs of a diverse range of student demographics.

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<sup>23</sup> [https://northmacedonia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/MKD-COVID\\_19-Response-Framework-20200730\\_costed.pdf](https://northmacedonia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/MKD-COVID_19-Response-Framework-20200730_costed.pdf)



The change to virtual learning and student services may stimulate greater engagement. A distance learning approach based on online systems is created and gradually implemented.

On-line learning/ training has both benefits and challenges. In the decades to come, the challenges will diminish mainly by encompassing technology improvements and enhancing the overall experience of the learners.

Benefits can be viewed from the viewpoint of the VET providers and from the standpoint of the students/trainees. Most of the educational and training institutions/organizations have begun to heavily engage in online instructions due to their several advantages, which include: new markets, financial gains, global collaborations, expansion in education, shortened time to market, and faculty education. Additionally, online education appeals to various student populations with diverse academic needs that are the obvious shortcomings or limitations of standard classes. The push strategy of the education institutions to offer online courses fuels the demand for them. Teachers and students can engage both asynchronously and synchronously, modes that have been extremely beneficial when online courses are offered<sup>24</sup>.

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## 2. Proposals for changes allowing the implementation of virtual training courses for profession “Cook”

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### 2.1. Stakeholder identification

The **governance in the education sector** is divided among the Parliament and the Government through the Ministry of Education and Science and the Local Self Government through the municipalities.

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The State provides financial resources for the education in the municipalities in a form of Block Grants. According to Art. 153 of the Law on Primary Education<sup>25</sup>, i.e. Art. 101-a of the Law on Secondary Education<sup>26</sup>, the Municipality can supplement the received block grant, i.e. a dedicated grant for education with own resources, except for the salaries of the employees in the schools.

The most common mechanisms for cross sector cooperation in education are Working groups for development, implementation and evaluation of the strategies and programs. Also, the Ministries, Departments and Agencies cooperate on joint projects by establishing mixed project teams.

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The **Ministry of Education and Science**<sup>27</sup> is the main government authority responsible for education and training, mandated with the realization of education. The strategies and programs of the national institutions foresee cross sector cooperation in implementation of various measures and activities.

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- **The Ministry of Education and Science** ([Министерство за образование и наука](#)) is the main governmental authority responsible for education and training, mandated with the realization of education. It is responsible for structuring and

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<sup>24</sup> <https://uklo.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/9..pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Закон за основното образование,

<https://www.sonk.org.mk/documents/Zakon%20za%20osnovno%20obrazovanie.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Закон за средното образование, <https://dejure.mk/zakon/zakon-za-srednoto-obrazovanie>

<sup>27</sup> <https://mon.gov.mk/en/>

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financing of education, founding of public institutions, preparation of the legislation governing education and science, implementation of laws, by laws and other regulations, adoption of syllabuses and curricula, approval of textbooks, development of science and research, enrolment policies, and control over the work of education institutions and quality of education. The Ministry of Education and Science also performs the activities related to verification of professions and profiles in education, student standards; technological development, informatics and technical culture; the information system; international scientific and technical cooperation; the supervision of his competence and perform other activities determined by law.

- **Bureau for Education Development**<sup>28</sup> ([Биро за развој на образованието](#)) is integral part of the Ministry of Education and Science as a legal entity and conducts expert work of importance for the development and promotion of education in the Republic of North Macedonia. The Bureau is responsible for monitoring, research, promotion and development of education in the area of preschool, primary, secondary education, art education, general education subjects in vocational education, specialized education and education of adults, education of children with special education needs, education activities in the dormitories and education of children of the citizens of Republic of North Macedonia living abroad learning their mother tongue and culture.
- **Municipalities** – With the adoption of the Law on Local Self-Government<sup>29</sup>, Art.22, ([Закон за локална самоуправа](#)) the municipalities gained authority for founding pre-school institutions, primary and secondary schools, their funding and administration (in collaboration with the central authorities) and also for the organization of transportation, nutrition and accommodation of students in student dormitories.
- **Adult Education Center** ([Центар за образование на возрасни](#)<sup>30</sup>) is a public institution for adult education in the Republic of North Macedonia, as a separate legal entity established by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. Main task of the Center is harmonization and integration of public interests and the interests of social partners in adult education in North Macedonia. It also coordinates the cooperation with international institutions and organizations in the field of adult education. In addition, the role of the center is to provide a quality education system for adults in accordance with European standards and practices through the establishment of standards and criteria that will provide formal and informal adult education and creating high quality and competitive workforce in the labor market with support of social partnership.
- **Centre for Vocational Education and Training (VET Center)** ([Центар за стручно образование и обука](#)<sup>31</sup>) is established as a public institution that should harmonize and integrate public interests and the interests of the social partners in the vocational education and training and to coordinate the cooperation with the international institutions and organizations in the area of vocational education and training. The VET Center conducts expert work in the area of monitoring,

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.bro.gov.mk/>

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.aa.mk/WBStorage/Files/Zakon\\_lokalnata\\_samouprava.pdf](https://www.aa.mk/WBStorage/Files/Zakon_lokalnata_samouprava.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> <https://cov.gov.mk/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://csoo.edu.mk/>





evaluation, examination, promotion, exploration and development of vocal education and training.

- **State Examinations Centre** is an independent institution whose responsibilities are determined by the **Law on State Examination Centre** ([Закон за Државниот испитен центар<sup>32</sup>](#)): to support the process of external examination of the achievements of students and teachers in primary and secondary education; to prepare a national program for external evaluation of primary and secondary education in accordance with the European standards; to collect, process and analyze the results of the testing for verifying the achievements of students in primary and secondary education; to prepare rank-order of teachers from primary and secondary schools in accordance with the results of the external examination, self-evaluation and integral evaluation; to prepare rank-order of professional associates from primary and secondary schools in accordance with the results from the professional records, to develop and sustain the information system for evaluating the achievements of students in primary and secondary education; to participate in the preparations of the concept for graduation and final exams in secondary education; to prepare texts for external examination; to conduct training for the members of state subject graduation commissions and school commissions for external evaluation of the achievements of students in primary and secondary education; to secure protection of secrecy of preparation, printing, distribution and storing of the examination materials; to conduct training for the candidates for principals of primary and secondary schools and to conduct the exam and issue certificates for the candidates with passed exam.
- **The National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility** ([Национална агенција за европски образовни програми и мобилност<sup>33</sup>](#)) is a public institution with an aim to promote and implement the European educational programs in Republic of North Macedonia. By implementing the programs, the agency contributes to development of knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and bigger social cohesion, at the same time providing environmental protection and especially exchange, collaboration and mobility into the areas of education and training. Program beneficiaries are: learners, students, teachers, professors, educators and other personnel engaged in any stage of educational process, enterprises and other legal bodies including commercial entities, chambers of commerce and other associations of legal bodies in the field of industry, research centers and bodies, as well as citizen associations and foundations.
- **State Education Inspectorate** ([Државен просветен инспекторат<sup>34</sup>](#)) is a legal entity, with its own budget account as a first-line budget user, independently implements recruitment procedures in accordance with the law and decides on the rights and obligations arising from employment. The carrying out of educational inspection shall include monitoring the quality of the educational process and the effectiveness through evaluation of the work of the educational institutions in primary and secondary education and supervision over the application of laws, other regulations and general acts in the field of education and upbringing. Educational inspection is carried out in: primary schools, secondary schools, kindergartens, adult education institutions, educational institutions and training of

<sup>32</sup> [https://dic.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/zakon\\_za\\_dic.pdf](https://dic.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/zakon_za_dic.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.na.org.mk/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://dip.gov.mk/>



students with special educational needs. In higher education and scientific institutions, inspection supervision is carried out over the application of the laws regulating higher education and scientific activity.

### Non-public actors

- **Independent Syndicate for Education, Science and Culture** ([Независен синдикат за образование, наука и култура](#)<sup>35</sup>) is an autonomous, democratic, independent organization of workers where they participate on voluntarily basis for advocating, implementing, protection and promotion of their economic, social, legal, professional, educational, cultural and other individual and collective interests. According to Art. 7 of the Statute of the Independent Syndicate for Education, Science and Culture of the Republic of Macedonia ([Статут на Самостојниот синдикат за образование, наука и култура на Република Македонија](#)<sup>36</sup>), the aim of which this union exists is: raising the socio-economic status of the members; protection of their working rights; social dialogue in accordance with international standards; collective negotiating and contracting branch and employer collective contracts; participation in creating the educational, scientific and cultural policy in the process of promulgation of laws; continued improvement of work conditions; higher rights for social, health, pension and invalid insurance, higher rights of daily, weekly and annual leave; more efficient preventive health protection; realization of international syndical cooperation.
- **Civil society organisations (CSO) sector** – There is quite a big number of CSOs in North Macedonia that are specialized in youth and education, either as an exclusive area of their expertise or as one of the areas that they cover with their activities. The youth CSO sector includes: youth organizations, organizations of different fields with youth target groups, youth lead organizations, student associations and student unions and cultural and artistic youth associations.

## 2.2. Steps to be taken for the official recognition of the virtual practical VET

The Republic of North Macedonia, as a candidate country for EU membership, has made continuous and significant progress in the harmonization of its education system with the educational policies and standards of the European Union.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is indicated in the **Education Strategy 2018-2025** as one of the challenges, i.e. one of the measures of the Strategy is: Support in the process of establishment and operationalization of the system of validation results of non-formal and informal learning. The Strategy also stressed that the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning in North Macedonia is in its embryonic phase, and establishment of a system for Macedonian Qualification Framework (MQF) management and inclusion of stakeholders is yet another open issue.

A comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges was adopted with the development of the **Roadmap for Further Development and Implementation of the MQF (2016)** and **National Qualifications Framework – North Macedonia**<sup>37</sup> (2021).

The document produced by the Ministry of Education and Science and Adult Education Center – Roadmap for implementing a System for VNFIL, states the following: *“it is increasingly widely recognized in the country that the validation of learning outcomes -*

<sup>35</sup> <https://sonk.org.mk/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://sonk.org.mk/documents/statut%20na%20sonk-preraboten.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/North%20Macedonia.pdf>.



*knowledge, skills and competences - acquired through non-formal and informal learning can play an important role in enhancing employability and mobility, as well as increasing motivation for lifelong learning”.*

*Important documents:*

In order to implement the measure "**Establishing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning**" from the *Education Strategy 2018-2025*, a Working Group for Amending and Supplementing the Laws and Bylaws was established with the aim of setting up a national validation system for non-formal and informal learning. This group was established by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia, and consists of representatives of state institutions, public institutions, providers of programs for adult education and civil society organizations. This body will work intensively on establishing the legal regulation for validation of non-formal and informal learning and harmonization with the existing legislation.

**Concept Paper for non-formal Adult Education and Informal Learning**<sup>38</sup>  
(Концепција за неформално образование на возрасните и за информално учење-РепубликаМакедонија)

The concept for informal education for adults and for informal learning in the Republic of North Macedonia was prepared on the initiative of the *Center for Adult Education*, supported by the *European Training Foundation*. Its ultimate goal is the integration of non-formal education into the education and training system and the provision of educational results certified within the National Qualifications Framework. This Concept Paper provides guidance for taking further steps within the informal adult education, as well as a vision for its further development.

**Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training in a Lifelong Learning Context 2013-2020**<sup>39</sup> (2013)

The VET strategy is structured in 4 key priorities, in which development of VNFIL finds a visible place.

- Under the first priority (VET in the function of strengthening social cohesion and social inclusion): objective A7 focuses on "Establishing a system for VNFIL". Key milestones: by 2015 (feasibility and options of a VNFIL system); by 2018 (key mechanisms and procedures in place) and by 2020 (generalization of implementation).
- Under the second priority (Attractive VET), the Strategy emphasizes the importance of VNFIL, in particular in objective B2: "Building diversified and flexible pathways for learning and professional guidance".

### 2.3. Proposals for changes

❖ **The Macedonian economy has to specify its labour needs based on the economic development plans (occupations, qualifications, quantity)**

The economic sectors are differently affected by the COVID-19 crisis. While some more digital and office-based sectors (e.g. finance, management) could continue their work to a large extent, others like manufacturing or food processing have to adapt their working environment substantially. This highlights the need for continually updated economic development plans at the level of economic sectors. The related professional associations have to strengthen their function as bridge between the companies and responsible

<sup>38</sup> <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/Koncepcija%20za%20sredno%20obrazovanie%20na%20vozasni.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> [https://csoo.edu.mk/images/vet%20strategy\\_en%20-%20final.pdf](https://csoo.edu.mk/images/vet%20strategy_en%20-%20final.pdf)



Vocational Skills Development (VSD)/VET institutions. In addition to the cooperation on national level, a strengthened regional cooperation between the private sector and the VSD/VET providers will provide the needed security to the private sector in terms of qualified labour, which in turn is crucial for them to invest in their business.

❖ **The formal VET and non-formal Vocational Skills Development (VSD) system are challenged to better align with labour market and society needs**

In consequence of COVID-19, a prioritization of economic sectors that turned out to be undeveloped or lacked qualified staff (e.g. health, public transport) should be made by the government. An improved coordination of the VSD/VET supporting measures provided by the different ministries will stimulate and steer non-formal VSD offers towards qualifications of high national priority. The Ministries, jointly with the local self-government units and the private sector have to promote VET, not only in general, but specific required occupations in the regions according to the labour market needs. VET schools need the flexibility to quickly adapt the curricula and the teaching programmes to the developments of the labour market. VET school programmes for occupations with decreasing labour demand may be merged or replaced by programmes for emerging occupations. Economic chambers and sector associations have to further strengthen their cooperation with ESA and VSD providers in order to jointly create VSD offers with a high employment or further qualification potential.

In the time of economic decline and increased survival struggles, companies / employers need system support to maintain their role in VET through Work-Based Learning.

❖ **Due to COVID-19, VET schools and companies engaged in public-private partnership need to adapt the practical training (training programmes, teaching/learning methodology, assessments, safety requirements, etc.)**

In order to guarantee quality alternating VET In order to reduce the current uncertainty, the responsible institutions should consider organizing a training and information sharing system for stakeholders (parents, students, mentors, companies, etc.) to get acquainted with the new safety and hygiene requirements in VSD/VET. MoES jointly with the business sector have to establish a formal committee/advisory group (composed of experts from different stakeholders) that will be responsible for monitoring, analysing and proposing day to day policy measures and changes to address the current and a mid-term challenges of COVID-19 impact on all kind of practical training in VET. The Law on VET, the bylaws, the various concepts and strategies etc. have to explicitly provide the needed flexibility to VET schools and employers in terms of how to apply WBL and the assessment thereof, in light of the newly imposed situation. This will mitigate the fact that students enter the labour market with less WBL experience than planned/needed. Therefore, the system needs to determine the minimum hours of practical training necessary to guarantee quality of the acquired qualification (number of hours and level of quality achieved before the graduation). These processes have to involve the private sector to ensure ownership and commitment. The scenarios for practical training need to be adjusted until the pandemic is over – rethinking ways of grouping students (teacher-student and mentor-student ratios), safety requirements and protocols, and ensuring effective communication channels for information exchange between teachers and companies' mentors in all steps of the training process (preparation, realization, assessment).

❖ **VET teachers need immediate systemic support to respond to the new challenges (e.g. digitalization) and to keep up with the developments in the sector they teach**

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The digitalization in education implies embedding online learning into the curriculum/modular training development; quality assurance and quality control of the same; and new tools and methodologies to be put in place. This requires supporting teachers' professional development to become facilitators of distant learning, to utilize online learning platforms, to enhance their digital skills, as well as enabling mechanisms to keep them updated in the field they are teaching in (where cooperation with the business sector is again necessary). Teacher development has to go into the direction of enabling them to create and apply own contents, methods etc. and not only following guidelines and acting upon pre-prepared materials. Influence of COVID-19 on VET in North Macedonia. Their teaching approach needs to support the development of a flexible future workforce, i.e. youth that is apt at using ICT for learning, has a problem-solving attitude, interpersonal skills etc. Suitable mechanisms that stimulate and acknowledge teachers' efforts in this regard need to be put in place. This will create a certain competition between teachers and thus result in an improved teaching quality. The tendency towards blended learning urges that the achievement of learning results by the end of the qualification requires careful selection of learning materials and tools, as well as adopting a teaching/learning methodology that reflects the working reality for which the students are being qualified.

❖ **VET providers have to adapt their offers to the modified labour market needs while considering the decreased purchasing power, requalification needs of redundant workers or emerging trends**

It is difficult to predict with accuracy the labour market trends in the future, but certain trends are already apparent. Namely, the people's purchasing power will decrease in general. The essential needs (food, utilities, rent, mortgage etc.) will have precedence over the personal development. So, it is expected that the personal investments in non-formal VSD will decrease as well. On the other side, the loss of jobs will increase the need for requalification of the newly unemployed people, leading to increased demand for non-formal VSD. The main challenge is who will bear the costs for the requalification trainings, and in this sense a strong cooperation between the state and the business sector is needed. All the available financing mechanisms, both provided by the state and the private sector, should support the (repetitive) labour market insertion process. It is obvious that the crisis will change to a certain degree our way we live and work. The increased use of telemedicine, online shopping or virtual management meetings are just an example of such new behaviours. This requires new/improved competences and skills from employees and job seekers, which in turn creates new opportunities for VSD providers. That is why it is crucial to strengthen the cooperation between employers and VSD providers for the latter to be able to align their offers to the modified labour market needs. On the other hand, potential supporting measures (e.g. Operational Plan) have to become much more performance-based in order to create a sustainable and demand-based VSD sector instead of the current one that is highly dependent on the financial support of the state and international donors. Investments in digitalization and up-to-date technologies in VSD/VET need a clear strategy that takes into account the prospects of the economic sectors and the related occupations. Quality VSD/VET can only be reached through considerable investments in digitalization and up-to-date technologies. This is a permanent, cost-intensive process that requires good cooperation between the state and the private sector and a transparent investment strategy. Following the approach of the Regional VET Centres (IPA II), investments in digitalization and up-to-date training technologies<sup>5</sup> of VET schools should be driven by the economic and employment perspectives in the different regions of the country. The most sustainable way to finance and maintain up-to-date training



technologies in the long-term is a target-oriented cooperation between municipalities, VET schools and companies from the same region.

<https://www.e4e.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-impact-of-COVID-19-on-VSD-and-VET.pdf>

#### **2.4. Outlining paths for recognizing the outcomes of practical training in distance mode**

Advancement in the Vocational Education and Training sector will be based on the following priorities and expected outcomes which are described in more detail, (including measures, activities and indicators) in the appropriate pillar in the Action Plan<sup>40</sup>:

##### *Priority I. Harmonise Vocational Education and Training with the Labour Market Needs*

- 1.1. System of VET can be promptly adapted to the changing skill needs in the Labour Market;
- 1.2. Learning within the VET system is organised in a more flexible and effective way in terms of competences acquisition and targeted to achieving the learning outcomes defined by the standards;
- 1.3. Decision-making process and the VET system development are supported by wider range of key stakeholders, including the business community;
- 1.4. VET system is continuously informed about the up-to-date demand on the work force and qualifications and skill needs to be used for VET policy development;
- 1.5. Information on graduates' further educational and/or employment pathways (career advancement) allows to take evidence-based policy decision;
- 1.6. Post-secondary Vocational education is reformed in accordance with the MQF.

##### *Priority II. Improve Learning Environment and Quality of Vocational Education and Training*

- 2.1. Efficiency and effectiveness of the VET system are improved in terms of expenditures and relevance to the local, regional and national labour markets;
- 2.2. Teaching and learning process is supported with all means necessary for achieving established learning outcomes;
- 2.3. Competences of VET graduates are in line with the employers' requirements and compatible with the references established in accordance with EQAVET;
- 2.4. VET students acquire practical skills relevant to the real needs in working environments;
- 2.5. The business community actively participates in the VET implementation;
- 2.6. Feedback from all assessments of students' achievement allows to take evidence-based policy decision;
- 2.7. Valid empirical data are provided on the capacities of 15-years old pupils (compared to international prospects) to enter life and continue education, or enter the labour market; Education Strategy for 2018-2025
- 2.8. Efficiency of VET reforms is ensured through centralisation of investments and concentration of results;
- 2.9. Introduction and dissemination of VET innovations based on the best national and international practices is promoted.

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<sup>40</sup> <http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanje-ENG-WEB-1.pdf>



*Priority III. Increase Enrolment in Vocational Education and Training*

- 3.1. VET graduates are able to make informed choices of education or career pathways;
- 3.2. VET system enrolls higher number of students with better academic progression;
- 3.3. Attractiveness and value of skilled work and of VET in general is improved;
- 3.4. Conditions for pupils at correctional facilities to participate in vocational education and training are provided.

*Priority IV. Improve Capacities of Human Resources*

- 4.1. Professional competences of teachers are continuously improved;
- 4.2. Teachers are motivated to demonstrate better performance;
- 4.3. Principals of all VET schools satisfy the minimum requirements of professional competences;
- 4.4. Education and training is accompanied with complete scope of support services necessary for students' quality learning process.

*\*This information was gathered from the Strategic plan for education 2020-2024 which included strategic priorities on VET growth.*

### **3. Action plan for implementation of changes in legislation (curricula/programmes) in VET and Adult Education (IVET and CVET).**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Responsible institution</b>	<b>Estimated period of implementation</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
Creation of tangible and realistic proposals for implementing online practical teaching + in line with already existing topics and modalities for practical teaching with physical presence, i.e. adapting the topics for practical work in online classes.			
Analyzing the curriculum in the formal system and as VET course in non-formal education for adults	CDI	2 months	Define the similarities and difference in the curricula for the practical trainings.  Highlight the similarities and start with adapting the material for online practical work.
Verifying online practical course for COOK	Centre for adult education	6 month (+/-)	Online VET course for COOK is fully (or partially verified) – if not fully in distance learning, at least in blended

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Propose the same online practical work methodology for non-formal VET course "COOK"	Ministry of Education	N/A	The Ministry of Education will potentially accept the methodology and include in the formal education system
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#### 4. Expected impact of the changes implemented

##### **Option 1 "The proposed reforms/changes are approved"**

- Positive impact:
  - The trainers and trainees will have more opportunities for flexible learning.
  - They will have access to more materials and recourses worldwide
  - The possibility of including trainees with disabilities in the classes that can't be attending VET courses with physical presence.
  - They will increase their knowledge in using IT platforms and tools.
  - Enroll larger number of trainees in one class
  - Better approach and possibility of one-on-one teaching/training
- Potential risks:
  - Long time to adjust all the materials and create uniform platform for use
  - Resistance of the trainers to learn new way of teaching
  - Resistance from the trainees to enrol in online classes
- Effect on the administrative burden for individuals and legal entities:
  - Long process and a lot of individuals involved

##### **Option 2 "The proposed reforms/changes does not receive support and are not approved"**

- Negative impact:
  - The county will not be up to date with the new approaches and changes in the education system worldwide.
  - In state of emergency (like COVID-19) they will not be prepared and the trainees will not gate the proper training
- Corrective measures:
  - The trainers on their own goodwill, will incorporate online materials, recourses etc. in their classes
  - The trainers and trainees will lobby for more open and flexible approach
  - The trainees will use online platforms and tools to upgrade their knowledge
- Possible solutions: Starting with validation of non-formal VET courses in more digital approach.







## Croatia

### 1. Analysis of the national situation (at country level)

#### 1.1. Review of the national legislation

Virtual teaching of any sort includes digital technology and having digital competences to use them well. This is the first precondition to approve virtual teaching for qualification "Cook" (or equivalent) in the national education system of Republic of Croatia. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, which was definitely a catalyst for the process of digital transformation, the government of Republic of Croatia underwent a series of actions targeting digital transformation of the education system. Since 2015 through the project *e-Škole* schools and classrooms are continuously equipped with contemporary technological and digital tools. Subject covering ICT was declared as an obligatory teaching subject in both primary and secondary schools, which includes VET. Education of teachers in the field of digital technologies was also a part of the reforms and for them a special online platform was made (Loomen). With these reforms the education system in Croatia has met some crucial preconditions to offer virtual teaching.

At the time of COVID-19 pandemic, when the schools closed their doors, Croatian government made an action plan for online teaching (*Akcijski plan za provedbu nastave na daljinu* – Action Plan). With this document the government tried to analyse the current situation and give as best as possible prediction of the situation regarding education and pandemic in the near future. In the document under the section Key guidelines a paragraph about VET states that theoretical part of all VET programmes will be done online to prepare the students for practical learning when the situation will allow it and also it says that VET teachers should be encouraged to try to design VET subjects in a way that they will be operational in online environment.

In general, online classes were less favourable in primary and secondary education in regard to higher education, but the fact was that online teaching and learning proved to be good because of its availability at any place and moment and because of fresh and interesting digital solutions and content. In this action plan it is clearly stated that more examples of good practice should be added to already made recommendations and guidelines especially if the COVID-19 pandemic would become worse. Moving on to the legislative regarding education there are only few articles and lines which emphasize online teaching.

One of them is the national *Law on upbringing and education in elementary and secondary schools* which states several things in articles 42, 48 and 53. Article 42 covers the topic of home schooling in which it says that students with deficiencies and chronic diseases can take final exams from home/health institution as well as take classes in virtual environment. All expense should be covered by the school. Article 48 states that it is possible to have distance mode learning in a school with the approval of the founder and the Ministry of Science and Education. In the article 53 it is stated that the way in which practical classes are organised in VET providers is prescribed by the Minister of Science and Education which has to follow regulations from the Rulebook for organising and conducting of classes in VET schools.

The *Law on VET* does not explicitly mention **neither virtual nor online teaching**. It states, again same as previous Law, that all ways of conducting of classes and examinations are prescribed by the Minister and that the content of examination is determined by *Agency for VET and Adult Education* (AVETA).

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In the *Law on Adult Education* the Minister prescribes the program for adult education and in the article 11 of that law it is stated that classes can be conducted online with beforehand positive professional confirmation from the *Agency for VET and AE (AVETAЕ)*. When an institution providing adult education wishes to convey classes to online environment it has to first be given permission by AVETAЕ after which it can be approved by the Ministry of Science and Education.

One more important document which regulates education in Republic of Croatia is the *National curriculum*. Part of it is the National curriculum for VET. Basically, the VET national curriculum prescribes the content of teaching in classes not the methods used, but in the part where teaching modules have to be elaborated (through an existing form) the VET provider can write down under category "independent student activities" that part of the module outcomes can be obtained through online learning. In the same part of elaboration of teaching modules VET provider can write that the specific material conditions and environment for learning has to be met for this module. Under this category online teaching can be made as an optimal way of conducting a class.

All of the above mentioned is the primary source of legislative framework on the topic of VET and possibilities to have online classes, either theoretical or practical. None of them explicitly allow online classes or practical training, but also, they do not explicitly restrict online classes or practical training. Institutions and bodies responsible for VET have the ability to give permission, in valid circumstances, for online classes and teaching methods to be used. CVET, in case of Croatia adult education, **can be done in distant mode teaching if permission is given by the Agency for VET and Adult Education and only for the theoretical part.**

- *The profession "Cook" in the EQF and the national qualification framework*

Regarding the specific topic of qualification "Cook" there is no regulative or legislative as there is **no specific regulation** for other qualifications and occupations. In Republic of Croatia the EQF is replaced with Croatian Qualification Framework<sup>41</sup> (CROQF) which in most cases resembles the EQF. The CROQF has a standard of qualification for the occupation "**Cook**" on the level 4.1 as a three-year program. Also, a "**Cook technician**" is available as a four-year program giving way for a vertical passability. This follows the IVET which is also available in the CVET. CVET also allows for further education for the profession cook on various polytechnic institutions and also having met the requirements a person can apply for the Program of master's examination for profession - master chef. Horizontal passability is possible in IVET for all students. Students which enroll in the three-year program for the profession "Cook" can change their profession in the same sector after the first year with no penalties, and the options are confectioner and waiter. For the four-year program of "Cook technician" horizontal passability is available by transferring to a four-year program "Tourism and hotel commercialist" which only has a differential educational program on the fourth year.

For a new or revised curricula in VET, both initial and continuous, the first step is to get a positive expert opinion from AVETAЕ. The parliament then has a discussion and a vote. If accepted the government alongside the responsible ministry is implementing the curricula through a valid rulebook.

## 1.2. Experiences in *online* classes for qualification "Cook".

- Barriers identified during the research

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/en/about-croqf>



VET sector was put under direct supervision of AVETAE while the rest of the secondary education and primary education were under supervision of Ministry of Science and Education. Ministry of Science and Education issued an Action Plan for implementation of distance mode learning which was used both as a background document and a guidebook for the school years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. The most important part describes **three different categories of classes** (A, B and C) which were introduced in 2019.

- Type A – class mostly live,
- Type B – Blended class model and
- Type C – Class mostly in distance mode.

The document includes **guidelines for assessment for distance mode learning**, it provides information on how to approach various disadvantaged students in distance mode learning, how to organise class and what type of equipment is needed for distance mode learning. Following the Action Plan several documents which accompanied and provided further information. A guideline for assessment of distance mode learning was made for teachers and principals and a recommendation for organising a work day. These were some of the issues faced by teachers in the early stages of COVID-19 pandemic and the start of distance mode learning.

After the initial period Ministry and accompanying agencies aided teachers and schools with the creation of several webpages where various learning materials were uploaded. AVETAE created a webpage for initial VET where it published presentations for different classes, guidelines and news regarding the COVID situation and education. All principals were organised by the Ministry on a different portal made by the national institute for computer science. Different documents were published on national level for health safety for when the class is done in school.

On the national level in most cases it was encouraged to still have class live in school and to follow guidelines on how to organise the classes live. For VET, theoretical parts were done using different platforms (google classrooms or *Loomen*), but the practical class was organised live in most cases with the only exception of computer sciences. The practical classes were done in smaller groups in schools and at the employer when possible. The theoretical classes were organised with the expectations of the pandemic having less of an impact so that the practical classes would be organised in June and when possible in summer. This option was commonly used in the hospitality and tourism sector which includes the profession "Cook".

## 2. Proposals for changes allowing the implementation of virtual training courses for profession "Cook"

### 2.1. Stakeholder identification

Main stakeholders which would be included in the process of implementation of virtual training courses for profession "Cook" would be the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Ministry of Science and Education, Government and Parliament. Each of them is included in at least one step of the procedure which would lead to a complete implementation of the virtual training in IVET. For CVET, AVETAE is responsible for validation of each course but is limited by the legislation regarding the distance mode learning.

### 2.2. Steps to be taken for the official recognition of the virtual practical VET

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To introduce a change in current legislation for VET (which is mentioned in three laws: Law on VET, Law on Adult education and Law on education) it has to firstly be proposed by an appropriate body. That can be either the government, a non-ruling party or an institution. If the proposal is coming outside of the government, then an expert body under the corresponding Ministry would give an expert opinion. In the case of the government proposing the change it acquires the expert opinion in advance. For VET, the expert opinion is given by AVETAE. If the opinion is positive and the Ministry of Science and Education accepts the proposal next step is to put on a public consultation which allows the general public and other experts to give their opinion on the matter. Taking into consideration the feedback information Ministry again evaluates the proposal. If it is still positive it forwards the proposal to the government which legally formulates it. The parliament then has the discussion and a vote sets in with majority having to accept the proposal in order for it to be accepted. If the parliament accepts the proposal the government inserts the changes to existing laws or creates a new one. In most cases an accompanying rulebook is needed to further provide detailed information. The government has a limited amount of time to write the rulebook and include it with the law.

### 2.3. Proposals for changes

As mentioned in the previous chapters distance mode learning is in general not represented in documents and laws on education directly. Most of the documents which refer to distance mode learning were created during the pandemic and were made specifically for that case. Following the experiences of the COVID period some changes were already introduced to the main Law on education. Article 48 of the mentioned law allows for distance mode learning in individual schools. The proposal has to be approved by the founder, in case of Croatia a county, state or a private founder, and it has to get an approval from the Ministry. For IVET the article 53 states that the organization of classes in vocational schools and practical education is prescribed by the minister and is accompanied by the rulebook. The rulebook does not refer to any type of distance mode learning nor is there any other document which would prescribe or provide information on the topic of distance mode learning in practical education. Currently, by the law, it is possible to have distance mode learning for theoretical education but the existing rulebook, which defines practical education, does not allow for distance mode learning because of the article 2 and article 5 which state that *"The participant of the practical part of the curriculum can only work under the professional guidance of a teacher at the institution, or a mentor at the employer"* and *"The practical part of the curriculum is taught in the institution and/or at the employer's place, in another institution, in educational groups or individually."*

To legally be able to implement and carry out the project outputs a change in the rulebook should be made. Even with the changes of the rulebook the school implementing the project outputs would need an approval from the ministry and their founder. Rulebook should omit or change the article 5 stating the need for a professional teacher or mentor to be present live. Also, an article should explicitly allow for distance mode learning since for now it can only be done at the institution and not at home. Some other articles in the rulebook would also need a supplementation regarding the environment in which the practical class can be done. The rulebook doesn't differentiate between different programmes and hence it would not be possible to put the profession "Cook" into it. Since every proposal has to be approved by the ministry each proposal would be examined individually by the ministry. The second option would be to create a new rulebook specifically for the distance mode learning. In that case the process would include expert opinion (AVETAE), proposal from the ministry, public counselling and voting at the



parliament. In current state of laws and documents regarding VET the existing rulebook would offer a possibility to implement distance mode learning.

Law on adult education which also includes the profession "Cook" states that distance mode learning is available as a way of conducting of classes. Beforehand the institution which would want to carry out the distance mode learning would need a positive expert opinion from the AVETAE. Hence this Law does not need a change for the project outputs to be available for implementation.

#### **2.4. Outlining paths for recognizing the outcomes of practical training in distance mode**

VET@HOME project has the goal to provide complete education to the users of the project outputs. It provides information on theoretical education as well as tasks and opportunities to implement practical education at home. The project outputs are easily navigated and the data offered can be changed and adjusted for future needs. In the CROQF the profession "Cook" was introduced because of the need to provide stable and unified education in the hospitality and tourism sector which also lacked educated staff. The standard of qualification for the profession "Cook" has 35 learning outcomes which are compulsory and 9 non-compulsory. In the current project outputs most of the topics correspond to the learning outcomes and the rest can be easily added in the future to be fully compliant with the qualification "Cook". The project would enable a quick response to changing circumstances in the education for the profession "Cook" and also scenarios in which live class would not be possible. The current curriculum creation is defined by the methodology of curriculum creation which structures the ways of acquiring learning outcomes. Guided learning process, work based learning and independent student activities. The project outputs allow for all three ways of acquiring learning outcomes. Especially the independent student activities allow for the possibility of practical work from home for students. Project outputs are compatible with the current program and curriculum and can be adjusted in the future which is one of the main ideas for the profession "Cook" in the national occupational and qualification standards.

### **3. Action plan for implementation of changes in legislation (curricula/programmes) in VET and Adult Education (IVET and CVET).**

As mentioned before, there are two possibilities in the process of changing of legislation. One is shorter and includes the change of the existing rulebook which defines how practical class is organised. Since the procedure only includes the approval of the minister, and his working group, there is no need to provide a detailed structure of the procedure.

The other option includes supplementing of the Law on education and upbringing and Law on VET which would then lead to a new rulebook made specifically for the purpose of implementing distance mode learning.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Responsible institution</b>	<b>Estimated period of implementation</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
1. Propose change of the Law on VET	Anyone can initiate the proposal for change	Up to 6 months	Accepted/not accepted

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2. Propose change on the Law on education and upbringing	Anyone can initiate the proposal for change	Up to 6 months	Accepted/not accepted
3. Obtaining of expert opinion	AVETAE for Law on VET and Law on education and Agency for upbringing and education for Law on education	1-2 months	Responsible agencies provide the ministry with expert opinion on the proposal for changing of the laws
4. Decision of Ministry of Science and Education	Ministry of Science and Education	1-2 months	The Ministry proceeds with the proposal and gives it to the government which formulates the changes and proposes it at the parliament
5. Parliament voting	Parliament	1-2 months	Parliament decides with majority on the proposal
6. Change/Supplement the Law	The government and the Ministry of Science and Education	Up to 6 months	The changes are put in effect in the mentioned Laws.
7. Decision for a new rulebook	Government	Up to 6 months	Proposition of a new rulebook made by the Minister
8. Inclusion of a new rulebook in the Law on Education	Ministry of Science and Education	Up to 6 months	A new rulebook is supplemented in the Law on Education

#### 4. Expected impact of the changes implemented

##### **Option 1 "The proposed reforms/changes are approved"**

- Positive impact: Distance mode learning is covered by the legislative which means a framework has been made on how to implement it in initial VET. Schools will have the opportunity to submit for a distance mode learning for some or all of their programmes.

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- Potential risks: Main risk would be in the quality of the classes because of the lack of equipment and fundings. It would be up to each school individually to financially aid students with the needed equipment. Also, the quality could be lesser because of teacher not being in the position to observe students work which further makes it harder for the teacher to provide useful feedback information.
- Effect on the administrative burden for individuals and legal entities: Each school will have to submit a request for carrying out distance mode learning and the Ministry will have to examine the request in which process AVETAE would be included.

**Option 2 "The proposed reforms/changes does not receive support and are not approved"**

- Negative impact: Schools would not be able to conduct practical classes in distance mode learning.
- Corrective measures: Ministry of Science and Education still has the possibility to approve the theoretical part of the distance mode learning for IVET. Also, the curriculum includes the independent student activities which allow for part of the project outputs to be done from home. This way distance learning mode would lack a legislative framework which would impact the quality of class.
- Possible solutions: Provide stakeholders with an elaborate of the project outputs and possibilities which the project offers in extreme situations and for disadvantaged students.

## 5. Potential of the VET@HOME approach application in the country

VET@HOME project is combating difficulties faced by schools and disadvantaged students (mostly which have difficulties in mobility). In the Croatian context distance mode learning achieved a breakthrough after the COVID pandemic.

A lot of measures and documents were created with the main aim to support schools, teachers and students with the difficulties which occurred because of the pandemic. They directly refer to the class organisation and implementation and also the state provided support in ensuring that the technological needs have been met (access to internet, *online platforms*, tablets etc.). Even though the reason why these actions were made was negative the positive is the outcome for further possibilities of distance mode learning. In the legislative distance mode learning was included as a potential way of conducting classes but it lacks a framework and information.

As of now only the Ministry of Science and Education is responsible for approval of request for distance mode learning and the requests lack formality and unity since every school would make a request based on its own solution. This is why creation of a rulebook would be a step towards formalization of distance mode learning which would be in line with other VET relevant documents such as the curriculums and Law on VET.





## VI. Conclusions

The European transition to digital education and training is visible in all countries as a series of national reforms in VET and adult learning across Europe in the post-pandemic period. This comes to evidence that the approached proposed in the VET@HOME project is feasible and well-timed now, when the policymakers and responsible authorities are ready for a change towards a modern, flexible and learner-centered education and training.

In continuous efforts to support the flexible, inclusive learning opportunities, on 16 June 2022, the Council of the European Union (EU) adopted a **Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability**<sup>42</sup>. The aim of the Recommendation is to support the development, implementation and recognition of micro-credentials across institutions, businesses, sectors and borders. With this, the efforts for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic were combined with new opportunities, given at EU level, for quality teaching and learning provided in different ways and settings.

As stated in the Recommendation *"There have been calls for education and training systems to become **more flexible** and to find solutions to deliver more **learner-centred, accessible and inclusive learning** to a wider range of profiles. Non-formal providers of education and training are also addressing this need by providing new and innovative opportunities for upskilling and reskilling."* (p.3).

Therefore, one of the reasons behind the design of the VET@HOME Syllabus in modules (or small courses) was the understanding that the separate parts of the VET@HOME training could be defined as units measurable through micro-credentials. Since the micro-credentials are relatively new approach discussed at European level allowing the certification of learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences (such as a short course or training), they also offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development. Moreover, the non-formal education and training are also recognized as effective tools for updating the qualifications as to the needs of the labour market.

Finally, the approach and measures proposed in the Roadmap are transferable to other contexts and countries (besides these represented in the VET@HOME project) with the respective adjustments, and also can be useful for the VET for the other professions in ESCO 343 and 51 categories (such as artists, social workers, travel attendant, hairdressers, beauticians, housekeepers, guides, etc.).

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<sup>42</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

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