

# STUDY VISIT ON EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING – Summary Sweden, May 21-24 2012

Study visit held in Sweden in May 2012 gathered 17 representatives from different Croatian institutions<sup>1</sup> involved in supporting and influencing policymaking processes in the field of education and labour market. It was financed by the *European Training Foundation* (hereinafter ETF) who organized this together with the *Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports* and hosted by the *Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education*. According to the planned study visit programme the main goal was to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise between Croatian delegation and Swedish colleagues concerning the enhancement of evidence based policy making (hereinafter EBPM) in area of matching skills and labour market needs. Fields of interest discussed during the visit revolved around establishing and managing cooperation between a number of stakeholders in the educational and labour market sector i.e. different Swedish institutions supporting and responsible for planning of matching education with employment (a), procedures of EBPM (b) and processes of data collection, analysis and reporting (c). Special emphasis was given to Swedish vocational education and training legislation and practice with the purpose of addressing labour market demands.

## May 21 2012

On the first day the Croatian group and ETF representatives had a brief introduction on the outline and objectives of the study visit. This opening discussion focused around themes of developing National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) in relation to the labour market and civil society needs. Group briefly discussed recent developments in connection with the Croatian Qualification Framework and similar activities that are being conducted across Europe aiming at classifying national qualifications based on learning outcomes and enhancing transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications, as well as referencing national qualification levels to the European Qualifications Framework, which has been developed as a tool for enhancing mobility of learners and workers. In some European Union countries (including Sweden) the process is still on-going as it is the case in Croatia. It is a general conclusion that for this kind of reforms national and expert consensus must be achieved and that mutual trust and cooperation between different stakeholders have to be set as a priority by and between institutions involved in developing and implementing the NQFs so as to enable quality assurance standards to be met.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Agency for Science and Higher Education, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Education and Teacher Training Agency, National Centre for External Evaluation of Education, Croatian Employment Service, Croatian Chamber of Economy, Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, Interdepartmental Working Body for Labour Market Monitoring, Croatian Employers Association

**May 22 2012**

Study visit officially began the next day in *the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education* (hereinafter Yh). The morning session was comprised of several presentations starting with a general overview of Swedish educational system, given by **Mrs Britt-Inger Stoltz**, analyst at the Department of Analysis and Research, and was followed by presentation demonstrating cooperation between employment sector and labour market. This was presented by **Mrs Linda Wiklund**, analyst at the Department of Analysis and Research and **Mr. Peter Gates** from the Department of Accreditation. This session dealt also with a collection and use of data on students in higher vocational education which was discussed with **Mrs Paula Kossack**, analyst at the Department of Analysis and Research. All presentations were very interactive, as the group was given the opportunity to ask questions and indicate certain special areas of interest. There are several valuable learning points that came out of this morning session.

Most educational agencies in Sweden, as well as the Yh, have a special Advisory Council chosen by the Government, supporting their work with additional expertise. In that respect, the Yh collaborates with Labour Market Council comprised of social partners and employment service representatives (6-7 members). The Advisory Council is not a decision making but solely advisory body.

We were also introduced to the process of accreditation of new educational courses (EQF level four to six) based on occupational analyses (description of the industry and of the occupations (duties, responsibilities, level of education needed, work experience, labour market demands, external factors that can affect the demand etc)) influenced by the labour market needs. This market-driven decision making is not based on popularity of a certain programme (students expressing interest in studying such courses), since even popular programmes can be cut off from financing if shown that students finishing such programmes could not find suitable employment. In 2011 Call for bids, 1127 applicants applied for financing out of which 330 were funded (29%). All applications are reviewed by two independent readers followed by general review meeting before subsequent recommendations are given to the Yh Director and disclosed for the press release. The Yh does follow up studies based on information collected from the Swedish Occupational Register (*Statistics Sweden*) and from the *Swedish Public Employment Service*. These analyses are send out to the sectors ensuring comments and acknowledges, and are subsequently being published on Yh's web site. Yh also makes networks with different sectors, including trade organisations, national unions and education providers. It was interesting to note diverse experience among Croatia and Sweden in terms of interest shown by the employers in influencing educational policies and their commitment concerning apprenticeship. Employers in Sweden are interested in having competent employees with relevant know-how, recognizing the importance of their investments and donations for the educational sectors, thus showing a bit more social responsibility and professionalism than their Croatian counterparts. Apart from state level, additional sector and occupational analysis are being made on regional and local level by developmental agencies in 25 Swedish regions, adding to this comprehensive overview.

We also learned that the whole population of students leaving their chosen education is being surveyed every year on the subject of finding jobs in their field of occupation thereby monitoring their success or failure. The usage of a social security number links students with study programmes and labour market

status. The student lists are sent by the education providers who collect information from the students about their employment status. In 2011 64% of students replied to this questionnaire. In addition, Yh can make additional proof checking by directly contacting some of the students itself.

On the first day the group also visited *Edströmska upper secondary school* in Västerås and discovered how a completely new school facility can be built in line with local industry needs and initiatives. This school offers upper secondary vocational programmes, courses for unemployed, adult vocational training and specially contracted courses by the local companies all in relation to transport and vehicles of all types. It is interesting to mention that school's Board of Directors as well as Program Council is again formed by representatives from education and industry. HE degree is not required from the VET teachers who are rather coming from the business sector and have been working for some years before they start teaching. An average state salary for teachers is around 2500 Swedish Krona. Student supervisors during apprenticeship are regular company's employees and do not receive any compensation for this additional mentorship.

### **May 23 2012**

During the second day of our visit we were hosted by the *Statistics Sweden*. **Mr Russell Schmieder**, analyst at the Population and Welfare Department of the Forecast Institute, who facilitated first session, described several types of reports that this most important data gathering and analysis institution is producing and publishing every year. Reports such as "Education and Labour Market Forecast up to the year 2030" are most evident and direct example of connecting educational system with labour market and are being used by the Swedish government, ministries, national agencies and many others. The goal is not forecasting future but revealing present and possible outcomes of educational programmes (supply) and labour market needs (demand) based on which policies to influence the future can be formed. For that purpose the Institute combines primarily data from the Education Register as well as from the Occupational Register along with other different data sources. Occupational Register is the newest one, launched in 2005 and up until today 98% complete. As for the methodology used in predicting trends and making forecasts, the Institute uses international model, more precisely the Cambridge Econometrics. The Institute organises a kind of promotional and expert event, so called 'Forecast day', which gathers around hundred people discussing and debating about things foreseen by the relevant forecasts made.

A representative from the *Swedish National Agency for Higher Education*, **Mr Andres Wiberg**, described some of the Agency's tasks such as: evaluating and monitoring university programmes, producing official statistics for higher education, organizing SWESAT exams (Swedish Scholastic Aptitude test which, if passed, enables students to enrol colleagues regardless of their previous grades record), monitoring international surveys and trends in the field, protecting and evaluating rights of students and keeping general student population informed as well as evaluating qualifications of graduates from abroad. Twice a year Advisory group of representatives from universities, agencies and government meets and discusses statistics. Agency keeps tracking record about former students 1-1,5 year after they finish their education to see how are they managing on the labour market. Information about success of students from certain universities in terms of employability rate is being published and considered a good marketing tool which helps future students in choosing their university. Data is being collected from the Statistics Sweden and HE institutions (about financing). A new momentum for the Agency is the analysis of efficiency and productivity of universities and finding a reasonable comparison model for achieving this.

**Mrs Adela Martinović** acquainted us with very specialized type of education provided by *Teknikcollege* that includes private business initiative based exclusively on local labour market needs and guided by local companies and social partners. This direct cooperation between business and industrial sector on one side and education system (upper secondary schools) on the other side saw the seed for some new ideas for an on-going school reform (beginning in 2011).

Another presentation was given by **Mrs Britt-Inger Stoltz** about the National Commission coordinated by the Swedish Agency for Economics and Regional Growth and comprised of representatives coming from six national agencies in total (Yh, Public Employment Service, Statistics Sweden, Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis, Swedish Agency for Economics and Regional Growth and Swedish National Agency for Education) with the aim of reporting on how to provide necessary skills for the labour market, efficiently use resources allocated by the state and to support regional and local enterprises. The idea for forming such Commission came from the National Strategy for National and Regional Sustainable Growth and it were the regions who initiated its establishment by addressing a need for coordination to the government. In two years this Commission had 20 meetings. This coordinated effort produced new definitions, conclusions as well as suggestions and guidelines for the government how to proceed on with the VET reform.

**Mrs Josefine Lundström**, statistician at the *Population and Welfare Department of Education and Jobs*, gave us an overview on the collection and use of data for the purpose of EBPM from pre-schooling to upper-secondary and adult education. These data come from Swedish National Agency for Education who can request them from *Statistics Sweden*. It is mandatory for schools to deliver such data. Each year approximately 2-4 studies are being conducted for the Ministry of Education and Research. Two registers were mentioned as important databases, the School Register (information on students, grades, costs, teaching staff) and the new Courses Register established after the new Education act and Curricula 2011 was adopted. Sweden participates in OECD PIAAC survey (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies). In the light of handling large data sources securely, Statistics Sweden developed a system called MONA which enables remote secure access to its micro-data from any place with Internet access.

## **May 24 2012**

On the last day of the visit the Croatian group was welcomed by **Mr Torbjörn Israelsson**, an analyst at the *Swedish Public Employment Service*. This institution provides, in close cooperation with *Statistics Sweden*, occupational analyses with the aim to match supply and demand of the labour market. They also conduct interviews with portion of employers twice a year to be able to understand in more detail skills and competences that are required for different jobs. Around 6000 employees (out of 15000) are engaged for this purpose. Their short-term analysis (1 year ahead) being conducted twice a year, and long-term (5-10 years ahead) occupational analyses being conducted once a year, are being published on the web regularly. Maybe the best known is the 'Occupational Compass' which shows in a graphic way the balance or imbalance in workforce for particular occupation (it is a sample of the most common occupations at the Swedish labour market with around 200 occupations covered).

An informative presentation was given by **Mr Per Byström**, Deputy director at the *Ministry of Education and Research*, who explained the way in which government uses analysis and reports provided by all afore

mentioned institutions. One interesting remark that came out during this discussion was that apart from not having capacities to conduct its own researches, being a rather small Ministry with around 190 staff employed, the Ministry for that purpose uses a wide range of its agencies for delivering reports on various issues that need to be tackled. Research papers are also often commissioned from universities and specialized experts. Upon delivering such reports, a process of decision making is subsequently driven by a top level management, state secretary and the minister. Finally, a brief history of the *Swedish National Agency for Higher Education* was given, since its foundation in 1994 until today, showing that much account has always been taken of the importance to overcome the gap between university and upper secondary educational institutions.

At the end of the programme the group had a wrap up session where future challenges and plans were discussed with the ETF representatives. Two of the Croatian representatives (**Mr Mislav Balković** and **Mrs Sanja Crnković-Pozaić**) had a presentation on present state of secondary vocational education reforms, developing standards for curricula, qualifications and occupations in Croatia. The Swedish colleagues were informed about the Law on the Croatian Qualification Framework (CROQF) prepared by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports together with the CROQF Committee, and to be released for public debate in beginning of June 2012. What is important about this Law, which is expected to be approved by the end of 2012, is an emphasis given to the partnership of all relevant stakeholders working within the envisaged National Council for Development of Human Potential. In this context, certain parallels can be drawn with partnership approach seen in the establishment of the Swedish National Commission. The Swedish and Croatian data bases and registries were briefly and roughly compared as well as the state of interconnecting the existing national data sources in both countries. A possibility of using Croatian OIB (permanent national identification number given to every Croatian citizen by the Tax Authority) was discussed as a possible tool for detecting a path of individual qualifications and competencies up until an individual enters a pension system. Taking everything into account the group concluded that a lot has been done in recent years, many processes are on-going across Europe and numerous challenges still lay ahead.

Croatian group found the content of the study visit in Sweden both relevant and interesting. The participants had the opportunity to get wide overview of the data collecting and usage in matching education with labour market needs, both from theoretical and practical view. It was beneficial and welcomed because it took place in the final period of drafting the Law on the CROQF, thus providing additional reflections. *“If nobody uses it, it’s useless”* – is the motto that we will all easily remember and take with us from Sweden. Having this in mind in everyday work in our institutions, data collection, analyses and reporting for evidence-based policy making should become more feasible.

First reports on the study visit to Sweden are to be published in July and foreseen mobile team activities are planned for the autumn 2012 when three national meetings with the aim to disseminate acquired knowledge will take place.

**Ines Elezović** (National Centre for External Evaluation of Education) and **Daria Arlavi**  
(Ministry of Science Education and Sports)

Zagreb, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2012

## **Appendix 1 Presentations being held 21-24 of May 2012**

Opening meeting: Brief introduction to the objectives of the Study visit and discussion on group's expectations

PPT1. General overview of the Swedish educational system

PPT2. Overview regarding the collection and use of data, in reference to students in higher vocational education, for the purpose of evidence based policy making

PPT3. Overview on the collection and use of data, in reference to students in higher vocational education, for the purpose of evidence based policy making

*Visit to upper secondary school "Edströmska", Västerås (polytechnic education)*

PPT1. Presentation of Statistics Sweden's work on data collection, analysis and trends and forecasts concerning supply and demand on the labour market of persons with different types of education

PPT2. Overview on the collection and use of data, in reference to students in higher vocational education, for the purpose of evidence based policy making

PPT3. Information about the Commission of National Cooperation to assure matching of skills with labour needs

PPT4. Teknikcollege – cooperation between social partners in the industrial sector and upper secondary schools

PPT5. Overview on the collection and use of data, regarding pre-schooling, school-age childcare, upper-secondary school and adult education, for the purpose of evidence based policy making

PPT1. Presentation regarding 'matching' employment seekers with employment offers, analysis and forecasting

PPT2. How does the Ministry of Education in Sweden use evidence-based information in policy making?

*Closing meeting: Wrap up and future challenges*

PPT3. Possible tools and sources of information (Mislav Balković and Sanja Crnković-Pozaić)