



RAZVOJ I UPIS STANDARDA ZANIMANJA ZA PRVOSTUPNIKE I MAGISTRE SESTRINSTVA (VI. I VII. HKO RAZINA) U REGISTAR HRVATSKOG KVALIFIKACIJSKOG OKVIRA

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U okviru kontinuiranih nastojanja za unaprjeđenjem sustava visokog obrazovanja zdravstvenih profesija, Fakultet zdravstvenih znanosti Sveučilišta u Splitu uspješno je finalizirao proces upisa standarda zanimanja u sestrinstvu za razine VI i VII HKO u službeni Registar. Ovaj uspjeh izravni je rezultat EU projekta "Izrada standarda zanimanja/kvalifikacija uz unaprjeđenje zdravstvenih studijskih programa" (MIS kod: HR.3.1.15-0051). Upis predstavlja vrhunac opsežnog stručnog rada unutar sestrinske profesije i postavlja temelje za nacionalnu ujednačenost, međunarodnu prepoznatljivost i daljnju modernizaciju studijskih programa sestrinstva u Republici Hrvatskoj.

Ključne riječi: STANDARD ZANIMANJA, SESTRINSTVO, HRVATSKI KVALIFIKACIJSKI OKVIR, KOMPETENCIJE, ZDRAVSTVENI SUSTAV, VISOKO OBRAZOVANJE

UVOD

Hrvatski kvalifikacijski okvir (HKO) uspostavljen je s ciljem jasnog definiranja ishoda učenja, kompetencija i razina kvalifikacija u skladu s Europskim kvalifikacijskim okvirom (European Qualifications Framework - EQF).

Razvoj i standardizacija kvalifikacija u Republici Hrvatskoj temelje se na uspostavi HKO-a i predstavlja temeljni instrument uređenja nacionalnog sustava kvalifikacija. Prema Zakonu o HKO-u (2013.), HKO osigurava jasnoću, prohodnost, kvalitetu i utemeljenost stjecanja kvalifikacija te njihovo povezivanje s razinama EQF-a i Kvalifikacijskog okvira Europskog prostora visokog obrazovanja (Framework for Qualifications

DEVELOPMENT AND REGISTRATION OF OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS FOR BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE NURSES (CROQF LEVELS 6 AND 7) IN THE CROATIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK REGISTRY

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As part of ongoing efforts to enhance the higher education system for health professions, the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Split successfully finalised the registration of occupational standards in nursing for CROQF levels 6 and 7 in the official Registry. This achievement is a direct result of the EU-funded project "Development of Occupational Standards/Qualifications with the Improvement of Health Study Programmes" (MIS code: HR.3.1.15-0051). It represents the culmination of extensive professional work in the nursing profession and establishes a foundation for national harmonisation, international recognition, and further modernisation of nursing study programmes in the Republic of Croatia.

Keywords: OCCUPATIONAL STANDARD, NURSING, CROATIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK, COMPETENCES, HEALTHCARE SYSTEM, HIGHER EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

The Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) was established to clearly define learning outcomes, competencies, and qualification levels in alignment with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The development and standardisation of qualifications in the Republic of Croatia are based on the establishment of the CROQF, which serves as the fundamental instrument for regulating the national qualifications system. According to the CROQF Act (2013), the CROQF ensures clarity, permeability, quality, and the grounded acquisition of qualifications, as well as their alignment with the levels of the EQF and the Fra-

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of the European Higher Education Area - QF-EHEA). Time se nacionalne kvalifikacije čine usporedivima i prepoznatljivima u europskom i međunarodnom kontekstu (1).

Registar HKO-a uspostavljen je kao središnje mjesto za evidentiranje standarda zanimanja, skupova kompetencija, standarda kvalifikacija i pripadajućih ishoda učenja. Njegova je svrha osigurati podlogu za izradu obrazovnih i studijskih programa usklađenih s načelima HKO-a, čime se postiže transparentnost i sustavnost u planiranju obrazovanja (2).

HKO se pritom promatra kao ključan preduvjet razvoja sustava cjeloživotnog učenja, koji čini okosnicu društva znanja i socijalne uključenosti. Konceptijski je utemeljen na hrvatskoj obrazovnoj tradiciji, a istodobno uvažava i suvremene potrebe gospodarstva, pojedinca i društva te europske smjernice i međunarodne propise. Njegova je zadaća povezati ishode učenja ostvarene u različitim obrazovnim institucijama, postaviti ih u međusobni odnos na nacionalnoj i međunarodnoj razini te definirati jasne kriterije kvalitete kompetencija koje se stječu određenom kvalifikacijom. HKO na taj način omogućuje mjerljivost i usporedivost ishoda učenja te snažnije povezivanje obrazovnog sustava s potrebama tržišta rada (3).

Povezanost HKO-a s europskim kontekstom ostvaruje se kroz EQF, koji predstavlja zajednički referentni okvir za usporedbu nacionalnih kvalifikacijskih sustava. Prema Zakonu o HKO-u (2018.), EQF je instrument uspostave razina kvalifikacija radi njihova prepoznavanja i razumijevanja među državama (1). Europska komisija dodatno naglašava kako EQF kvalifikacije čini čitljivijima i razumljivijima u različitim zemljama i sustavima te omogućuje njihovu usporedivost i prenosivost (4).

EQF je osmostupanjski okvir utemeljen na ishodima učenja i obuhvaća sve vrste i razine kvalifikacija. Razine su definirane kroz deskriptore znanja, vještina i kompetencija, pri čemu razina I označava najnižu, a razina VIII najvišu razinu složenosti. Njegova uska povezanost s nacionalnim kvalifikacijskim okvirima omogućuje stvaranje sveobuhvatne "karte" kvalifikacija u Europi, čime se jača transparentnost i mobilnost radne snage. Okvir je uspostavljen 2008. godine, a revidiran 2017., zadržavajući temeljne ciljeve jačanja transparentnosti i međusobnog povjerenja u području kvalifikacija (4). U literaturi se ističe kako je EQF zamišljen kao "mreža za prevođenje" između nacionalnih sustava, usmjerena na reforme koje promiču ishode učenja, transparentnost kvalifikacija i mobilnost između država i sektora (5). U tom kontekstu, sestrinstvo kao regulirana zdravstvena profesija zahtijeva jasno strukturiran i međunarodno usporediv kompetencijski okvir.

Upis standarda zanimanja prvostupnik/prvostupnica sestrinstva (razina VI HKO) i magistar/magistra sestrinstva (razina VII HKO) u Registar Hrvatskog kvalifikacijskog okvira (HKO) predstavlja povijesni iskorak u nacionalnoj standardizaciji sestriinske profesije u Republici Hrvatskoj. Upisom standarda prvi put su jasno i nacionalno usklađeno definirane kompetencije sestriinske profesije na razinama VI i VII HKO-a, u skladu s Europskim kvalifikacijskim okvirom (EQF) i relevantnim direktivama Europske unije. Standardi vrijede do 31. pro-

mework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). In this way, national qualifications become comparable and recognisable in the European and international context (1).

The CROQF Register has been established as a central repository for recording occupational standards, sets of competencies, qualification standards, and corresponding learning outcomes. Its purpose is to provide a foundation for developing educational and study programs aligned with CROQF principles, thereby ensuring transparency and systematic planning in education (2).

The CROQF is also viewed as a key prerequisite for developing a lifelong learning system, which forms the backbone of a knowledge-based society and social inclusion. Conceptually, it is grounded in the Croatian educational tradition while simultaneously considering contemporary economic, individual, and societal needs, as well as European guidelines and international regulations. Its role is to connect learning outcomes achieved across different educational institutions, position them within national and international contexts, and define clear criteria for the quality of competencies acquired through specific qualifications. In this way, the CROQF enables the measurability and comparability of learning outcomes and strengthens the link between the education system and labour market needs (3).

The connection between the CROQF and the European context is achieved through the EQF, which serves as a common reference framework for comparing national qualification systems. According to the CROQF Act (2018), the EQF is an instrument for establishing qualification levels to facilitate their recognition and understanding across countries (1). The European Commission further emphasises that the EQF makes qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems, enabling their comparability and transferability (4).

The EQF is an eight-level framework based on learning outcomes, encompassing all types and levels of qualifications. The levels are defined by descriptors of knowledge, skills, and competencies, with level 1 representing the lowest and level 8 the highest level of complexity. Its close connection with national qualifications frameworks enables the creation of a comprehensive "map" of qualifications in Europe, thereby enhancing transparency and workforce mobility. The framework was established in 2008 and revised in 2017, maintaining its core objectives of strengthening transparency and mutual trust in the field of qualifications (4). In the literature, the EQF is described as a "translation grid" between national systems, aimed at reforms that promote learning outcomes, qualification transparency, and mobility across countries and sectors (5). In this context, nursing as a regulated healthcare profession requires a clearly structured and internationally comparable competency framework.

The inclusion of the occupational standards for the Bachelor of Nursing (CROQF level 6) and the Master of Nursing (CROQF level 7) in the Croatian Qualifications Framework

sinca 2035. godine te predstavljaju temelj za izradu standarda kvalifikacija te, posljedično tome, daljnju modernizaciju studijskih programa i jačanje kvalitete obrazovanja u sestrinstvu.

Upravo u tom normativnom i strateškom okviru potrebno je promatrati upis standarda zanimanja u sestrinstvu na razinama VI i VII HKO-a. Njihovo uvrštavanje u Registar HKO-a ne predstavlja samo administrativni čin, već potvrdu usklađenosti nacionalnog obrazovanja u sestrinstvu s europskim referentnim okvirom, načelima cjeloživotnog učenja i zahtjevima suvremenog tržišta rada.

PROJEKTNI OKVIR I INSTITUCIONALNA SURADNJA

Standardi zanimanja razvijeni su u sklopu EU projekta "Izrada standarda zanimanja/kvalifikacija uz unaprjeđenje zdravstvenih studijskih programa" (MIS kod: HR.3.1.15-0051). Nositelj projekta bio je tadašnji Sveučilišni odjel zdravstvenih studija Sveučilišta u Splitu, danas Fakultet zdravstvenih znanosti Sveučilišta u Splitu. Projekt je okupio devet institucija iz Republike Hrvatske te 20 stručnjaka iz područja visokog obrazovanja, zdravstvenog sustava i komore medicinskih sestara.

Ovaj strukovno utemeljen pristup omogućio je da definirani standardi ne budu samo akademski održivi, već i izravno primjenjivi u realnim uvjetima pružanja sestriinske skrbi. Stručna radna skupina osigurala je stručnu, zakonodavnu i europsku usklađenost standarda, čime je postavljen temelj nacionalne standardizacije sestriinske profesije.

Izazovi u postupku upisa standarda zanimanja u Registar HKO-a

Put od izrade standarda zanimanja do njegova prihvatanja i upisa u Registar HKO-a predstavljao je složen, višefazan i vremenski zahtjevan proces. Nakon dovršetka izrade standarda zanimanja, pokrenut je formalni postupak upisa u Registar HKO-a. Postupak je uključivao administrativnu provjeru, sadržajnu doradu te usklađivanje s nadležnim institucijama (Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskoga sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike i Ministarstvo zdravstva).

Tijekom višegodišnjeg razdoblja provedene su intenzivne konzultacije i stručna usuglašavanja s kompetentnim predstavnicima Ministarstva zdravstva (MZ), a proces je koordinirala voditeljica radne skupine za izradu standarda zanimanja. Konzultacije su se odvijale u više navrata i kroz nekoliko faza, obuhvaćajući analizu pojedinih kompetencija, terminološko preciziranje, normativno usklađivanje te prilagodbu zahtjevima metodologije HKO-a.

Cijeli postupak usklađivanja odvijao se uz kontinuiranu stručnu i metodološku podršku Ministarstva rada, mirovinskoga sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike (MROSP), koje je pratilo provedbu postupka i osiguravalo da se standardi izrađuju u skladu s propisanom Metodologijom za izradu standarda zanimanja. U završnoj fazi postupka MROSP je, nakon provede-

Register represents a historic step forward in the national standardisation of the nursing profession in the Republic of Croatia. With their inclusion, competencies of the nursing profession at levels 6 and 7 of the CROQF have been clearly and nationally harmonised for the first time, in accordance with the EQF and relevant European Union directives. These standards are valid until 31 December 2035 and provide a foundation for the development of qualification standards and, consequently, for further modernisation of study programs and enhancement of the quality of nursing education.

Within this normative and strategic framework, the inclusion of occupational standards in nursing at levels 6 and 7 of the CROQF should be understood not merely as an administrative act, but as confirmation of the alignment of national nursing education with the European reference framework, the principles of lifelong learning, and the demands of the modern labour market.

PROJECT FRAMEWORK AND INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

Occupational standards were developed within the framework of the EU project "Development of Occupational/Qualification Standards with the Improvement of Health Study Programs" (MIS code: HR.3.1.15-0051). The project coordinator was the former University Department of Health Studies at the University of Split, now the Faculty of Health Sciences. The project brought together nine institutions from the Republic of Croatia and twenty experts from higher education, the healthcare system, and the nursing chamber.

This professionally grounded approach ensured that the defined standards are not only academically sustainable but also directly applicable to real-world nursing care. The expert working group ensured professional, legislative, and European alignment of the standards, thereby establishing the foundation for the national standardisation of the nursing profession.

Challenges in the Process of Entering Occupational Standards into the CROQF Register

The process from the development of occupational standards to their acceptance and entry into the CROQF Register represented a complex, multi-phase, and time-consuming procedure. Following completion of the occupational standards, the formal registration process in the CROQF Register was initiated. This procedure included administrative verification, substantive revision, and alignment with the competent institutions (The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, and the Ministry of Health).

Over a multi-year period, intensive consultations and expert harmonisation were conducted with competent representatives of the Ministry of Health (MoH), while the process was coordinated by the head of the working group responsible for developing the occupational standards. The consultations were carried out on several occasions and across multiple pha-

ne evaluacije i provjere usklađenosti, donijelo odluku o upisu standarda zanimanja u Registar HKO-a.

Takav iterativni pristup, obilježen kontinuiranim dijalogom između predlagatelja standarda zanimanja i nadležnog tijela, rezultirao je postupnim oblikovanjem konačnih verzija standarda zanimanja prvostupnika/prvostupnice sestrinstva i magistra/magistre sestrinstva. Konačni standardi zanimanja u sestrinstvu predstavljaju rezultat višegodišnjeg stručnog rada, institucionalne suradnje i usklađivanja sa zakonodavnim i regulatornim okvirom, čime su stvoreni preduvjeti za njegovo formalno prihvaćanje i upis u Registar HKO-a.

KLJUČNE ODREDNICE STANDARDA ZANIMANJA
U SESTRINSTVU

Upisom standarda zanimanja prvostupnik/prvostupnica sestrinstva (razina VI HKO) i magistar/magistra sestrinstva (razina VII HKO) u Registar HKO, Republika Hrvatska je prvi put dobila jedinstveno i formalno potvrđeno definiranje profesionalnog profila sestrinstva na prijediplomskoj i diplomskoj razini.

Standardi zanimanja jasno definiraju potrebna znanja (teorijska i praktična), specifične i generičke vještine, razinu samostalnosti i odgovornosti te opseg profesionalnog djelovanja (1, 2, 6).

Standard zanimanja u normativnom smislu definiran je kao popis svih poslova koje pojedinac obavlja u okviru određenog zanimanja te popis kompetencija potrebnih za njihovo uspješno izvršavanje (1). Time se standard zanimanja postavlja kao temeljni dokument koji povezuje svijet rada i sustav obrazovanja, jasno određujući što stručnjak mora znati, razumjeti i biti sposoban učiniti u okviru svoje profesije.

Prema službenim pojašnjenjima Registra HKO-a, standard zanimanja nastaje kao rezultat usuglašavanja relevantnih dionika iz područja tržišta rada i obrazovanja o optimalnom sadržaju pojedinog zanimanja. U tom se procesu definiraju ključni poslovi te znanja, vještine i pripadajuća razina samostalnosti i odgovornosti, odnosno kompetencije potrebne za njihovo obavljanje (2). Takvo usuglašavanje osigurava da standard ne odražava isključivo akademsku perspektivu, nego stvarne potrebe u praksi.

Standard zanimanja određuju poduzetnici, poslodavci i njihovi predstavnici, a opisuje se terminologijom usklađenom s odgovarajućom razinom HKO-a (3). Time se osigurava vertikalna usklađenost između razine kvalifikacije i složenosti poslova, kao i horizontalna usporedivost među različitim zanimanjima. S gledišta sestrinstva, to znači precizno razlikovanje kompetencija prvostupničke (razina VI) i diplomatske/magistarske razine (razina VII) s obzirom na opseg odgovornosti, autonomiju u odlučivanju i razinu složenosti kliničkih postupaka.

Važna dimenzija standarda zanimanja je njegova razvojna komponenta. Ističe se kako standardi ne bi smjeli odražavati isključivo trenutačne potrebe tržišta rada, nego i predviđene

ses, encompassing analysis of individual competencies, terminological refinement, regulatory alignment, and adaptation to the requirements of the CROQF methodology.

The entire harmonisation process was carried out with continuous expert and methodological support from the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy (MLPSFSP), which monitored the implementation of the procedure and ensured that the standards were developed in accordance with the prescribed Occupational Standards Development Methodology. In the final phase of the procedure, following evaluation and compliance verification, the MLPSFSP decided to enter the occupational standards into the CROQF Register.

Such an iterative approach, characterised by continuous dialogue between the proposing body and the competent authority, resulted in the gradual formulation of the final versions of the occupational standards for the Bachelor and the Master of Nursing. The final nursing occupational standards represent the outcome of several years of expert work, institutional cooperation, and alignment with the legislative and regulatory framework, thereby establishing the prerequisites for their formal acceptance and entry into the CROQF Register.

KEY DETERMINANTS OF OCCUPATIONAL
STANDARDS IN NURSING

With the entry of the occupational standards for Bachelor of Nursing (level 6 CROQF) and Master of Nursing (level 7 CROQF) into the CROQF Register, the Republic of Croatia has, for the first time, obtained a unified and formally validated definition of the professional profile of nursing at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Occupational standards clearly define the required knowledge (theoretical and practical), specific and generic skills, the level of autonomy and responsibility, and the scope of professional activity (1, 2, 6). In a normative sense, an occupational standard is defined as a list of all tasks performed by an individual in a specific occupation, along with the competencies required for their successful execution (1). In this way, the occupational standard serves as a fundamental document that connects the world of work and the education system, clearly specifying what a professional must know, understand, and be able to do within their profession.

According to the official explanations of the CROQF Register, occupational standards are developed through alignment among relevant stakeholders from the labour market and education sectors on the optimal content of a given occupation. This process defines key tasks, as well as the knowledge, skills, and associated level of autonomy and responsibility, i.e., competencies required for their performance (2). Such alignment ensures that the standard reflects not only an academic perspective but also the actual needs of professional practice.

Occupational standards are defined by entrepreneurs, employers, and their representatives, and are described using terminology aligned with the corresponding CROQF level (3).

buduće zahtjeve, što podrazumijeva sustavnu analizu društvenih, tehnoloških i gospodarskih trendova te uključivanje šire zajednice u proces njihova oblikovanja (3). Ovakav pristup osobito je relevantan za zdravstveni sektor, obilježen ubrzanim tehnološkim napretkom, demografskim promjenama i rastućom potrebom za visokorazvijenim kompetencijama u području upravljanja kvalitetom, sigurnosti pacijenata i interdisciplinarne suradnje.

Dodatno, sukladno načelima HKO-a, standard zanimanja čini podlogu za izradu standarda kvalifikacija, a posredno i studijskih programa. Time se uspostavlja logičan slijed: od analize poslova i kompetencija u svijetu rada, preko definiranja ishoda učenja, do oblikovanja kurikuluma i metoda vrednovanja. Takva struktura osigurava transparentnost, mjerljivost i usklađenost obrazovanja s realnim potrebama zdravstvenog sustava.

U upisanim standardima zanimanja jasno su razgraničene ovlasti, znanja i vještine između prijediplomske (razina VI) i diplomatske (razina VII) razine. Definirani su okviri unutar kojih sestrinski profesionalci djeluju, što doprinosi pravnoj sigurnosti i profesionalnom integritetu, a njihova usklađenost s Europskim kvalifikacijskim okvirom (EQF) te Direktivom 2005/36/EZ (uključujući dopune 2013/55/EU i 2024/782) jamči mobilnost zdravstvenih profesionalaca unutar EU.

Prvostupnik/prvostupnica sestrinstva
(razina VI HKO)

Na razini VI HKO-a, prvostupnik/prvostupnica sestrinstva osposobljen/a je za samostalno provođenje zdravstvene njege u skladu s profesionalnim i etičkim standardima te za sudjelovanje u interdisciplinarnom timu. Standard zanimanja prvostupnik/prvostupnica sestrinstva (razina VI HKO-a) logično je i nužno uporište u nacionalnim i europskim strateškim dokumentima koji oblikuju razvoj zdravstvenog sustava, obrazovanja i tržišta rada u Republici Hrvatskoj.

U Nacionalnoj strategiji razvoja zdravstva 2012.-2020., medicinska sestra prepoznata je kao ključni dionik zdravstvenog tima na svim razinama zdravstvene zaštite te u sustavu socijalne skrbi, osobito u segmentu izravne skrbi za pacijente (7). Takvo pozicioniranje profesije zahtijeva jasno definirane i standardizirane kompetencije. Normativni okvir učvršćen je Zakonom o sestrinstvu, kojim je propisano da sestrinsku djelatnost mogu obavljati isključivo medicinske sestre u okviru kompetencija stečenih obrazovanjem, pri čemu je završetak prijediplomskog studija sestrinstva prepoznat kao viša razina obrazovanja s proširenim odgovornostima. Ujedno su dotadašnje više medicinske sestre izjednačene u nazivu i kompetencijama s prvostupnicama sestrinstva (8, 9).

Na europskoj razini, strategija Europa 2020 naglašava potrebu ulaganja u obrazovanje, jačanja nacionalnih kvalifikacijskih okvira i prilagodbe ishoda učenja potrebama tržišta rada (10). U kontekstu izraženog nedostatka medicinskih sestara na hrvatskom i europskom tržištu rada, jasno definiran standard zanimanja postaje instrument kojim se osigurava transparentnost kvalifikacije, njezina usporedivost i profesionalna mobilnost.

This ensures vertical alignment between qualification different levels and task complexity, as well as horizontal comparability across occupations. From the perspective of nursing, this enables a clear distinction between the competencies at the bachelor level (level 6) and the master level (level 7), particularly regarding responsibility, decision-making autonomy, and the complexity of clinical procedures.

An important dimension of occupational standards is their developmental component. It is emphasized that standards should not reflect only current labour market needs, but also anticipated future requirements, which implies systematic analysis of social, technological, and economic trends, as well as the involvement of the broader community in their development process (3). This approach is particularly relevant to the healthcare sector, which is characterised by rapid technological advancement, demographic changes, and an increasing need for advanced competencies in quality management, patient safety, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Furthermore, in accordance with CROQF principles, occupational standards form the basis for the development of qualification standards and, indirectly, study programmes. This establishes a logical sequence: from job and competency analysis in the labour market, through defining learning outcomes, to curriculum design and assessment methods. Such a structure ensures transparency, measurability, and alignment of education with the real needs of the healthcare system.

In the registered occupational standards, clear distinctions are made between the authority, knowledge, and skills at the undergraduate (level 6) and graduate (level 7) levels. The defined frameworks within which nursing professionals operate contribute to legal certainty and professional integrity. At the same time, their alignment with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Directive 2005/36/EC (including amendments 2013/55/EU and 2024/782) ensures the mobility of healthcare professionals within the European Union.

Bachelor/Baccalaureus of Nursing
(CROQF Level 6)

At CROQF level 6, the Bachelor/Baccalaureus of Nursing is qualified to independently provide nursing care in accordance with professional and ethical standards, as well as to participate in interdisciplinary healthcare teams.

The occupational standard for the Bachelor/Baccalaureus of Nursing (CROQF level 6) represents a logical and necessary foundation within national and European strategic documents that shape the development of the healthcare system, education, and labour market in the Republic of Croatia.

Within the National Health Development Strategy 2012-2020, nurses are recognised as key stakeholders in healthcare teams at all levels of healthcare delivery, as well as in the social welfare system, particularly in direct patient care (7). Such positioning of the profession requires clearly defined and stan-

S tim je ciljevima usklađen i Operativni program Učinkoviti ljudski potencijali 2014.-2020., koji kao prioritet ističe povezivanje obrazovanja i tržišta rada putem HKO-a (11). Standard zanimanja prvostupnika sestrinstva upravo kroz HKO omogućuje da kompetencije budu jasno opisane, mjerljive i međunarodno razumljive.

Istodobno, Strateški plan razvoja ljudskih resursa u zdravstvu 2015.-2020. upozorava na potrebu modernizacije klasifikacija i odnosa među zdravstvenim profesijama, koji još uvijek dijelom ne odražavaju suvremene kompetencije i timski pristup u zdravstvu (12). Standard zanimanja prvostupnika sestrinstva pridonosi upravo toj modernizaciji, jer jasno razlikuje razine obrazovanja i opseg odgovornosti.

Međunarodnu dimenziju profesije osigurava Zakon o reguliranim profesijama i priznavanju inozemnih stručnih kvalifikacija, koji u nacionalno zakonodavstvo prenose Direktiva 2005/36/EZ i Direktiva 2013/55/EU, te jamči medicinskim sestrama pravo na priznavanje kvalifikacija i rad u drugim državama članicama pod jednakim uvjetima (13-15).

U tom kontekstu standard zanimanja prvostupnik/prvostupnica sestrinstva nije samo formalni dokument, već strateški dokument koji povezuje zakonodavni okvir, razvojne prioritete i stvarne potrebe zdravstvenog sustava. Njime se osigurava profesionalna jasnoća, kvaliteta zdravstvene skrbi i međunarodna prepoznatljivost hrvatskih medicinskih sestara.

Magistar/magistra sestrinstva
(razina VII HKO)

Na razini VII HKO-a, magistar/magistra sestrinstva preuzima proširene kompetencije koje uključuju kliničko odlučivanje više razine složenosti, upravljanje sustavima kvalitete, sudjelovanje u znanstveno-istraživačkom radu te razvoj i evaluaciju zdravstvenih politika i sestrinskih intervencija. Standard zanimanja magistar/magistra sestrinstva utemeljen je na jasnim strateškim opredjeljenjima Republike Hrvatske za razvoj znanosti, visokog obrazovanja i kvalitete zdravstvene zaštite.

U Strategiji obrazovanja, znanosti i tehnologije ističe se kako je Hrvatska suočena s izazovima primjene novih tehnologija, zaštite okoliša i starenja stanovništva, na koje je moguće odgovoriti ponajprije razvojem znanosti i istraživanja (16). Studenti prijediplomskog studija sestrinstva tijekom svog studiranja podižu svoje stavove prema znanosti i svojoj orijentaciji na budućnost (17). Područje zdravstva prepoznato je kao jedno od uspješnijih, što dodatno opravdava potrebu jačanja znanstvene komponente sestrinstva kroz diplomatske i poslijediplomske studije.

Sličan smjer potvrđuje i Nacionalna strategija razvoja zdravstva 2012.-2020., u kojoj se navodi kako je uvođenje diplomskog studija sestrinstva usmjereno unapređivanju profesije i osposobljavanju diplomiranih medicinskih sestara za nastavničke i razvojne uloge. Istodobno se naglašava potreba poticanja istraživanja u sestrinstvu, budući da nedostatna znan-

dardised competencies. The regulatory framework is further strengthened by the Nursing Act, which stipulates that nursing activities may be performed exclusively by registered nurses within the scope of competencies acquired through education, with completion of undergraduate nursing studies recognised as a higher education level with expanded responsibilities. At the same time, the former category of "senior nurses" was aligned in title and competencies with bachelor-level nurses (8, 9).

At the European level, the Europe 2020 Strategy emphasises the need for investment in education, the strengthening of national qualifications frameworks, and the alignment of learning outcomes with labour market needs (10). In the context of a significant shortage of nurses in both the Croatian and European labour markets, a clearly defined occupational standard serves as a tool to ensure the transparency of qualifications, their comparability, and professional mobility.

These objectives are further supported by the Operational Programme Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020, which highlights the integration of education and the labour market through the CROQF (11). The occupational standard for bachelor-level nursing enables competencies to be clearly described, measurable, and internationally understandable through the CROQF framework.

At the same time, the Strategic Plan for Human Resources Development in Health 2015-2020 highlights the need to modernise classifications and relationships among healthcare professions, which still only partially reflect contemporary competencies and the team-based approach in healthcare (12). The occupational standard for bachelor-level nursing contributes to this modernisation by clearly distinguishing between levels of education and scopes of responsibility.

The international dimension of the profession is ensured by the Act on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications, which transposes Directive 2005/36/EC and Directive 2013/55/EU into national legislation and guarantees nurses the right to recognition of qualifications and employment in other Member States under equal conditions (13-15).

In this context, the occupational standard for the Bachelor/Baccalaureus of Nursing is not merely a formal document, but a strategic instrument that connects the legislative framework, development priorities, and the real needs of the healthcare system. It ensures professional clarity, quality of healthcare delivery, and international recognition of Croatian nurses.

Master/Magister of Nursing
(CROQF Level 7)

At CROQF level 7, the Master/Magister of Nursing assumes advanced competencies that include higher-level clinical decision-making, quality management system governance, participation in scientific research, and the development and evaluation of healthcare policies and nursing interventions.

stvena produkcija negativno utječe na razvoj profesije, ali i na ukupnu kvalitetu i sigurnost zdravstvene zaštite (7).

Povećanje udjela visokoobrazovanih zdravstvenih radnika usklađeno je i s ciljevima Europa 2020, koja promiče pametan i uključiv rast kroz ulaganje u znanje i kompetencije (10). U tom kontekstu, magistre sestrinstva prepoznaju se kao nositelji naprednih kompetencija te imaju sposobnost preuzimati složenije kliničke, organizacijske i edukacijske zadaće.

Normativna potvrda takve uloge vidljiva je i u Uredbi o izmjenama i dopuni Uredbe o nazivima radnih mjesta i koeficijentima složenosti poslova u javnim službama (2022.), kojom se magistra sestrinstva/diplomirana medicinska sestra prepoznaje u poslovima sprječavanja i kontrole bolničkih infekcija, osiguranja i unaprjeđenja kvalitete zdravstvene zaštite, izvođenja specifičnih dijagnostičko-terapijskih postupaka te u voditeljskim i koordinatorskim ulogama (18). Time se formalno priznaje viša razina odgovornosti i složenosti poslova koja odgovara razini VII HKO-a.

Daljnje povezivanje obrazovanja i tržišta rada naglašeno je u Operativnom programu Učinkoviti ljudski potencijali 2014.-2020., gdje se kao prioritet ističe jačanje mobilnosti i razvoj kompetencija putem Hrvatskog kvalifikacijskog okvira, uz potporu Europskog socijalnog fonda za razvoj novih znanja u područjima poput telemedicine i mZdravlja (11). Standard zanimanja magistra sestrinstva time postaje ključni instrument međunarodne prepoznatljivosti i profesionalne mobilnosti.

Nadalje, Zakonski okvir definira opseg djelovanja u sestrinstvu. Prema Zakonu o sestrinstvu, viša razina obrazovanja stječe se završetkom prijediplomskog i diplomskog studija, a magistre sestrinstva provode edukaciju svih razina medicinskih sestara, sudjeluju u znanstvenom radu, upravljaju ljudskim i materijalnim resursima te sustavima kvalitete zdravstvene njege. Time je jasno normirana njihova autonomna i razvojna uloga unutar zdravstvenog sustava (8).

Vertikalna prohodnost prema znanstvenoj karijeri omogućena je kroz Zakon o visokom obrazovanju i znanstvenoj djelatnosti, koji predviđa mogućnost upisa doktorskog studija nakon završetka diplomskog sveučilišnog studija te izbor u suradnička i znanstveno-nastavna zvanja (19). Dodatno, Pravilnik o znanstvenim i interdisciplinarnim područjima, poljima i granama te umjetničkom području, poljima i granama prepoznaje sestrinstvo kao znanstvenu granu unutar područja Biomedicine i zdravstva (20). Time se sestrinstvu osigurava puni akademski legitimitet i mogućnost razvoja vlastite znanstvene discipline.

U tom širem strateškom i zakonodavnom okviru, standard zanimanja magistar/magistra sestrinstva predstavlja više od opisa kompetencija; on je instrument profesionalne autonomije, znanstvenog razvoja i unaprjeđenja kvalitete zdravstvene skrbi. Njime se osigurava vertikalna obrazovna prohodnost, međunarodna usporedivost kvalifikacija i aktivna uloga sestrinstva u razvoju suvremenog, znanstveno utemeljenog zdravstvenog sustava.

The occupational standard for the Master/Magister of Nursing is grounded in the Republic of Croatia's clear strategic commitments to the development of science, higher education, and healthcare quality.

The Strategy for Education, Science and Technology highlights that Croatia faces challenges related to the application of new technologies, environmental protection, and population ageing, which can primarily be addressed through the development of science and research (16). During their undergraduate studies, nursing students progressively develop their attitudes towards science and their future orientation (17). The healthcare sector is recognised as one of the more successful sectors, further underscoring the need to strengthen the scientific component of nursing through graduate and postgraduate studies.

A similar direction is confirmed in the National Health Development Strategy 2012-2020, which states that introducing graduate nursing studies aims to advance the profession and prepare graduate nurses for teaching and developmental roles. At the same time, the need to encourage nursing research is emphasised, as insufficient scientific output negatively affects both professional development and the overall quality and safety of healthcare delivery (7).

The increase in the proportion of highly educated healthcare professionals is also aligned with the goals of Europe 2020, which promotes smart and inclusive growth through investment in knowledge and competencies (10). In this context, master-level nurses are recognised as holders of advanced competencies and can undertake more complex clinical, organisational, and educational responsibilities.

The normative confirmation of such roles is also reflected in the Regulation on Amendments to the Regulation on Job Titles and Coefficients of Complexity in Public Services (2022), which recognizes master-level nurses/graduate nurses in roles related to the prevention and control of hospital infections, quality assurance and improvement of healthcare services, the performance of specialized diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, as well as managerial and coordination functions (18). This formally acknowledges a higher level of responsibility and job complexity corresponding to CROQF level 7.

Further alignment between education and the labour market is emphasised in the Operational Programme "Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020", which prioritises strengthening mobility and competency development through the Croatian Qualifications Framework, supported by the European Social Fund, including the development of new knowledge in areas such as telemedicine and mHealth (11). In this sense, the occupational standard for the Master of Nursing becomes a key instrument of international recognition and professional mobility.

Furthermore, the legal framework defines the scope of nursing practice. According to the Nursing Act, higher levels of education are obtained through completion of undergraduate and graduate studies. At the same time, master-level nurses are

ZNAČAJ ZA AKADEMSKU I PROFESIONALNU ZAJEDNICU	
Upis standarda zanimanja prvostupnik/prvostupnica sestrinstva (razina VI HKO-a) i magistar/magistra sestrinstva (razina VII HKO-a) u Registar HKO-a ima višestruk značaj za akademsku i profesionalnu zajednicu. Standardi zanimanja povezuju zakonodavni okvir, potrebu zdravstvenog sustava i sustava visokog obrazovanja. Kroz Hrvatski kvalifikacijski okvir osigurava se jasnoća, kvaliteta i usporedivost kvalifikacija (1). Time su standardi ujedno usklađeni i s Europskim kvalifikacijskim okvirom, čime se omogućuje međunarodna transparentnost i mobilnost (4, 5). Njihov značaj može se sagledati kroz tri međusobno povezana aspekta: nacionalnu ujednačenost, reformu kurikuluma i jasnu distinkciju razina obrazovanja i odgovornosti.	
Nacionalna ujednačenost	
Jedna od temeljnih vrijednosti standarda jest uspostava nacionalno ujednačenog kompetencijskog okvira za sestrinstvo. Prema Zakonu o HKO-u, standard zanimanja predstavlja osnovu za izradu standarda kvalifikacija i obrazovnih programa, čime se osigurava usklađenost ishoda učenja na razini cijelog sustava (1).	
U praksi to znači da svi studiji sestrinstva u Republici Hrvatskoj moraju polaziti od istoga profesionalnog profila i jasno definiranih kompetencija. Time se smanjuju razlike među ustanovama, povećava transparentnost kvalifikacije te olakšava priznavanje stručnih kvalifikacija u skladu s Direktivom 2005/36/EZ i Direktivom 2013/55/EU (13). Nacionalna ujednačenost istodobno pridonosi jačanju profesionalnog identiteta i povjerenja u sustav obrazovanja zdravstvenih radnika.	
Zaključno, kompetencijski okvir postaje obvezujuća referentna točka za sve visokoškolske ustanove koje provode studije sestrinstva u RH. Time se osigurava da svaki diplomant, bez obzira na mjesto studiranja, posjeduje identičan set temeljnih kompetencija.	
Reforma kurikuluma	
Standardi zanimanja su preduvjet za izradu standarda kvalifikacija i modernizaciju zajedničkog nacionalnog kurikuluma usklađenog s potrebama suvremenog zdravstvenog sustava. Standardi zanimanja izravno potiču reformu i modernizaciju kurikuluma. HKO naglašava potrebu povezivanja ishoda učenja s potrebama tržišta rada i osiguravanja mjerljivosti kompetencija (3). U tom kontekstu standard zanimanja postaje temelj za oblikovanje suvremenih studijskih programa usmjerenih na ishode učenja, kliničku izvrsnost, upravljanje kvalitetom i razvoj istraživačkih kompetencija.	
Strateški dokumenti poput Strategije obrazovanja, znanosti i tehnologije naglašavaju potrebu jačanja istraživačkog kapaciteta i inovativnosti u visokom obrazovanju, dok Nacionalna strategija razvoja zdravstva 2012.-2020. ističe važnost	

responsible for educating nurses at all levels, participating in scientific work, managing human and material resources, and overseeing healthcare quality systems This clearly establishes their autonomous and developmental role within the healthcare system (8).

Vertical academic progression towards a scientific career is enabled by the Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity, which allows enrolment in doctoral studies after completion of graduate university studies, as well as appointment to research and academic positions (19). Additionally, the Ordinance on Scientific and Interdisciplinary Fields recognises nursing as a scientific branch within Biomedicine and Health, thereby granting it full academic legitimacy and the opportunity to develop as an independent scientific discipline (20).

Within this broader strategic and legislative framework, the occupational standard for the Master/Magister of Nursing represents more than a description of competencies; it is an instrument of professional autonomy, scientific development, and quality improvement in healthcare. It ensures vertical educational progression, international comparability of qualifications, and an active role of nursing in the development of a modern, scientifically grounded healthcare system.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY
The inclusion of the occupational standards for Bachelor/Baccalaureus of Nursing (CROQF level 6) and Master/Magister of Nursing (CROQF level 7) in the CROQF Register holds multiple layers of significance for both the academic and professional communities. These occupational standards establish a clear link between the legislative framework, the needs of the healthcare system, and the higher education system. Through the Croatian Qualifications Framework, they ensure clarity, quality, and comparability of qualifications (1). In this way, the standards are also aligned with the European Qualifications Framework, thereby enabling international transparency and professional mobility (4, 5).

Their significance can be observed in three interrelated dimensions: national standardization, curriculum reform, and a clear distinction between educational levels and professional responsibility.

National Standardization
One of the fundamental values of occupational standards is the establishment of a nationally unified competency framework for nursing. According to the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) Act, an occupational standard serves as the basis for developing qualification standards and educational programmes, thereby ensuring alignment of learning outcomes across the entire system (1).

In practical terms, this means that all nursing study programmes in the Republic of Croatia must be based on the same

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unaprjeđenja sestrinskog obrazovanja radi povećanja kvalitete i sigurnosti zdravstvene skrbi (7, 16). Standardi zanimanja tako omogućuju sustavno usklađivanje kurikuluma s nacionalnim prioritetima, ali i europskim trendovima razvoja zdravstvenih profesija.	
Jasna distinkcija razina	
Jedan od ključnih doprinosa standarda jest jasno razlikovanje kompetencija između razine VI i razine VII HKO-a, u skladu s deskriptorima Europskog kvalifikacijskog okvira (4). Razina VI podrazumijeva samostalno obavljanje složenih stručnih poslova uz odgovornost za kliničke odluke i organizaciju rada unutar definirane prakse, dok razina VII uključuje napredne kompetencije: vođenje sustava kvalitete, razvoj politika zdravstvene njege, edukaciju na visokoškolskoj razini i znanstveno-istraživački rad (1, 8).	
Takva distinkcija uklanja dugogodišnje nejasnoće u pogledu profesionalnih ovlasti i odgovornosti te omogućuje racionalnije upravljanje ljudskim resursima u zdravstvu, što je naglašeno i u Strateškom planu razvoja ljudskih resursa u zdravstvu 2015.-2020. (12). Upisom standarda zanimanja u HKO, po prvi put su na nacionalnoj razini jasno definirani ključni poslovi prvostupnika/prvostupnice i magistra/magistre sestrinstva, što olakšava sistematizaciju radnih mjesta u zdravstvenim ustanovama.	
ZAKLJUČAK	
Upis standarda zanimanja za prvostupnike/prvostupnice i magistre sestrinstva u Registar HKO-a predstavlja prekretnicu u razvoju sestrinske profesije u Republici Hrvatskoj. Time je uspostavljen jasno definiran, europski usklađen i nacionalno obvezujući kompetencijski okvir koji osigurava kvalitetu obrazovanja, profesionalnu prepoznatljivost i međunarodnu mobilnost medicinskih sestara.	
Ovaj iskorak osigurava čvrstu vezu između obrazovnog sustava i tržišta rada, a istovremeno podiže kvalitetu zdravstvene njege kroz visokoobrazovani i kompetentan sestrinski kadar. Ovo ne predstavlja završetak procesa, već početak nove faze razvoja, faze sustavne modernizacije studijskih programa i daljnjeg jačanja akademskog i profesionalnog identiteta sestrinstva u Hrvatskoj.	
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SUKOB INTERESA/CONFLICT OF INTEREST Autori su popunili the <i>Unified Competing Interest form</i> na www.icmje.org/coi_disclosure.pdf (dostupno na zahtjev) obrazac i izjavljuju: nemaju potporu niti jedne organizacije za objavljeni rad; nemaju financijsku potporu niti jedne organizacije koja bi mogla imati interes za objavu ovog rada u posljednje 3 godine; nemaju drugih veza ili aktivnosti koje bi mogle utjecati na objavljeni rad./All authors have completed the <i>Unified Competing Interest form</i> at	
professional profile and clearly defined competencies. This reduces differences between higher education institutions, increases the transparency of qualifications, and facilitates the recognition of professional qualifications in accordance with Directive 2005/36/EC and Directive 2013/55/EU (13). National standardisation also contributes to strengthening professional identity and trust in the healthcare education system.	
In conclusion, the competency framework becomes a binding reference point for all higher education institutions delivering nursing programmes in the Republic of Croatia. This ensures that every graduate, regardless of the institution attended, possesses an identical set of core competencies.	
Curriculum Reform	
Occupational standards are a prerequisite for the development of qualification standards and the modernisation of a shared national curriculum aligned with the needs of a contemporary healthcare system.	
They directly drive curriculum reform and modernisation. The Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) emphasises the need to link learning outcomes with labour market needs and to ensure the measurability of competencies (3). In this context, occupational standards become the foundation for designing modern study programmes oriented towards learning outcomes, clinical excellence, quality management, and the development of research competencies.	
Strategic documents such as the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology highlight the need to strengthen research capacity and innovation in higher education (16). At the same time, the National Health Development Strategy 2012-2020 emphasises the importance of advancing nursing education to improve the quality and safety of healthcare delivery (7). Occupational standards, therefore, enable the systematic alignment of curricula with national priorities and European trends in the development of healthcare professions.	
Clear Distinction Between Levels	
One of the key contributions of the occupational standards is the clear differentiation of competencies between CROQF level 6 and level 7, in accordance with the descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (4). Level 6 involves the independent performance of complex professional tasks with responsibility for clinical decision-making and work organisation within a defined scope of practice. In contrast, level 7 encompasses advanced competencies such as quality system leadership, healthcare policy development, higher education teaching, and scientific research activities (1, 8).	
Such a distinction eliminates long-standing ambiguities regarding professional authority and responsibility. It enables more efficient human resource management in healthcare, as also highlighted in the Strategic Plan for Human Resources Development in Health 2015-2020 (12). With the entry of occu-	

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pational standards into the CROQF Register, key job roles for Bachelor and Master-level nurses have, for the first time, been clearly defined at the national level, facilitating the structuring and classification of job positions within healthcare institutions.

CONCLUSION

The inclusion of the occupational standards for and Master's degrees in Nursing in the CROQF Register represents a milestone in the development of the nursing profession in the Republic of Croatia. It has established a clearly defined, European-aligned, and nationally binding competency framework that ensures the quality of education, professional recognition, and international mobility of nurses.

This advancement strengthens the link between the education system and the labour market, while simultaneously enhancing the quality of nursing care through a highly educated and competent nursing workforce. It does not represent the end of the process, but rather the beginning of a new phase of development a phase of systematic modernisation of study programmes and further strengthening of the academic and professional identity of nursing in Croatia.

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SUKOB INTERESA/*CONFLICT OF INTEREST*

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