

## Erasmus+ - project “BOQua digital”



# Guidelines for the implementation of the EU-wide uniform qualification modules for further training of vocational orientation specialists in Slovenia

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## Introduction

Our entrance into the fourth industrial revolution, ushering in digitization and automation, has shifted the job market dynamics, influencing the entire ecosystem including the educational institutions and their processes as points of origin concerning vocational orientation. Current knowledge of different work profiles and work processes is key to effective, up-to-date vocational orientation for the young people – it is this knowledge that has become critically insufficient and obsolete due to the changes brought on by digitization.

From the development of computers and all the way to current everyday use of mobile devices, constant internet connectivity and emerging online ecosystems, almost all work profiles, vocations and inherently work processes, have somehow changed due to digitization and completely new digital skillsets, work processes, work profiles and professions have emerged.

That is the main priority of the BOQua digital project and its qualification modules, focusing on the young people in the process of VO as it relates to the digital work processes, digital skillsets and newly required knowledge. To effectively guide the young people with these objectives in focus, VO experts (professional orientation counsellors, guidance professionals, VO trainers etc.) must be trained and educated, acquiring comprehensive and in-depth knowledge due to effects of digitization (new professions, work profiles, skillsets, trends). They also have to further develop the ability to transfer this acquired knowledge to guide students in their studies, specializations, career choice and future career development – apprenticeships/internships, employment and additional training.

To achieve this, specific modules have been developed during the course of the BOQua digital project - addressing these issues and helping guidance professionals acquire know-how about the effects of digitization in different vocational fields. Utilizing this, professionals can guide young people in the process of career choice, increase their employability and raise their general awareness about the demands and requirements of the new (digitized) job market.

These guidelines for the implementation of the EU-wide uniform qualification modules for further training of vocational orientation specialists (within the BOQua digital project) are structured with the first chapter focusing on the need for specific qualification concerning digitization, followed by ways to implement the specific qualifications in Slovenia in the second chapter and finally, options for financing in the closing chapter.

### 1. Description of the need of specific qualifications concerning digitisation

It is apparent that Slovenia is amidst a digital transformation process – an observation stemming from the recently established Government Office for Digital Transformation (established in 2021<sup>1</sup>, headed by the Minister for Digital Transformation)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ODLO2547>

and the current government policies (digital vouchers, digitization programmes and subsidies – 44 million EUR allocated for digital transformation 2022-2024<sup>2</sup>). This is further supported by the adoption of the national Strategy for digital transformation of Economy<sup>3</sup> in January 2022, as proposed by the Ministry for Economic Development and Technology.

Considering these nationwide policies as a direct response to the digitization process in general, the professional requirements and their changes due to digitization should also be addressed directly, with the specific qualification modules as proposed in the BOQua digital project. This is most effective when implemented within institutions of education and vocational orientation, focusing on the young people in the process of VO.

Within the framework of the Erasmus+- project BOQua digital, all five project partners from Slovenia, UK (Scotland), Spain, Austria and Germany (as leading partner, specifically the University of Education Schwäbisch Gmünd) have developed training modules for career orientation experts – trainers, counsellors, professionals. These training modules were developed based on interviews with vocational orientation experts in various fields (Crafts, Production, Commerce, Nursing and Health, Training and Work), with questions focusing on the effects of digitization and how these changes have affected the job market and workplace requirements. Questions were also addressing the challenges young people are facing in the process of career choice and career orientation and the career guidance that accompanies this process.

Although the qualification modules include all aspects considered relevant that were identified by vocational orientation experts in the aforementioned five countries, it is not exclusively subject to country-specific conditions. The aspects, taken into account, are deemed universal and are independent of the different VO systems and formats of the EU countries and independent from the specific framework conditions of individual institutions.

In this manner, the qualification are also not limited exclusively to vocational fields specifically addressed within the project, but is transferrable to other vocational fields as the digitization changes have brought on the need for specific qualifications to almost all areas as they relate to:

1. **digital literacy** – knowledge of digital devices (computers, mobile devices) and their use, different operating systems; internet use and platforms (sites, social media)
2. **digital security** – using digital devices and browsing safely; awareness of digital footprints and digital ethics
3. **digital skillsets** – changes to necessary work skills and work processes due to digitization
4. **digital job market** – changes to work profiles (professions, vocations) due to digitization

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rtvsllo.si/gospodarstvo/gospodarsko-ministrstvo-namenja-44-milijonov-evrov-za-digitalno-preobrazbo/616246>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MGRT/Dokumenti/DIPT/StrategijaDTG.pdf>

## 2. Proposals for implementation of the specific qualifications in Slovenia

The qualification modules can be implemented in different ways as they relate to the direct beneficiaries, experts in career guidance, and the indirect beneficiaries, the young people in the process of VO.

### ***Academic field***

Considering the system of upper-secondary education is fully funded, nationwide and centralised, the primary focus should be implementing the qualification modules so that their benefits are transferred directly into educational institutions of secondary vocational education. These programmes encompass the largest share of the target group. At this stage, the young people are most intensely included in the career choice and VO process and (indirectly) benefit the most from the qualification modules.

Thus, the qualification modules should be implemented in the academic field for educators (teachers, professors etc.) either as an optional module or as a standalone obligatory supplement to teacher education, considering the alarming need for such qualification modules considering the labour market. Specifically, this should primarily be addressed at Pedagogical and Sociological studies for teachers as part of a valid public study programme at university level, with appropriate accreditation.

Considering the applicable fields of impact, implementation should also be considered as a specific programme at the School of Economics and Business as a standalone separate module or part of Digital Marketing programme<sup>4</sup>. There are also specific post-graduate programmes addressing the effects of digitization that could benefit greatly from implementing this module such as the Digital Humanities programme<sup>5</sup> at the School of Humanities.

For workers in the educational field there is the National catalogue of further education and professional development (KATIS<sup>6</sup>) where the qualification modules can be published as a free training offer for all employed in the educational field (schools, universities, career centres, lifelong learning facilities etc.)

### ***Workplace mentoring/apprenticeship/training***

As upper secondary vocational education usually veers into apprenticeships, workplace training or workplace mentoring, crossing into the labour market, it is crucial that the digitization changes - as they relate to work processes and workflow – are addressed. This can be done either through incompany trainers or on-the-job mentors via apprenticeship, mentoring or a dedicated training programme. All these are an ideal way to incorporate the qualification modules into the workplace environment. It is in the companies' best interest to have their trainers, mentors or other HR experts to partake in a programme, training module or other educational format utilizing the qualification modules.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ef.uni-lj.si/content/static\\_slovene/predmet/predmet.asp?l=100&li=1013&predmet\\_id=196359](http://www.ef.uni-lj.si/content/static_slovene/predmet/predmet.asp?l=100&li=1013&predmet_id=196359)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ung.si/en/schools/school-of-humanities/programmes/2DH/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://paka3.mss.edus.si/Katis/Uvodna.aspx>

### ***Employment agencies***

Employment agencies (national as well as private) are a vital part of the labor market, bridging the gap between educational institutions and employers. Their role in vocational orientation, career orientation and even vocational training through programmes and courses, makes them an ideal beneficiary of the qualification modules. Having their employees (counsellors, VO and HR experts, educators) partake in the qualification modules in form of training<sup>7</sup> or, ideally, a workplace education course<sup>8</sup>, would make an important impact on tackling digitization changes in all professions and work profiles.

### ***Lifelong education centres***

Lifelong education centres are considered either as a supplementation or an extension of educational institutions, performing not only vocational orientation, career orientation and guidance, but also career transition (change, redirection) and further education. These are perfect examples for the qualification modules as the digitization effects demand modifications to existing vocations and job/work profiles. These centres already offer courses on basic digital knowledge<sup>9</sup> (ranging from basic typing to software and internet use) so implementing the qualification modules to offer more in-depth and focused insight into work profiles and processes is the logical next step. Currently there are many lifelong education centres offering digital education courses<sup>10</sup> as part of the national digital voucher system<sup>11</sup>.

### ***Independent training programme/module***

Finally, the qualification modules can be offered as a standalone payable training or a training module for all interested in working in the field of vocational orientation and career counselling (companies, HR, career centres, students, school counsellors, etc.).

## **3. Proposals for financing the specific qualifications in Slovenia**

Financing the specific qualifications differs considering the different ways of implementation.

Within the academic field, considering that educational programmes up to university levels are fully funded by the state, financing the qualification modules from the budget depends on it being introduced into a valid public study programme at university level, with appropriate accreditation. This result would stem from a proposal and campaign aimed at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, introducing the modules into the programming and/or legislative dialogue.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ess.gov.si/obvestila/obvestilo/izobrazevanja-in-usposabljanja-za-zaposlitvene-moznosti>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ess.gov.si/obvestila/obvestilo/izobrazevanja-in-usposabljanja-za-zaposlene-s-skrajsanim-polnim-delovnim-casom>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.zlu.si/projekti/brezplacni-tecaji-za-brezposelne-in-zaposlene-45-/racunalniski-tecaji-in-digitalna-pismenost-rdo/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://lu-r.si/2022/08/09/vpis-v-programe-za-pridobitev-digitalnega-bona-info/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://racunalniske-novice.com/digitalni-boni-22-vse-informacije-na-enem-mestu/>

A higher aim would be to push for the qualification modules to be integrated into the National catalogue of further education and professional development (KATIS), where it would be registered as a free training module for all educators.

Regarding implementation in the workplace, the financing would lie squarely on the shoulders of the employers, as they would offer their employees the qualification modules as a privately funded training programme. An alternative option would be to consider subsidies or financing initiatives by the government (namely the Government Office for Digital Transformation) or European Union (via European structural and investment funds or grants<sup>12</sup>) to facilitate the process. Considering 99,8% of all enterprises in Slovenia are small or medium-sized<sup>13</sup>, grants aimed specifically at these enterprises<sup>14</sup> are a considerable option.

Offering the qualification modules as single modules or training programme within employment agencies and lifelong learning centres would require a proposal to the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, emphasizing the importance of the modules and their benefits to the temporarily inactive workforce (job seekers, career transitioning employment seekers etc.). These programmes are fully funded by the national budget (allocated for projects as per National Employment Agency business plan<sup>15</sup>, estimated at 6.469.327 EUR for 2022) and are offered to job seekers free of charge as part of every unemployed individual's personal employment plan.

Lastly, it can be fully funded by the individual, who is partaking in the qualification module in the form of a standalone payable training or a training module, organized and executed by a private company in the field of career counselling or vocational orientation. Considering a proposal to partially or fully subsidize (i.e. with digital vouchers<sup>16</sup>) these by the Government Office for Digital Transformation should not be excluded.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://razpis.eu/razpisi/digitalna-transformacija-velikih-podjetji-konzorciji/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.si teme/mala-in-srednje-velika-podjetja/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.inin.si/2021/nepovratna-sredstva-za-digitalizacijo-malih-in-srednje-velikih-podjetij/>

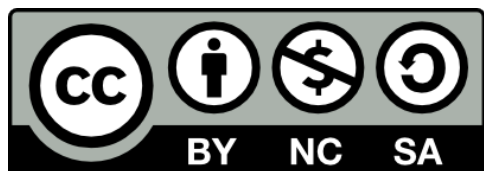
<sup>15</sup> [https://www.ess.gov.si/\\_files/14928/Poslovni\\_nacrt\\_2022.pdf](https://www.ess.gov.si/_files/14928/Poslovni_nacrt_2022.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.si/zbirke/storitve/digitalni-bon/>

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