Development Groups Summary
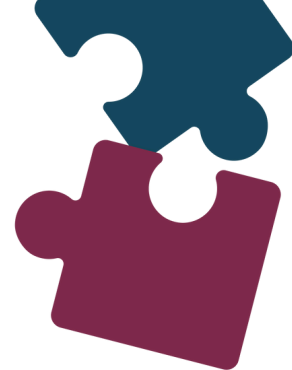
Country: Croatia

Stakeholders involved

Stakeholders that were involved in the project were chamber of commerce, andragogy society, ministry of science and education, employment service and adult education institutions. In total, five stakeholders participated in the development group. Association for the Advancement of Human Resources and Adult Education at the Croatian Chamber of Commerce had the role of bringing together adult education institutions that strive to establish high quality and accessible education for all adults and to improve the adult education system through cooperation, exchange of experiences and joint action. As a central institution for implementing educational policies aimed at training and upskilling workers with low skills, the Ministry of Science and Education adult education is defined as acquiring and developing key competences as part of LLL and acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve sets of learning outcomes or qualifications. The Croatian Employment Service (CES), in cooperation with the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and AE, developed a number of programmes that were used in the voucher system aiming to acquire additional knowledge and skills. CES creates, i.e. provides education programmes that are deficient and in demand on the labour market. Adult education institutions carry out adult education in accordance with the prescribed Adult Education Act.

Activities and methods for stakeholder engagement

The Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education carried out online and onsite events for stakeholders. Online events enabled better reach of participants, while onsite events enabled better impact and more opportunities to network and share experiences in working with adults with low skills among stakeholders. The session that was highlighted as most constructive was the Possible solutions session on involving learners with low skills in adult education. The workshop enabled adult education stakeholders to meet with participants from many different or related areas, discuss current events and news in adult education, and contribute to better networking among stakeholders. Different participants offered viable solutions to facilitate access to adult education and that will result in a positive outcome. The workshops had a positive outcome, with participants being interested in joining similar meetings and workshops related to adults with low qualifications and UP.

Another example of cooperation is between the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth and the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education, which continuously monitor the daily needs of institutions for adult education, connecting with the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, and through certain projects with The Croatian Employment Service, the Croatian Association of Employers, the Croatian Chamber of Commerce and directly to institutions for adult education.

Opportunities

Adult education institutions mostly cooperate with the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education in the development of new adult education programmes. Representatives of institutions often collaborate with the Ministry of Science and Education or other ministries, and educational institutions at local and regional level, Croatian Employment Service, entrepreneurship centres, employers' associations, the Education and Teacher Training Agency, the Association for the Advancement of Human Resources and AE at the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, vocational schools, etc. The Ministry of Science and Education directly cooperates with the ASOO, other ministries, CES, the Croatian Employers' Association, the Croatian Chamber of Commerce. Croatian Andragogy Society cooperates with the Croatian Employment Service, the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, and ASOO. In terms of improving existing practice, the stakeholders highlighted possible guidelines for improvements within the adult education system, improvement of the financial framework for financing adult education, policy changes to resolve legal and regulatory obstacles to cooperation, promotion of partnership for the needs of the "Forms of improvement" initiative, and incentives for participation and engagement of stakeholders. Stakeholders that could be involved in UP: social work centres, citizens' associations, associations of persons with disabilities, associations of blind and visually impaired people, local governments, local committees in rural areas, media/local radio/newsletters, employers, and local entrepreneurship hubs.

Challenges

The main obstacles and challenges faced by learners when engaging in adult education: Low motivation, lack of learning practice, lack of learning ability, functional and IT literacy, acquiring knowledge is more difficult than acquiring skills, working in shifts, lack of free time or poor time management, poor learning conditions, adult learners very often feel ashamed to engage in the learning process. Key shortcomings and challenges are primarily related to motivation of adults to get involved in the education processes, as well as the drop out of the education programme. It is believed that it is necessary to introduce vocational guidance to facilitate the inclusion of people with low skills in further education. There are many more training programs on the market that are not intended for people with low skills as they have a pre-requisite of having obtained professional qualification for participation. Stakeholders recognised the insufficient role of Social Welfare Centres in educational activities. Another challenge is a large number of programs related to VET in AE for which adult education institutions cannot apply. Another challenge is the lack of a database for tracking leavers from primary and secondary education. One of the key obstacles to the inclusion of workers with low skills is certainly the lack of IT literacy, which primarily causes difficulties when using the online voucher system, filling out the application and the entire education process which requires a high level of digital skills. The difficulty of finding a partner for work-based learning, especially in rural areas. The lack the financial resources for promoting institutions to attract a larger number of participants.
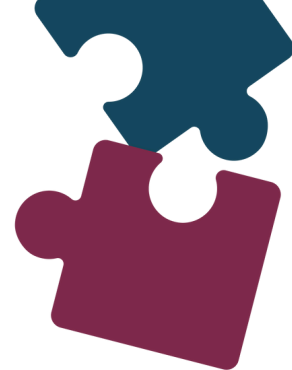
Solutions

Various solutions and strategies that can be applied to identify challenges and barriers to the inclusion of people with low skills in further education and how to overcome them.

Partnerships should be fostered to overcome financial challenges, provision of affordable credit lines or subsidies for companies participating in training programmes, costs of programmes funded by voucher system should be made more consistent, institutions should be provided with the possibility of funding their media promotion to attract the larger number of learners. Policy changes to address legal and regulatory barriers to cooperation. Creating incentive policies that encourage cooperation between the public and private sectors, study existing laws and regulations to identify barriers to cooperation. Promoting partnership in UP Organization of educational events to raise awareness of the importance of partnership among stakeholders and creating incentive frameworks that reward institutions and companies that successfully participate in partnerships. Tax benefits or subsidies for companies, recognition or awarding institutions, companies or individuals that make outstanding contributions, involvement of media or creating an obligation for the media to publish content related to AE which would result in better promotion, the media could help in promoting free primary education, strengthen cooperation with all stakeholders. In addition to these strategies, it is important to continuously monitor and evaluate the effects of the implemented measures and adjust the approach to ensure that the identified challenges and obstacles are successfully overcome.