





# Analysis Report Summary

Country: Croatia



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## 1. Upskilling Pathways Implementation

The Partner UP project brings together several European countries through diverse partnerships. At the international level, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) has led the analysis, serving as the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. On the national level, various institutions have taken the lead: in Cyprus, the Centre for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology (CARDET); in Latvia, the Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA) and the State Education Development Agency (VIAA) under the Ministry of Education and Science; in Croatia, the Croatian Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education alongside Adult Education Institution Dante; in Romania, ASOCIATIA EURO ADULT EDUCATION; in Belgium, the European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN); in Greece, the Hellenic Adult Education Association; in Ireland, AONTAS National Adult Learning Organisation; and in Italy, FORMA.Azione srl.

Key issues identified by all stakeholders include: effective outreach, guidance, and support measures. Challenges in the education market involve time constraints for low-skilled workers, labor force outflow, and insufficient employer investment in workforce development. Without adequate employer participation, further engagement and advocacy are necessary to promote upskilling efforts. Emphasis on micro-qualifications and digital competencies must match labor market needs to keep skillsets relevant. The system also lacks recognition of prior knowledge, requires a broader voucher system, and needs better media promotion for certain occupations, as well as improved adult guidance.

Stakeholders report strong existing cooperation between relevant ministries, adult learning and education (ALE) associations, employment services, employers, trade unions, and ALE providers, with increased collaboration driven by European projects and the implementation of the CROQF. This enhanced cooperation spans from labor markets to state institutions such as the Croatian Employment Service (CES), the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family, and Social Policy, and European agencies like EACEA and CEDEFOP.

A significant finding reveals gaps in collaboration: stakeholders identify their own contributions to addressing issues in adult education (UP) in Croatia but tend to delegate responsibility for broader solutions to others. Those with a national reach believe local stakeholders can connect better with individuals, while local actors expect broader-scale impact from national bodies. This suggests a need for stakeholders to collectively reassess roles, expectations, and coordination. One proposal involves creating a joint body that includes all major stakeholders, aiming to establish a shared strategy that aligns goals and addresses unmet needs.

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## 2. Stakeholder Cooperation in UP

The UP initiative demonstrates established cooperation mechanisms among stakeholders, including partnerships between ministries, adult learning and education (ALE) associations, employment services, employers, trade unions, and ALE providers. This collaboration is supported at various levels, particularly through European projects and frameworks like the CROQF, and involves the Croatian Employment Service (CES), the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family, and Social Policy, and European agencies such as EACEA and CEDEFOP. Stakeholders work together to address skills gaps, adapt to labor market demands, and promote adult learning. This network allows ALE providers and related entities to share resources, exchange best practices, and coordinate outreach efforts.

However, gaps in cooperation have been identified. While each stakeholder acknowledges its role in contributing to adult education in Croatia, many shift responsibility for comprehensive solutions to others. For example, stakeholders with a national focus believe that local actors are better positioned to connect with individuals, while local stakeholders expect broader, more impactful initiatives from national bodies. This mutual dependency, paired with limited direct communication on shared responsibilities, creates a lack of cohesion. Stakeholders recommend establishing clearer, shared roles to align efforts and clarify accountability across local and national levels. Insights from stakeholder mapping and focus groups further reveal this need for enhanced coordination. Interviews highlighted that although stakeholders propose solutions and steps to address issues, they often rely on others to implement these ideas fully. This has even led to a recommendation for forming a joint body, including all key stakeholders, to foster more unified strategic planning. Such a body could facilitate regular dialogue, set common goals, and reduce role ambiguity, ensuring that no issues are overlooked and that all actions are part of a cohesive, collaborative strategy.





### 3. Lessons Learnt

The analysis process significantly influenced stakeholder commitment and contributions, fostering positive changes in relationships while also revealing areas for improvement.

The 14 stakeholders interviewed showed high engagement, demonstrating genuine interest in the complexities surrounding upskilling pathways in Croatia. Their active participation and willingness to share experiences led to a deeper understanding of the barriers and challenges in adult education and upskilling.

The analysis revealed a strong level of cooperation among stakeholders, including ministries, ALE associations, employment services, employers, trade unions, and ALE providers. Most stakeholders already collaborate to some extent, setting the foundation for strengthening partnerships and working more cohesively. However, the analysis also highlighted the need for improved communication and clearer division of responsibilities, particularly in addressing barriers to upskilling. This collective reflection allowed stakeholders to better understand shared challenges and identify areas for improvement. The willingness of stakeholders to participate in the analysis process indicates their readiness to continue collaborating in future phases of the project. Keeping the same participants involved in future steps is seen as valuable for strengthening networks, fostering trust, and encouraging ongoing collaboration. Stakeholders are eager to work together to develop solutions for the barriers identified.

Despite the established cooperation, gaps in communication were noted. While collaboration exists in some areas, better, continuous communication is needed to align efforts effectively and avoid inefficiencies or misunderstandings. The current communication structures may not be sufficient for addressing the complex nature of upskilling pathways.

Additionally, the analysis revealed that roles and responsibilities are often unclear, leading to confusion and fragmentation of efforts. Defining clear responsibilities is crucial to avoid duplication and ensure that all aspects of the upskilling process are properly addressed.





Key lessons learned include the need for improved and more consistent communication among stakeholders. Regular updates, clearer channels for information exchange, and a more structured approach to sharing knowledge will help ensure alignment and coordination. Clearer definition of roles and responsibilities will streamline decision-making and improve collaboration.

The high level of stakeholder engagement during the analysis process underscores the value of involving stakeholders early and maintaining their commitment throughout the project. These lessons will guide future efforts to enhance collaboration and address the barriers in upskilling pathways more effectively.

## 4. Priorities for Development Groups

Based on the findings, key priorities for future Development Group discussions to strengthen the UP initiative include:

- Gathering the same stakeholders that participated in this round of interviews but trying to include representatives of local municipalities/governments as they have a large impact on a local level, but most stakeholders mentioned an infrequent level of collaboration.
- Discussing what motivation, promotion, and guidance strategies can be introduced or improved as well as who plays what role in the process/delineating responsibilities.
- Discussing how to make the UP system more vertically mobile for adults with CROQF 1 or no qualification.
- Discussing possible expansion of micro-qualifications to a variety of skills, not just green and digital.

