



EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION
OF ADULTS

Country Report on Adult Education in CROATIA

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Introduction

This Report covers the situation of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Croatia. It is divided into two sections. The section *Policy and Politics* gives an overview of the key policy currently in force, and also outlines the main legislation or political situation in the country. *Structure and Providers* gives a more detailed look at the organizational structures, and also outlines the main adult education providers, mainly looking at non-formal and informal learning.

We want to thank our members for their contributions to this reflection on the adult education situation in Croatia as far as possible as of 2010/2011. Inevitably there will be new things emerging within the ever changing situation of adult education, but we believe the majority of the information provided will be relevant and useful for the foreseeable future. However, to keep the resource accurate and up to date we are open to suggestions to improve the texts. If you feel there is something you can add about your country please contact us via email at eaea-info@eaea.org.



Overview

Croatia has a century-old tradition of institutional adult education; after World War II an outline was established, which in the mid-fifties acquired all the characteristics of a system and was incorporated at the local and state level. A great number of adult education institutions exist (e.g. people's universities, workers' universities, primary schools for adults, secondary evening schools and two-year evening colleges), with quite a number of students. Together with a constant improvement of andragogic (learning strategies focused on adults) workers, this has allowed the Croatian education system to become very well developed, and not only oriented in former Yugoslavia. [1]

The Croatian system of education is under the authority of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports [2]. The system encompasses preschool, primary, secondary, higher and formal adult education. The authority of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports also includes the systems of science, technology and information society, which provide significant support to the system of education. Various levels of the education system are also supported by professional agencies and expert advisory bodies.

Politics and Law

A number of education policy documents recently adopted in Croatia can be divided into general education system documents but with a special reflection on adult education, and those focusing on the education of adults in particular. Among the documents covering the field of **education in general**, the following can be listed as the key policy documents [3]:

- 2001 - Croatia in the 21st Century - Education, White Paper on Croatian Education, Government of the Republic of Croatia, National Competitiveness Council;
- 2002 - Declaration on Knowledge; 2004 Croatia Based on Knowledge and the Application of Knowledge, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts;
- 2004 - 55 Recommendations for Increasing Croatia's Competitiveness, National Competitiveness Council;
- 2004 - Croatian National Educational Standard
- 2005 - Education System Development Plan 2005-2010, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports;
- 2006 - Strategic Development Framework 2006-2013, Central State Office for Development Strategy and Coordination of EU Funds;



- 2007 - National Programme of Measures for the Introduction of Obligatory Secondary Education, Croatian Parliament;
- 2007 - Strategy for the Development of the National Curriculum, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, National Curriculum Council.
- 2008 - Development Strategy of the VET System in the Republic of Croatia 2008-2013
- Croatian National Qualification framework [4]

In Croatia, adult education is highlighted as an important component of the education system, which is confirmed by a number of strategic documents. The most important steps in the development of the adult education system are the adoption of the **Strategy for Adult Education by the Croatian Government** (in November 2004), the establishment of the **Agency for Adult Education** by the Government's Decree (in May 2006), and the **Adult Education Act** in February 2007 [5].

The Adult Education Act has established a **normative framework** and created legal prerequisites for further development of adult education as an integral part of the Croatian education system as a whole. In the field of formal adult education, standards are defined through one of four by-laws complementing the Adult Education Act [6]

According to the Adult Education Act, adult education in Croatia is the entire process of adult learning with the purpose of exercising the right to **personal development**, training for **employability** (earning qualifications for a first-time career, professional retraining, acquiring and expanding vocational knowledge, skills and abilities), and for **civic participation**. Adult education in Croatia encompasses all forms of education for those **over 15 years of age**. As stipulated by the Act, adult education is based on the following principles:

- **lifelong learning**, including the good use of educational opportunities, proximity and accessibility of education for all in accordance with different individuals' abilities;
- **liberty and autonomy** in the choice of style, content, form, resource and method; respect for diversity and inclusion;
- professional and moral responsibility of employees working in the field of andragogy (adult learning);
- guarantee of the quality of educational choices;
- respect for the personality and dignity of each participant. [7]



The Act also decrees that adult education may be conducted as **formal, non-formal, informal and/or self-guided** learning.

Formal education is any activity conducted on the basis of programmes approved by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports with the purpose of acquiring **vocational knowledge, skills and abilities**. It includes the primary education of adults, secondary education of adults (includes acquiring a secondary school degree or qualification, low-skill professional qualification, professional re-training, training and supplemental training), as well as tertiary adult education. According to the Adult Education Act, formal adult education may be provided by local adult learning institutions (pučko otvoreno učilište similar to Folk High School), primary schools, secondary schools, higher education institutions, language schools, institutions for the care of persons with special needs and disabilities and other institutions, if they fulfil the requirements stipulated by the Act. Formal adult education leads to the **acquisition of a formal certificate**.

Non-formal education refers to organised learning processes directed at educating and training adults for work and meeting the needs of the **labour market**, participation in **social activities** and **personal development**. It is conducted in adult learning institutions, commercial enterprises, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, political parties, sports clubs, and various centres. [8]

Non-formal education **covers a broad range**, from education for democracy and peace, health, environmental protection and active citizenship to foreign language learning, business, management and leadership skills and IT literacy programmes. It is conducted independently of the formal education system and does not lead to the acquisition of a formal certificate. **Informal** adult learning refers to activities in which adults acquire views, values, skills and knowledge **through everyday experiences**, as well as a range of other influences and sources from their environments, while **self-guided learning** implies the learner's control over the learning process as well as his or her responsibility for the end results.

Adult education institutions deal with formal adult education, and implement programmes for the acquisition of an initial qualification, in-service training, continuous training and re-training. [9]

Future trends/key concerns/directions

There has been a big step forward during the period from 2004 to 2007 when the Strategy on Adult Learning and the first Adult Education Act were adopted. However, there are still important issues related to their implementation in practice, for example:



- the improvement of adult learning provision to reach the individuals' and labour market educational needs;
- developing **sustainable partnership between relevant stakeholders** at all levels: local, regional and national;
- developing **sustainable financing mechanisms** from public sources;
- to improve adult teachers' and trainers' competencies, to **recognise prior learning** outcomes; and to develop quality management system in adult learning.

Currently, Croatia is a candidate country currently preparing for EU accession. Croatia has, in January 2011, entered the **European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme** (LLP), which enables Croatian students in high, vocational, school and adult education the possibility to benefit from Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig, grants respectively. [10]

Structure overview

The network of adult education institutions in Croatia comprises the following [11]:

- Adult learning institutions called pučko otvoreno učilište
- Elementary schools, which provide adult education courses
- Secondary schools, which also provide adult education courses
- Higher education colleges and universities, which offer part-time first degrees and non-degree courses for people who are working, university diplomas and specialist courses, and postgraduate Master's and PhD degrees
- Private educational institutions
- Education and training centres within companies
- Various professional associations, societies and organisations which are not mainly educational in nature but do provide courses in addition to their main functions
- Political societies and unions
- Universities of the Third Age



Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education

A very important institution in field of adult education in Croatia is the **Ministry of Science, Education and Sports** [12]; which is not the only state institution dealing with adult education, but also the key body regulating all sectors of education, **including formal adult education**. Adult education institutions which conduct accredited educational programmes do so based on the guidelines set up by the Ministry, with the learner as the final beneficiary.

The Adult Education Council is a Governmental counselling body consisting of representatives of key stakeholders in adult education, facilitating cooperation and ensuring synchronised policy and strategy formulation, resulting from a consensus among major stakeholders. The Council **monitors** the adult education system and **proposes measures for its development**, provides opinions on legislative and implementing regulations and proposes mechanisms for financing from public sources. It consists of a chairman and twelve members, appointed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the basis of a proposal of the Minister of Science, Education and Sports. The candidates for chairman and members are nominated by the heads of central state administration bodies, adult education institutions, professional and business organisations, trade unions and employers' associations. [13]

The Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education was established in law in February 2010 after the merger of two agencies: The Agency for Training and Adult Education established by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette 59/06) in May 2006 and The Agency for Vocational Education established by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in January 2005.

The tasks of the Agency are:

- performing **analytical and developmental tasks** in the field of vocational and adult education
- coordinating proposals of professional bodies
- performing professional **supervision** of vocational and adult education institutions
- providing professional **advice and counselling services**
- professional education and training of employees in the field of vocational education



- **innovation**, monitoring and evaluation of vocational education programmes
- **stimulating cooperation** and participation in the implementation of vocational education
 - programmes and projects
 - maintaining a database and providing information to state administration bodies and the relevant ministry on records and other relevant data regarding the monitoring of the state of vocational and adult education and its development
 - preparing **analyses of management** processes in vocational and adult education
 - defining criteria for the establishment, implementation and monitoring of systematic funding of adult education with regard to programmes, investment and material management.

‘Non-Formal’ Learning

- Local adult learning institutions (Pučka otvorena učilišta)

A central place in adult education is occupied by local institutions for adult learning called **pučka otvorena učilišta** [4], many of them were founded in the 1960s and 1970s by local communities. Currently there are more than 70, however this number has been rapidly cut down in recent years. These public institutions deal with all kinds of adult learning including both formal and non-formal education; therefore their programmes vary from basic education and literacy to secondary-school courses, pre-skills, occupational retraining courses, foreign language courses, computer technology, general education and cultural courses. Most of them are members of the **Croatian Adult Education Association**. Besides the public institutions, there are also about 30 private local adult learning institutions - pučka otvorena učilišta; most of them specialising in a certain field of adult learning.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Croatian Association for the Education of Adults

The Croatian Association for the Education of Adults (CAEA) was founded in 1954, as an organisation representing the interests of adult education providers on both a national and international level. The CAEA is a non-profit, non-governmental, national **umbrella organisation** of institutions. They lobby for lifelong learning concept implementation, ensure the exchange of experiences between member institutions and other stakeholders, organise, support and



encourage **research in adult education theory** and practice, and have organised a permanent training and development system. They have also been developing an **information system** inside the Association and between member institutions to develop and support good practise. Aside from this they work by providing **counselling and advisory services** to members and other stakeholders; aiding cooperation with other stakeholders in the country and abroad; and with the development and implementation of new learning programs and projects.

The CAEA organises the **Croatian Summer Andragogy Academy**, an annual international conference for the professional development of principals and professionals working in adult learning institutions. The Academy reflects the needs and interests of various target groups. It is also a co-founder of the Andragogy Centre (AC), a public institution for the fostering of adult education. The AC organises workshops on new methods in adult education, and has been running a verified training programme for basic andragogical knowledge and skills since 2003 [15].

University of the Third Age

University of the Third Age is a department within the Pučko otvoreno učilište Zagreb. This program started in 1992 and specialises in non-formal education by offering senior citizens a range of courses in, for example, foreign languages, IT-skills, and lectures and workshops about history, art, and health. There are currently around 1300 students organised in 90 educational groups. [16]

Croatian Andragogy Society

The development of andragogical theory and practice is among the key tasks of the Croatian Andragogy Society (CAS). The CAS, which was founded as a professional association in 1998, is dedicated to:

- improving the theory and practice of both formal and non-formal adult education;
- providing training opportunities for its members through scientific gatherings, seminars and study trips;
- encouraging scientific work and research in the field of adult education;
- providing expert assistance to members and legal entities in implementing legal acts in the field of education, with particular emphasis on adult education regulations;



- and encouraging cooperation among adult education providers, as well as between the providers and governing bodies and other stakeholders on a national and international level. [17]

Universities

The University of Rijeka issued the Strategy 2007-2013, which stated that they will organise lifelong learning programmes, and establish the institutional structure for their implementation. Lifelong learning programmes are open to people of all ages, especially senior citizens (with a University for senior citizens), so as to enable the continuous education and personal development of every individual. An accredited procedure (a credit-based system) will be carried out for the lifelong learning programmes. The same standards of quality that are implemented in university studies will be applicable to the lifelong learning programmes, so that learners will be able to use the acquired credits for building and further developing their academic and professional profiles. Furthermore, the University of Rijeka plans to establish an institutional structure for the **accreditation of past formal and informal education**. Programmes for lifelong learning will be an integral part of the regular activities of university officials and staff members. [18]

e-learning

In Croatia the **University of Rijeka** is focused on e-learning. E-learning is education through the use of information and communication technologies, firstly by using the Internet and Learning Management Systems for conducting online classes. The implementation of e-learning was defined with the University of Rijeka's e-learning Implementation Strategy 2006-2010. Strategic goals as well as the necessary steps and strategies for their realization were determined. The Committee for implementation of e-learning at the University of Rijeka has the task of implementing and monitoring results of annual actions plans for implementation of e-learning, which are based on the Strategy. Aside from e-learning, the University of Rijeka also provide programs for the University of the Third Age, as part of their Lifelong Learning strategy [19].



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