RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE QUALITY DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADULT EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
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The implementation of this project is funded by the European Commission. The sole responsibility for the content of this publication (communication) lies with the author and in no way reflects the opinion of the European Commission.

Publisher:
Ministry of Science,
Education and Sports

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Graphic complement of second edition:
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Circulation:
250

ISBN
978-953-6569-95-3

CIP data available in the computer catalogue of the national and University Library in Zagreb under number 000915303

Zagreb, October 2015, second edition
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INTRODUCTION

Adult education and lifelong learning is one of the key triggers of development on both the national and local levels. In most cases, a high level of competence in the population generally correlates with the competitiveness of the country or region and the quality of life and attractiveness therein. The society and the individuals change and adapt constantly by synchronising their interests, affinities and capacities with the challenges of rapid changes in the areas of technology, communication, working conditions, work processes and everyday social interaction. The learning process occurs on a daily basis, in an organised or accidental way, at the place of employment, at educational institutions or in private life. Lifelong learning and adult education contributes to the flexibility and higher employment rates of the workforce, and facilitates access to information, social values, rights and public services for all sections of the population. It is a prerequisite of social inclusion and meets the increasingly complex demands of social and economic development on both a global and a micro or local level.

The Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Adult Education of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports implemented the European Agenda for adult learning, which is part of the Grundtvig lifelong learning programme of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) between 2012 and 2014. The project implements and promotes the new Resolution of the European Council on a renewed European agenda for adult learning (2011/C 372/01) and the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC). The goals of the project were to raise awareness of the role and importance of adult education, promote the advantages of engaging in adult education, especially regarding the employability of citizens and encourage them to engage in adult education programmes, encourage the cooperation of stakeholders in adult education and create a stakeholders' network at local and national levels for the purpose of improving the quality of adult education, presenting European agendas for adult education to help improve the Croatian agenda for adult education at the local and national levels, actively promoting key competences for lifelong learning as the basis of all adult education curricula, presenting good European examples of adult education systems and the preparation of a summary of the education programme/module for key competences.

Special attention was given to the introduction of local stakeholders to the key European strategy documents in comparison with the guidelines of the proposal of the Strategy of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the concepts of adult education and lifelong learning and the promotion of the further development of the system at the national and local levels.

The goal of this Manual, as a key document and conclusion of the implemented project, is to propose methods of implementing the Resolution of the European Council on a renewed European agenda for adult learning (2011/C 372/01) at the national and local levels and the possibilities of implementing the Recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) via an adult education curriculum.

The first part of this publication deals with analysing the implementation of the renewed European agenda for adult learning within the proposal of the Strategy of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. It was obvious during the discussions and coordination meetings during the project that they comply with the recommendations and with the needs of stakeholders at local and national levels. The strategic guidelines of the aforementioned documents and the recommendations of adult education stakeholders should be used for drawing-up a new adult education strategy by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, as well as for amending the Adult Education Act (Official Gazette no. 07/2007) with the accompanying regulations.

The current representation of adult education in local development processes is shown in the first part of this document to highlight the significance attributed to this important area of local development by local stakeholders. Finally, the first part of the document includes recommendations for improving the agenda for adult education in the Republic of Croatia at the national and local levels and recommendations for the further development of the system and the stronger promotion of agendas and programmes via relevant strategy documents.

The key methods used for a robust analysis of adult education at the national and local levels include discussions/panels organised in order to encourage debates on adult education and to identify the challenges that face local stakeholders during the creation and implementation of adult education agendas and programmes. A total of 25 discussions were held in 18 counties and in the City of Zagreb. The 186 representatives of various organisations and institutions expressed their opinions on the issues of adult education and proposed potential solutions in a moderated debate. At the end of each discussion, the workshop participants arrived at conclusions that make up the basis of the recommendations for improving the situation in the sector accompanied by commentaries and suggestions made by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MZOS).

Besides debating with the local stakeholders, the project team also analysed the representation of adult education and lifelong learning in the county strategies for human resource development. This process was implemented in order to obtain data on the intensity of inclusion of adult education in the development strategies as a special set of measures or as part of other agendas, such as employment agendas. This analysis includes the method of strategy design, but not an analysis of the outcome of the implementation, since the results were not available to the project team.
The second part of this publication deals with examples of good practice and the adult education systems in Norway, Ireland and Austria. The project team became acquainted with these during their study trips and they can be used as guidelines for improving the adult education and lifelong learning system in the Republic of Croatia. The Irish model is a good example of the institutional reform of the agenda for the education system at the national level. The reform of the system to create a cohesive adult education as well as managing and monitoring quality in a simpler and more efficient manner was prompted by merging certain services of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation with the Ministry of Education and Skills, which led to the founding of SOLAS (Further Education and Training Authority). SOLAS is currently under the competence of the Ministry of Education and Skills and is responsible for the planning, development, coordination and implementation of the European agenda for adult education, funding, accreditation and ensuring a quality system for institutions as well as programmes and for the education and training of adult-learning professionals. SOLAS formed 16 ETBs (Education and Training Boards) out of the former VEC training centres and adult education institutions and they are responsible for providing coordinated and quality adult education programmes as well as maintaining the quality of the institutions at a national level. The ETBs are responsible for obtaining data necessary for analysing the current status of the system and adopting SOLAS’ strategy documents at the national level, as well as being the primary contact source for adults that seek career guidance or advice or for enrolling in the programmes. The Norwegian model, i.e. the “Basic Skills Programme” of the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (VOX) is an example of good practice in planning and implementing a basic competences programme. Four basic skills have been defined (reading and writing, verbal communication, numerical and digital literacy) with learning outcomes (4 levels) in daily life, education and the working environment. Teachers use VOX's exceptionally well-drafted programmes for drafting individualised (“local”) curricula that enable the social inclusion of all adult learners. The Norwegian basic competences programme is intended mostly for the most deprived citizens, such as immigrants (who for the most part cannot read and write in their own language), school drop-outs and the unemployed. The intention is that the national curriculum should be included in the basic competences programme and that the materials intended for adult education are often used by secondary school teachers. The Job Skills programmes, which are especially applicable in vocational schools, state the basic skills (reading and writing, verbal communication, numerical and digital literacy) necessary for the work process of a particular occupation (carpenter, caregiver, forklift operator etc.). The Austrian example of the development of the agenda for adult education at a local level, which is aligned with local needs and consistent with the national and European goals and therefore largely financed by European funds (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development – EARDF) is mentioned at the end of the second part of the manual. This interesting project has been implemented by the Austrian Institute for Adult Education in Vienna, while the programmes (and the need for such projects) are defined and initiated by the local adult education stakeholders.

The third and last part of this publication deals with the proposed model of adult education based on the key competences for lifelong learning pursuant to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning, which should serve as a starting point for the further development of the model and programme for adult education. The competence model proposal was drafted during two sets of workshops organised by the task force, which consists of key adult education stakeholders at national level. The task force was led and coordinated by: Boris Jokić, Ph.D. and Zrinka Ristić Dedić, Ph.D. (Institute for Social Research in Zagreb), prof. Mladen Vojković (MMV Development Consultancy, d. o. o.) and the project team. The goal of the proposed model is to increase the development of key competences and the functional literacy of adults in the Republic of Croatia and is based on defining competence goals and learning outcomes, while at the same time moving away from the system in question. The competence model of basic adult education is appropriate, except for individuals without a primary school education or adults with a low educational and literacy level that want or need to upgrade and improve their existing competences and develop new competences that they were unable to acquire during their regular education or work, and which increase their chances of adapting to new and increasingly complex demands in the changing environment of the modern world of work and society as a whole. The new competence model will improve the existing adult education curriculum and will be used in drafting other formal and informal adult education programmes. The competence model is flexible and consists of three modules. Module A is intended for the acquisition of basic competences for social inclusion and continued education, module B is equivalent to basic adult education and level 1 of HKO (Croatian Qualifications Framework), and module R is envisioned as a combination of necessary competences for individual professional development and social action. Module R should be flexible in order to functionally keep track of the labour market and social changes and needs and it will be an integral part of the professional retraining, training and supplemental training programmes for adult learners. The competence model for basic lifelong learning competences includes communication in the mother tongue (Croatian), mathematical and basic science and technology competence, digital competence and a competence for learning how to learn, which will be executed cross-curricularly by modernising the didactic and methodic aspects of teaching adult learners.
1. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE QUALITY DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

1.1. Recommendations on the quality development of the adult education system at the national level

Adult education comprises the entire process of adult learning with the purpose of exercising the right to the unrestrained development of personality, training for employability (earning qualifications for a first-time career, professional retraining, acquiring and expanding vocational knowledge, skills and abilities) and enabling civic participation, all part of the unique education system of the Republic of Croatia (Article 1 of the Adult Education Act, Official Gazette, No 07/2007). Adult education shall be conducted as formal, non-formal, informal and/or self-guided learning. Formal adult education shall mean such operations as take place within institutional and publicly verified forms of education, with the purpose of acquiring vocational knowledge, skills and abilities, which includes the following: primary school education of adults, secondary school education of adults (earning a secondary school degree or qualification, a lower qualification, receiving professional retraining, training and supplemental training, and higher education. Non-formal adult education includes organised learning processes intended to enable adults to meet the needs of the labour market, to participate in a variety of social activities, and to achieve a higher level of personal development. Informal adult education includes activities in which adults accept such views, values, skills and knowledge as are gained through everyday experiences, as well as a range of other influences and sources from their environment, while self-guided adult learning includes activities in which an adult independently establishes control over the learning process, as well as a responsibility for the results of the said process (Article 3 of the Adult Education Act, Official Gazette, No 07/2007).

The key participants in adult education at the national level are the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, which is responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of educational agendas (adopts acts and regulations and monitors their implementation), the Adult Education Council as the professional and advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, whose primary concern is to plan, develop, organise, implement, monitor and improve the adult education system. Other ministries, government agencies and institutions that are indirectly involved in adult education (e.g. the Croatian Employment Service that coordinates all active employment measures) also participate at the national level. All national stakeholders are involved in the programming and promotion of agendas for adult education, i.e. implementing national strategic plans and establishing a framework for the operational activities of stakeholders at the local level.

The Croatian agenda for adult education follows the European educational agenda (the 2002 “Resolution on lifelong learning, the 2008 “Recommendations of the European Parliament and Council on the European Qualifications framework for lifelong learning”) and lifelong learning is included in adult education strategy documents, such as the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports for the 2013-2015 period, the Educational System Development Plan for the 2005-2010 period, the Strategy for the Development of the Educational System of the Republic of Croatia for the 2008-2014 period, the Agenda for Adult Education and the Adult Education Act, as well as bylaws pertaining to adult education.

The Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports for the period between 2013 and 2015 specifies that ensuring the wide availability of and participation in adult education programmes is one of the main priorities of lifelong learning policy dissemination and that special attention should be given to promoting the attractiveness of adult education and expanding the network of adult education programmes and institutions. Against this background, it is planned to continue supporting the basic education and training of adults as part of the literacy programme in order to include individuals without a primary school education in the process of lifelong learning.

As a result of following the European educational agenda and promoting adult education and lifelong learning in the Republic of Croatia, with a special emphasis on low-skilled citizens, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports implemented the renewed European agenda for adult learning, which is part of the Grundtvig lifelong learning programme of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in the 2012-2014 period. The viability of the project is reflected in the reform of the adult education system by implementing a new Agenda for Adult Education in the Republic of Croatia, based on the renewed European agenda for adult learning, the amendments to the Adult Education Act and all accompanying regulations, as well as in the drawing-up of a competence model for basic skills and the adult education curriculum.

Recommendations on the quality development of the adult education system are based on analysing the implementation of the renewed European agenda for adult learning within the proposal of the Strategy of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (2013) and the analyses of recommendations and conclusions following 25 discussions and three coordination meetings held across Croatia throughout the duration of the project against a background of system reform and on the basis of the existing SWOT system analysis.
1.1.1. Common guidelines and recommendations on the development of an adult education system: Renewed European agenda for adult learning and the Proposal of a science, education and technology agenda

The renewed European adult agenda for adult learning, based on the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, acknowledges lifelong learning and skill acquisition as key components in response to the current economic crisis, population ageing and the broader economic and social agenda of the European Union.

The crisis emphasised the potentially important role of adult education in achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, allowing adults, especially low-skilled and older workers, to improve their ability to adapt to the labour market and social changes. Adult education provides individuals affected by unemployment, reorganisation and changes of occupation with a means for improving skills and learning new ones, and also contributes significantly to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.

The proposal of the science, education and technology agenda suggests innovating the entire Croatian educational system via a lifelong learning concept that will make education constantly available to each individual, regardless of demographic, and also acknowledge different forms of learning. Lifelong learning, science and innovations form a knowledge triangle, which is provided with the conditions to function efficiently by the government.

Since a brochure titled “The renewed European agenda for adult learning” was created during the project and the entire text was translated, the manual will focus on the identical or similar guidelines for the development of the adult education system in the Renewed European adult agenda for adult learning and the Proposal of the science, education and technology agenda. The analysis should be used for drafting a new national agenda for adult education and lifelong learning, and as inspiration and guidelines for local and national education stakeholders during the planning and programming of national or regional projects based on the concept of lifelong learning.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Renewed European agenda for adult learning (guidelines)</th>
<th>Proposal for an agenda for science, education and technology (guidelines and measures)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make lifelong learning and mobility a reality:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• encourage quality adult education tenders that lead to the acquisition of qualifications recognised on the EQF level</td>
<td>• define new professional and qualification standards based on current and future labour market needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• promote employer inclusion in workplace education</td>
<td>• improve and expand learning, education, training and supplemental training on and from the workplace, elaborate specific programmes for education, training and supplemental training in small and medium-sized enterprises for existing and potential entrepreneurs via calls to programme tenders on the basis of agreed competences and learning outcomes define the conditions and procedures for encouraging cooperation between adult education institutions and business persons and the local government for the purpose of improving conditions for practical teaching, apprenticeships and adult education programme exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the use of information and communications technology (e-learning)</td>
<td>• encourage the use of information and communications technology in education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• establish a functional system of informal and formal education evaluation</td>
<td>• develop processes and a system of recognising informally and formally acquired knowledge and skills: define processes and a system for evaluating of previously acquired knowledge and skills at all levels of education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1

<table>
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<th>Renewed European agenda for adult learning (guidelines)</th>
<th>Proposal for an agenda for science, education and technology (guidelines and measures)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• develop quality assurance of adult education institutions (accreditation system)</td>
<td>• improving criteria for the initial accreditation and reaccreditation of adult education programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• improving the quality of adult-learning staff (by defining competence profiles, establishing effective systems for initial training and professional development and facilitating mobility)</td>
<td>• establishing a project for developing qualification standards for adult learning staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensuring a viable and effective system for funding adult learning (providing support for those who cannot pay contribution to funding from all stakeholders)</td>
<td>• defining the processes of coordinating funding between the various competent ministries and the national and local authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensuring a viable and effective system for funding adult learning (providing support for those who cannot pay contribution to funding from all stakeholders)</td>
<td>• defining informal education programmes that are of special interest to society and providing financial support for their implementation including unemployed individuals in formal education programmes required for obtaining a higher level of qualification through financial stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensuring a viable and effective system for funding adult learning (providing support for those who cannot pay contribution to funding from all stakeholders)</td>
<td>• developing and funding educational services for the purpose of employment through which accredited providers are paid mostly based on employing unemployed individuals they had previously educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensuring a viable and effective system for funding adult learning (providing support for those who cannot pay contribution to funding from all stakeholders)</td>
<td>• proposing an optimal model for the financial stimulation of individuals and employers based on analysis of the possibility and justifiability of introducing financial incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• developing mechanisms for ensuring that educational provision better meets labour market needs</td>
<td>• integrating lifelong learning and adult education agendas with the goals of social, economic, regional and cultural development and developing models and tools for predicting future needs for knowledge and qualifications consistent with the development goals foreseeable by demographic and migrational changes by implementing agendas for employment and social care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• intensifying cooperation and partnership between all the stakeholders relevant for adult learning, especially at the regional and local levels in the context of developing “learning regions” and local learning centres</td>
<td>• encouraging, developing and implementing adult education programmes in smaller settlements, undeveloped and rural areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, developing digital literacy and basic skills and forms of literacy needed for participating actively in modern society</td>
<td>• drawing up improved primary and secondary education programmes adapted for adults and summarised based on the evaluation of the necessary key competences and the time required for their acquisition in order to prepare trainees for entering the labour market and continuing their education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• improving adult literacy and numeracy skills, developing digital literacy and basic skills and forms of literacy needed for participating actively in modern society</td>
<td>• ensuring free basic adult education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• improving access to adult learning for migrants, Roma, disadvantaged groups, refugees and people seeking asylum (including learning the language of the host country)</td>
<td>• drawing up and implementing priority formal and informal adult education programmes for citizens without primary school education, with a lower level of education, the socially marginalised and excluded, disabled persons, senior citizens and immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>• enhancing learning opportunities for older adults in the context of active ageing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• addressing the learning needs of people excluded from learning, such as those in hospitals, care homes and prisons</td>
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The accompanying table clearly shows the alignment of the guidelines and measures in the Proposal for an agenda for science, education and technology with the guidelines of the Renewed European agenda for adult learning. Both documents may have a strategic purpose in the planning, programming and realisation of projects related to stakeholders connected to adult education, as well as drawing up a national Agenda for adult education and lifelong learning. When drawing up the Agenda for adult education and lifelong learning, attention should also be paid to the recommendations that are not priority objectives for adult education in Europe, but a priority in the quality development of a national adult education system and pertain to improving the organisation, management, analyses and funding of the adult education system in Croatia (guideline of the Proposal for a science, education and technology agenda). Guidelines and measures that are excluded or barely included in the Proposal for an agenda for science, education and technology should be included in the new Agenda for adult education and lifelong learning and they are also required for improving and obtaining data and analysing the adult education system by participating in international research and studies and encouraging own researches pertaining to the area in question, as well as creating an extensive database in order to better prepare and plan strategy documents and legislation at the national level. Guidelines and measures should also be used to enhance the role of civic associations, cultural institutions and sports organisations in the implementation of informal and formal adult education programmes because they are currently underrepresented in the Croatian adult education system compared to the rest of Europe. Finally, the new Agenda should give guidelines for encouraging the inclusion of transversal key competences (such as initiatives and entrepreneurship, cultural sensibility etc.) in adult education programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Renewed European agenda for adult learning (guidelines)</th>
<th>Proposal for an agenda for science, education and technology (guidelines and measures)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Enhancing the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments:</td>
<td>• improving the organisation, management and funding of adult education: defining procedures for analysing strategy implementation, decision-making, management and monitoring determining the competences and responsibilities of ministries, agencies, employment services and other government and local organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• promoting the acquisition of transversal key competences (such as learning to learn, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship) – especially by applying the European Key Competence Framework within the adult-learning sector</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• enhancing the role of cultural organisations (such as museums, libraries, etc.), civil society, sporting organisations and other bodies as creative and innovative settings for non-formal and informal adult learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exploiting new opportunities for distance learning and the creation of e-learning tools and platforms in order to reach new target groups, in particular those with special needs or who live in remote areas</td>
<td>• organising open digital learning material and aids with free access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult-learning sector:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• participating actively in and implementing key messages resulting from major international surveys and studies such as the Adult Education Survey (AES), the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• collecting sufficient baseline data on, for instance, participation, providers, financing, the outcomes and the wider benefits of learning for adults</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Common guidelines and measures in the renewed European agenda for adult learning and the Proposal for an agenda for science, education and technology.
1.1.2. Analysis of the recommendations and inclusions of local adult education stakeholders for the development of an adult education system at the national level – discussion results

Discussion participants

Discussions/panels were held at the local level from October 2013 to June 2014. 186 participants took part in a total of 25 discussions that were held in 25 cities in 18 Croatian counties and in the City of Zagreb. The discussion target group were the stakeholders relevant for adult education, such as adult educational institutions, secondary schools, the local HZZ (Croatian Employment Service), development agencies, local and regional self-government units, government authorities etc. Participants were invited via e-mail, however they were not given any additional incentives to take part in the workshops in order to see how many people were actually interested in the topic.

The majority of participants came from adult secondary schools (31.69% of the total participants), while the smallest number of participants came from local self-government units (12% of the total participants). Upon closer examination of the list of participants, it can be seen that the number of people employed in development agencies (organisations responsible for coordinating the implementation of county development strategies) participating in the discussions was insignificant considering that the topic was closely related to local development. The number of participants that came from adult education institutions was also relatively low (37 participants overall, i.e. 20.22% of the total number of participants) considering they were a key discussion target group and that the majority of invitations were sent to adult educational institutions.

The number of participants that came from the Croatian Employment Service was sufficient, with a total of 31 participants or 16.94% coming from the regional offices of the HZZ. Only 3.83% of all participants came from other organisations, mostly from chambers and non-governmental organisations, which is negligible. Only a small number of civic organisations participated in the discussions, which indicates a low level of awareness and interest in the topic of adult education in the tertiary sector as well as insufficient involvement in adult education. This may well be a consequence of the manner in which the invitations were communicated to the tertiary sector (indirectly via local and regional self-government units). The number of private sector/employer representatives (private adult educational institutions notwithstanding) was also negligible, which indicates little interest in activities pertaining to the area of human resource development organised by the public sector. The faint interest of employers in participating in policy planning activities at the local level has a negative effect on the process of relevant local strategy development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation type</th>
<th>Nr. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult educational institutions</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary schools</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian Employment Service</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local and regional self-government units</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government authorities</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>186</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The response rate was low in most cities. Seven participants took part in discussions on average, which is a negligible number considering the topic. A sufficient number participants took part in the discussions held in Split, Osijek and Koprivnica (15 participants), while in other towns, such as Petrinja and Knin, only two or three local stakeholders participated in the discussions.

The faint interest in participating in the discussions from relevant stakeholders can be attributed to the insufficient continued promotion of the topic at the local level and the lack of motivation to participate in initiatives whose scope exceeds the development and implementation of adult education programmes.

Topics and concluding remarks

The objectives of the discussion, in greater detail, were as follows:

- promoting adult education and involving stakeholders in activities related to adult education,
- encouraging stakeholder networking on the local labour market,
- ensuring that the adult education agenda is included in the framework of local development,
- introducing local stakeholders to the concept of key competences.

The discussions lasted 2 to 3 hours on average and the agenda included the following topics:

- introduction of the project,
- a comparison of guidelines from the Renewed European agenda for adult learning and the Proposal for a science, education and technology agenda (in the context of adult education and lifelong learning),
- presentation of the local context for human resource development,
- discussion on the problems of adult education at the local level and the potential solutions,
- presentation of the key competence concept.

Beside the project team presentations, the basic and most extensive part of the workshop related to project activities and the general framework of the agenda for adult education at the local and national levels in Croatia was the discussion on the state of adult education in the counties, the problems that the stakeholders related to the sector have to deal with and identifying activities that can help improve the situation. The moderators wrote down specific conclusions for each county in agreement with the participants at the end of every workshop. Similarities were noted between the workshop stakeholders in each county, which allowed the conclusions to be systemised in terms of the most represented topics. There were barely any differences between the counties in terms of the needs and limitations they are faced with, which facilitated making concluding remarks. The concluding remarks were analysed by extracting the most frequent issues and challenges in order to accurately estimate the views of the local stakeholders on the state of adult education at the local and national levels.

Local stakeholders identified the issues of adult education at the national and local levels and divided them into 4 basic categories (according to the project team and based on the answers given by local stakeholders):

- local partnerships for human resource development have not been sufficiently realised;
- the adult education system at the national and local levels has not been sufficiently developed and efficient (including means of funding);
- questionable quality of the teaching process and adult education programme;
- citizens lack motivation and awareness of the need for lifelong learning.

Each of the aforementioned categories includes a number of issues that the discussion participants frequently identified as key for their environment.
After analysing the issues identified in adult education, five common priorities for improving the quality of the adult education system in the Republic of Croatia were extracted from the 25 issues/recommendations: the developing of local partnerships, standardising adult education programmes and the means of their implementation, introducing a system for the external assessment of participants and institutions, motivating citizens to participate in lifelong learning and motivating entrepreneurs to participate in human resource development. Motivation does not just include the notion of promoting ideas, but also concrete and innovative models of co-financing.

The priority, as the most important conclusion of the discussions (72% of all conclusions and recommendations made at the local level), concerns the establishment of local partnerships that are key for improving the quality of adult education at the local level. This should be made a priority, which we will further elaborate subsequently. The other priority for improving the adult education system refers to the national level (60% of all conclusions and recommendations made at the local level) and concerns adopting a standardised programme that defines the means of implementation (primarily professional retraining and training) executed by the Ministry of Science, Education and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education.

Conclusions that the project team placed in the category of insufficient development and efficiency of the adult education system refer to the following system deficiencies and issues: no standardisation of programmes and the means for their implementation since adult educational institutions draft the programmes; no external institution evaluation system or issuing of authentic instruments; the purposefulness and the slow manner in which the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training...
and Adult Education approve adult education programmes and the lack of defining and co-financing of programmes of national interest (except for the continued funding of adult education after the end of the Literacy Decade project and within the Active Employment Measures programme conducted by the Croatian Employment Service).

**Chart 4**

**NATIONAL LEVEL PRIORITIES**

At 60% of the discussions, the participants reached the conclusion that one of the biggest issues identified in the adult education system is the lack of standardised programmes and the regulations for their implementation. This conclusion mainly refers to the existence of a large number of programmes for similar or identical occupations/competences that differ in implementation, the number of hours required for receiving an authentic instrument that confirms the successful completion of the programme, and the content. Every institution was granted a mandate for creating a programme, which leads to significant disparities between similar or identical adult education programmes. The lack of standardisation leads to a failure for the participants and orderers to adapt to the educational service market because it is difficult to assess the quality of the programmes. The standardisation of programmes, especially those that are of particular value for the strategic priorities of the country, would make the market more transparent for orderers of educational services (e.g. the HZZ or the Ministry of Veterans’ Affairs) and institutions. Quality standards should also include means of implementation and programme content. It is assumed (in the context of adult learning) that programmes requiring more teaching hours for completion (regular attendance with a 100% completed curriculum) are of greater quality because they require participants to become more active and focus on class requirements, continuing work, studying and improving skills and allow daily consultations and the satisfaction of the participants’ individual needs. In order to ensure the same quality of consultative and instructive teaching (which covers a minimum of 2/3 of group consultation hours, i.e. prescribed curriculum hours) and correspondence and consultative course programmes (a minimum of 10% of the total teaching hours prescribed by the curriculum), institutions should have transparent sources of knowledge at their disposal so that the participants could work independently (Articles 38, paragraph 3 and 39, paragraph 2 of the Ordinance on Standards and Specifications, the Mode and Procedures for Determining the Fulfilment of Conditions in Adult Education Institutions, Official Gazette 129/2008, 52/2010), which is frequently not the case.

A large number of participants (identified as an important issue at 40% of the discussions) also consider that independent external assessments of learning outcomes should be introduced for receiving an authentic instrument, i.e. certificate in order to get a more objective picture of the actual effects of the learning and teaching processes. The current system also allows institutions that draw up and implement programmes to assess learning outcomes, which may lead to subjectivity and an unclear selection of assessment criteria. In the opinion of the participants, the quality of adult education programme implementation is often questionable, and the reason for that is the lack of competence of the adult education staff and the infrequent checks and monitoring of the teaching and learning processes.

At the discussions, the participants arrived at the conclusion (40% of total conclusions) that motivation and the citizens’ level of awareness regarding the possibilities and need for continuing learning are insufficient, making this, together with the self-financing of programmes, the main reason for poor system development and the small number of participants involved in adult education (2.4% of the population of the Republic of Croatia). The reasons for insufficient interest are the co-financing of adult education programmes by participants (60% of participants finance their own education), the lack of awareness of the benefits of education and lifelong learning and the possibilities offered to the population at large. Furthermore, education remains unavailable to the majority of the population due to the high costs (e.g. low purchasing power) and poor traffic connections in some parts of the country, which makes attending classes difficult or impossible.
According to the discussion participants (36 % of the total number of recommendations), *employers* do not invest sufficient funds in human resource development, which is one of the reasons why the system is underdeveloped, and for the generally low level of citizen participation in adult education programmes.

36 % percent of the total number of given issues and recommendations refers to the current slow *process* of obtaining a positive expert opinion on the programme or an order for implementing the programme, which are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Adult Education. The purposefulness of this procedure was also called into question. The programmes are currently being drawn up by adult education institutions and in order to implement the programme, a positive expert opinion needs to be obtained from the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, as well as an order to implement the programme from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (Articles 20, 21, 22 and 43 of the Ordinance on Standards and Specifications, the Mode and Procedures for Determining the Fulfilment of Conditions in Adult Education Institutions, Official Gazette 129/2008, 52/2010). It was suggested that the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports appoint a task force that would be responsible for drawing up the programme in order to achieve standardisation, which would be made binding by the Minister. The Childminder Training Programme is an example of such good practice (Official Gazette 89/2013, 108/2013 and 111/2013). Numerous bad examples were given when the institutions could not react in time to the Croatian Employment Service's calls for public tenders for the implementation of programmes as part of taking active employment measures, because the length of the said process exceeded the time during which applications could be submitted. In addition to the duration of the process, the lack of standardisation (in terms of teaching hours and the means of implementation) was also seen as an extenuating circumstance regarding the submission of applications for tenders for taking active employment measures. This affected the price offer during calls for tender and the institutions were not given equal footing as regards the pricing of their services on the market.

### 1.2. Recommendations on the quality development of the adult education system at the local level

#### 1.2.1. Analysis of the recommendations and conclusions of local adult education stakeholders for the development of the adult education system at the local level – discussion results

The discussions at the local level were organised to increase stakeholder mobilisation at the local level regarding adult education, but also to stimulate broad groups of stakeholders whose primary concerns are topics related to local development. Their mutual interaction and moderating conducted by the project team should contribute to a better understanding of development processes and the role of stakeholders related to the adult education sector in the overall planning of agendas for human resource development at the local level. MZOS and the project partners organised these discussions in an attempt to further explore the level of interest in adult education and to gain insight into the stakeholders' views on the challenges they are faced with on a daily basis at the local level.

After analysing the conclusions reached at the discussions, the following were singled out as the most frequent issues related to the development of an adult education system: the insufficient development of local partnerships, co-financing programmes important for developing the local community, co-financing the transportation of participants to county centres where the adult education institutions are located, the inability to conduct practical classes with entrepreneurs or at specialised venues in counties, and the disproportion of adult education institutions in the region, considering that some counties have an excess (Vukovar-Srijem and Istria) while others counties (Dubrovnik-Neretva and Lika-Senj) lack the said institutions.

**Chart 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL LEVEL PRIORITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priorities for the development of an adult education system at local level in terms of frequency regarding discussion conclusions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local partnerships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The lack of local partnerships for human resource development was identified as a major issue for the adult education system. The most frequent conclusions regarding this category were as follows: lack of local partnerships, lack of interest of entrepreneurs in human resource development and lack of networking, i.e. no single programme database, the needs of the local community, applying for tenders etc. The local stakeholders concluded at 72% of the discussions that the key issue of adult education is the lack of or poor functioning of relevant partner structures that include participants from the public, private and civil sectors. This is mainly a reference to the lack of cooperation and the inability to reach an agreement on the most important issues related to adult education, as well as the broader topics of human resource development between the organisations and institutions that are crucial for the social and economic development at the county level. This conclusion refers in particular to the lack of coordination between stakeholders in the human resource development sector and stakeholders responsible for the economic priorities of counties. The agendas for human resource development (including adult education) are often not aligned with the priorities of regional economic and industrial development. The participants pointed out that education is not aligned with the strategic development needs of various industries and they also mentioned the lack of adequate information and analyses on the future needs of the economy. The importance of this issue in resolving the problem of aligning agendas and programmes in the area of education with the needs of economy was emphasised at 20% of the discussions (lack of networking and information on needs etc.). The employers’ lack of interest in participating in various local development initiatives was also emphasised as a major drawback in the development and implementation of programmes and agendas for human resource development. The reason for this is the failure of employers to recognise the profile and competences of workers that are required in the long run. The lack of employer interest was highlighted as an issue in the adult education sector at 36% of the discussions because of the lack of information for creating adequate programmes and agendas.

The participants at 32% of the discussions pointed out that adult education programmes are not aligned with local market needs, which is an issue. They also believe that the programmes are being drawn up in an ad hoc manner, based on insufficient and unreliable data and that it is sometimes not even used in the creation of new programmes, which are then dependent on the intuition and subjective motives of the institution owners. A large number of programmes are approved without previously conducting market research or stating detailed reasons for their implementation.

One of the major issues of the adult education system is the lack of financial means necessary for implementing the programme. On the one hand, citizens lack the means for investing in their own education (currently 60% of citizens finance their own education) and their share in the overall financing of adult education is slowly diminishing due to the economic crisis and lack of means. On the other hand, the subsidisation of education by local self-government units is not sufficient to maintain a viable adult education system at the local level and to increase participation in formal and informal education. Free adult education programmes are mostly implemented by the regional offices of the Croatian Employment Service as part of taking active employment measures.

All conclusions reached at the discussions, as well as the causes and effects of key issues identified in the adult education system at the local level, are the result of debating with stakeholders. The stakeholder sample is not representative, but the results are significant because they can give us insight into the actual situation on the ground as well as the problems and situations that the various participants are faced with during the operational implementation of programmes and agendas for adult education.

### 1.2.2. Recommendations for the inclusion of adult education in the local development processes – adult education and lifelong learning in county strategies for human resource development 2011 – 2013

Practical operationalisation of the concept of lifelong learning and adult education is occurring at the local county level. The key stakeholders related to adult education are mainly participants in the programme and can be divided into different social groups, such as employed, entrepreneurs, unemployed, pupils, students, retired people, marginalised social groups etc. Adult education programmes may be implemented by public open universities, adult education institutions, primary schools, secondary schools, higher education institutions, language schools, institutions that provide accommodation and care for people with special needs, prison institutions and other legally sanctioned adult education institutions. Local and regional self-government units are responsible for the strategic coordination and for directing measures for adult education to areas or target groups that need it.

Other organisations and institutions at the local level, such as civic associations or employers, implement informal adult education programmes, while the HZZ is responsible for coordinating the implementation of active employment measures containing basic elements of adult education.

### Agenda for adult education at the local level – Strategies for human resource development

The agenda for adult education at the local county level is part of development strategies that include goals and priorities for the economic and social development of counties. All the counties in Croatia and the City of Zagreb pay special attention to human resource development as part of their overall development strategies and constantly develop and implement, to an extent, the strategies for human resource development. The goal of these strategies is
to coordinate and define the priorities for employment policies, education (including adult education), social inclusion and improving the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises. They are usually drafted with the purpose of implementing policies in a particular timeframe (3 – 7 years). Adult education and lifelong learning are represented in all strategies for human resource development to an extent, but they vary in form and intensity.

The drawing up of the Strategies for human resource development 2011–2013 for all counties in the Republic of Croatia was conducted as part of the IPA Human Resource Development Operational Programme with the purpose of establishing an institutional framework for human resource development at the county level and enhancing the capacities of local stakeholders for the development and implementation of human resource development measures.

The methodology for drafting strategy documents is pursuant to the Ordinance on the mandatory content, drafting methodology and assessment methods of county development strategies (Official Gazette 53/10) and aligned with the procedures and standards applicable in the EU.

Each document is structured as follows:

- Introduction/Summary
- Analysis of the social and economic situation
- SWOT analysis
- Vision and priorities
- Description of priorities and measures
- Strategy implementation: Financial framework
- Strategy implementation: Institutional framework
- Monitoring and reporting
- Attachments (statistical indicators, action plan, project bases...)

Broadly speaking, the SRLJP presents the hierarchically medium-term strategy documents that actively support the sustainable development of the community by taking its local needs into consideration. The strategies also promote partnership as one of the key principles when identifying the causes of uncompetitiveness, unemployment and social exclusion within the scope of socio-economic opportunities characteristic of each county. In that regard, these documents cover all the relevant data regarding the labour market and the conditions for economic development in order to define the measures and activities for reducing problem intensity and the appropriate human resource development as precisely as possible.

The analysis of the socio-economic situation that precedes the operative measures recommended in the strategy documents of human resource development generally includes three basic areas: regional economic situation, education and labour market analysis. The focus is placed on employment, i.e. the disproportion between supply and demand on the labour market, sensitive social group issues, the lack of required education among adults and the need for the active participation of civil sector groups in local development decision making.

These strategy documents are also programming documents, whose priorities are aligned in their entirety with other national and supranational strategies (EU) and in that regard serve as a valuable foundation for creating a project idea base suited for financing from national and European funds, and particularly the European Social Fund (ESF).

All Strategies are aligned with the following strategy documents:

- Europa 2020 – strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
- Joint Assessment of the Employment Policy Priorities of the Republic of Croatia (JAP)
- Joint Inclusion Memorandum of the Republic of Croatia (JIM)
- appropriate county development strategies

The drafting and implementation of strategies resumed and new revised strategies for the period between 2014 and 2020 are currently being drafted at the county level. This document can aid local stakeholders in improving the parts of their strategy documents pertaining to adult education.

Adult education and lifelong learning in county strategies for human resource development 2011 – 2013

The project team analysed the way in which adult education was described and analysed in the sections of the SRLJP pertaining to socio-economic analysis. This part of the strategy deals with the current situation on the ground and is key to the subsequent creation of implementation priorities and measures, so it was necessary to thoroughly inspect the depth and manner in which local stakeholders dealt with adult education. This information can give us a general insight into stakeholders’ views on the importance of adult education for human resource development in counties, but also reveal how each topic was approached methodologically.
The analysis of programmes and the number of adult education institutions in each county, as presented in the strategies, enables us to get an overview of the representation of stakeholders related to adult education in terms of adult education programme offers. Adult education in counties mostly includes institutions that provide formal education: public open universities, secondary schools and higher education institutions. Each county also implements measures as part of HZZ’s (regional office) Active Employment Policy (APZ) in cooperation with their partners. In most cases, county development agencies, non-governmental organisations and organisations that cannot provide authentic instruments.

By gaining insight into the number of adult education institutions and the thematic coverage of lifelong learning issues, it is easy to detect disproportion in strategy information. The reason for this lies in the lack of a standardised adult education programme, as well as in the inconsistent manner of indicating institutions and the number of participants in the observed period. As a result, certain strategy information lacks adequate quantification and transparent differentiation in terms of formal and informal types of education.

This analysis also shows that the data used by SRLJP is incomplete because MZOS’s data indicate a significantly larger number of educational institutions. It is assumed that the local stakeholders only included institutions that are active in the implementation of programmes in their analysis.

The exact number of educational institutions in terms of adult education programme offers could not be determined in 6 out of 21 strategies (28.6 %), while the number varies significantly from case to case, which may indicate the lack of a standardised methodology for analysing the relevant topic.

The separate thematic coverage of lifelong learning is also a point of concern. In 14 cases (66.7 %), adult education and lifelong learning was covered separately or as part of the topic of overall education in counties, while in other cases it was not covered adequately or recognised as an analyzable category, despite the fact that all strategy documents consider the promotion of lifelong learning a means for increasing employability and maintaining workforce competitiveness. This information indicates a lack of strategy drafting methodology. The logic behind strategy implementation (goals, priorities, measures, activities) should completely rely on the analysis of the current situation. In the case of inconsistencies between analysis and strategy implementation logic, we can agree that the strategic planning procedure was deficient and that it did not necessarily take into account the needs of the local community. Lack of information can also be a contributory factor, but excluding the topic of adult education from the analytical part of the strategy still remains concerning.

It should be noted that there are visible differences in the approach to this issue, which directly affects the quality of conducting a comparative analysis and as such indicate a need to establish a standardised strategy that will allow adequate design, monitoring and assessment of lifelong learning and adult education at the county level. Beside standardisation, i.e. a further elaborated strategy form, data quality should also be highlighted. Data should be updated, compared to data from other counties and regularly obtained in order to analyse trends. The drafting methodology for analysing the state of adult education should also be standardised, which requires quality data and cooperation between several different stakeholders.
The tables below show the number of adult education institutions in each county and the separate thematic coverage of lifelong learning included in the strategies:

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of institutions</th>
<th>Thematic coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. ZAGREB</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. KRAPINA-ZAGORJE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SISAK-MOSLAVINA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. KARLOVAC</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. VARAĐIN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. KOPRIVNICA- KRIŽEVCI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. BJELOVAR- BILOGORA</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. PRIMORJE-GORSKI KOTAR</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. LIKA-SENJ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. VIROVITICA-PODRAVINA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. POŽEGA-SLAVONIA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. BROD-POSAVINA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. ZADAR</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. OSIJEK-BARANJA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV. ŠIBENIK-KNIN</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI. VUKOVAR- SYRMIA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII. SPLIT- Dalmatia</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII. ISTRIA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIX. DUBROVNIK- NERETVA</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX. MEDIMURJE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXI. CITY OF ZAGREB</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Number of relevant activities</td>
<td>Number of relevant measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| I. ZAGREB                     | 5                           | • Employee and employer education  
• Creating conditions for lifelong learning |
| II. KRAPINA-ZAGORJE           | 3                           | • Promoting lifelong learning |
| III. SISAK-MOSLAVINA          | 2                           | • Promoting and supporting the adult education system |
| IV. KARLOVAC                  | 5                           | • Developing lifelong learning |
| V. VARAŽDIN                   | 2                           | • Encouraging lifelong learning |
| VI. KOPRIVNICA-KRIŽEVCI       | 2                           | • Developing lifelong learning and workforce mobility |
| VII. BIJELOVAR-BILOGORA       | 3                           | • Lifelong learning |
| VIII. PRIMORJE-GORSKI KOTAR    | 0                           | -                                                                                           |
| IX. LIKA-SENJ                 | 1                           | • Enhancing the lifelong professional orientation system and other labour market support mechanisms |
| X. VIROVITICA-PODRAVINA       | 2                           | • Supporting lifelong learning development                                                   |
| XI. POŽEGA-SLAVONIA           | 2                           | • Supporting lifelong learning enhancement and promotion                                       |
| XII. BROD-POSAVINA            | 1                           | • Enhancing HZZ’s lifelong professional orientation system and other labour market support mechanisms |
| XIII. ZADAR                   | 3                           | • Promoting the need and importance of lifelong learning                                     |
| XIV. OSIJEK-BARANJA           | 4                           | • Aligning educational and lifelong learning programmes with labour market needs             |
| XV. ŠIBENIK-KNIN              | 2                           | • Enhancing vocational and lifelong learning education relating to labour market needs       |
| XVI. VUKOVAR-SYRMIA           | 1                           | • Improving the concept of lifelong learning                                                |
| XVII. SPLIT-DALMATIA          | 2                           | • Developing the lifelong learning programme                                                  |
| XVIII. ISTRIA                 | 3                           | • Developing and establishing lifelong learning programmes                                    |
| XIX. DUBROVNIK-NERETVA        | 4                           | • Promoting the need and importance of lifelong learning                                     |
| XX. MEDIJMURJE                | 4                           | • Encouraging lifelong learning                                                               |
| XXI. CITY OF ZAGREB           | 5                           | • Improving vocational education and training quality  
• Connecting lifelong learning with the labour market |
Analysis of adult education and lifelong learning representation in terms of priority structure

By conducting an in-depth analysis of priorities and measures included in the county strategies for human resource development, it is possible to infer the extent that adult education and the concept of lifelong learning are identified as key, i.e. to see whether it is placed high in the hierarchy of priorities or if it have an operational role whose outcomes are visible at the level of implementation. This way, it is possible to determine whether a vertical thematic distribution exists, as well as the level at which it was recognised or if adult education and the concept of lifelong learning is being implemented according to the principles of horizontal approach as a supporting activity included in another measure/priority.

The county level breakdown points to the unification of lifelong learning prioritisation, as evidenced by the fact that lifelong learning appears 1.05 times on average among the Strategy measures (a total of 22 measures in 21 Strategies), which means that in practice almost all counties have at least one measure explicitly dedicated to lifelong learning and we can observe that the views on the importance of adult education are the same across the country. It should be noted that the city of Zagreb and Zagreb County deviate from the average by applying two measures for each thematic context (separately for each Strategy). Despite the fact that only one of each measure is explicitly relevant, it is evident that the other two measures (“Improving vocational education and training quality” in the City of Zagreb and “Employee and employer education” in Zagreb County) fit in the concept of lifelong learning with their high level of focus and who they directly contribute to through their activities.

The level of priority refers to the highest vertical thematic distribution within the Strategy and shows how adult education and lifelong learning is represented as a priority in only 4 counties (Zagreb, Karlovac, Osijek-Baranja and Vukovar-Syrmia), which is 19.1 % of the entire Strategy. It can be clearly inferred that thematic representation is not placed high up in the hierarchy of priorities at the county level and that most cases are dealt with at the operational level through other measures and activities.

By analysing the distribution of the obtained results, it is evident that adult education and lifelong learning are covered by a total of 296 activities, of which 240 (81.1 %) are not included in the benchmark, meaning that they are represented via supporting activities within another measure (etc. enhancing the capacity of educational institutions or human resource competitiveness on the labour market). Only 56 activities (18.9 %) that were directed at lifelong learning and adult education promotion were included in the benchmark (measures that directly promote the relevant topic), which points to the fact that adult education is mostly not considered a relevant topic and that it is usually implemented horizontally through other measures, i.e. it is implemented as a medium priority.
Beside the explicit thematic focus at every strategic level, the methodological approach to the assessment of adult education and lifelong learning representation is also monitored on the basis of activity analysis, i.e. direct results and the analysis of measure and target group descriptions. Only through such a comprehensive and multilevel approach can we see the actual extent of adult education representation in the strategies and the relevance of measures that are important to the observed activities.

The distribution of activities relevant to adult education and lifelong learning relevance shows a high level of representation (81.1 %) among other topics/measures that are not explicitly related to the topic of education. By observing strategies as a whole, we can infer that local stakeholders do not sufficiently prioritise the adult education policy as a separate topic. Adult education and lifelong learning has been prioritised along with the accompanying measures and activities only twice. A systematic approach to adult education requires a higher level of prioritisation and the inclusion of a large number of adult education measures in local strategies. This refers to measures that contribute to improving the system, enhancing capacities of sector stakeholders, improving the programmes and the manner of their implementation, and promoting the adult education and lifelong learning concept among potential participants. Only a systematic and organised approach to adult education can improve the quality of programmes and procedures that appear horizontally in other policies as support or a tool for their implementation (employment, social inclusion etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of priorities</th>
<th>Number of measures</th>
<th>Number of activities included in measure</th>
<th>Number of activities not included in measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. ZAGREB</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. KRAPINA-ZAGORJE</td>
<td>0</td>
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1.3. **Conclusions and recommendations for improving the adult education system at the national and local levels**

The recommendations for improving the adult education system were developed based on the common guideline analysis of the Renewed European agenda for adult learning and the Proposal of an agenda for science, education, and technology, SWOT analysis of the adult education system, the representation of adult education in county human resource strategies, conclusions reached at the discussions with local stakeholders held for the purpose of discussing the main challenges within and outside the adult education sector, the area of human resource development and the coordination meetings that had been held. The recommendations are not binding and are not the result of a comprehensive sector analysis, which needs to be conducted in order to get a clear picture of the situation and to determine comprehensive measures for implementing the adult education policy. The main purpose of these recommendations is to point to the existing guidelines at the European and national levels and to align the national guidelines and measures with local needs in order to encourage the development of a standardised national adult education policy that will contribute to the achievement of regional and local development objectives.

All the recommendations are the result of analysing the application of European strategy documents at the national level and discussions with stakeholders. Recommendations that pertain to the inclusion of adult education policies in local strategies for human resource development are the result of strategy analyses.

**Recommendations related to educational policy development at the local level:**

- **Renewing and strengthening human resource development partnerships and/or local development**

Local stakeholders clearly recognise the networking and joint effort of all stakeholders as one of the key challenges for improving the adult education system at the local level. The existing structure of local human resource development partnerships (local employment partnerships) at the county level are not sufficiently operational and their operations are reduced to ad hoc strategic planning interventions motivated by new cycles of EU fund programming and demands from various ministries. Strategy implementation and the monitoring and assessment of local interventions are mostly not being conducted according to plan or have been limited to active stakeholders only. The partnership approach to local intervention planning has not yet taken hold, which is evidenced by the lack of coherent logic in local strategy implementation. The areas in which stakeholders are more active are covered sufficiently, which does not necessarily cater to the needs of the local community. When discussing the strengthening of partnerships, it is important to note that engaging local stakeholders in these endeavours is essential for triggering the successful development processes. Local stakeholders need to initiate stronger networking and action within the scope of their mandates and capacities. This is particularly true for stakeholders related to adult education, whose participation in local human resource development through operational implementation is not sufficient. This policy is insufficiently represented considering its importance and that the small number of adult education measures included in a strategy means a smaller allocation of funds and fewer opportunities for system improvement. All counties should form permanent teams within the existing partnership structures, whose main purpose would be to obtain and analyse data on the needs for education and to draft, implement and promote adult education and lifelong learning programmes. Teams and working groups that are part of the existing partnerships should comprise employer representatives, institutions, the HZZ, regional and local self-government units and other relevant stakeholders, depending on county needs. The idea of forming special groups that will focus on a specific topic is not new. Similar, more or less successful attempts have been made, in various areas. Taking into consideration the low level of participation of stakeholders connected to education in the local development processes, could be the solution to the problem of representation and the further development of the adult education system at the local level.

- **Making adult education one of the priorities of local strategies**

Adult education should be emphasised in local human resource development strategies, so that it could be systematically promoted and developed at the local level. This means that adult education and lifelong learning should be prioritised as a special topic with its accompanying measures and activities. The strategic prioritisation of adult education would include the improvement of the adult education system, which would require the expansion of the service provider network and an improvement in the quality of managers, teachers and their working conditions. This priority should also include support in creating new educational programmes relevant to the market and the process of obtaining information on labour market needs. Local stakeholders should invest significant funds in the promotion of adult education and lifelong learning in order to increase the number of participants in adult education (this particularly refers to employers and the effort to encourage them to invest in human resources). It should be noted that the systematic implementation of adult education policies includes both formal and informal adult education programmes, which are mostly implemented as local initiatives by various stakeholders, especially civic associations.
• Improving educational programme development and enhancing educational service providers

Regularly obtaining and analysing data related to economic needs, as well as data related to potential participants in adult education programmes, such as the unemployed, employed, employers, retired people, marginalised groups, pupils, students etc., is necessary for the continuous development of relevant programmes. Such a complex endeavour requires the involvement of other stakeholders, such as the HZZ, the employers' association, chambers, employers, and regional and local self-government units (as development coordinators). This also includes the national level, which should set up a quality framework for human resource development (e.g. standardised programmes and an external assessment system). The programme development process should be clear to all adult education participants and should include a number of steps, at least for programmes of strategic importance for a certain region (others will be regulated by the market in accordance with user demands). Upon identification, programmes should be drawn up in accordance with valid professional standards and implemented in a manner that would allow participants to actually acquire relevant competences. This process requires competences acquired by the involved persons and, as has been said, a more effective legislation developed by MZOS. Service providers are required to invest in their own education in order to adequately develop and implement programmes. This capacity enhancing element is vital and must be included in the relevant strategies together with the tracing of financial sources (national budget, budget of local self-government units, EU programmes etc.)

• Promoting adult education as a local initiative with a special focus on raising employer awareness

Lifelong learning and adult education promotional activities are currently being conducted at the local level, although they are mostly initiated at the national level (e.g. Lifelong Learning Week). Local stakeholders should take responsibility for conducting a lifelong learning awareness campaign and should focus especially on working with employers. These measures should be taken continuously and funded by local self-government units, counties and other sources, such as the European Social Fund.

Recommendations related to the adult education system at the national level:

• Standardise adult education programmes

In order for the adult education system to function efficiently, it is necessary to establish an efficient framework. Participants in 60% of the discussions held as part of this project arrived at the conclusion that it is vital for adult education programmes to be developed by national authorities. This includes professional retraining and training programmes, i.e. programmes that can be identified by the HKO. It is necessary to determine priority programmes for the economic and social development of the country, which would be subsidised, while all the other programmes would be developed and implemented according to free market principles and the quality identified by the programme orderers. Standardised adult education programmes would improve the organisation and assessment system because they would set quality criteria for methodical programme implementation and determine mandatory content and learning outcomes. Institutions should start developing e-learning platforms that would include discernible didactic and methodical materials for the independent work of participants and the adult learning staff. Keeping records of individual consultations conducted via e-mail (especially for the current type of correspondence and consultative learning) would be an additional indicator of the implemented programme’s quality. In order to ensure that the institutions are all on an equal footing, they should issue calls for tender for the offer of adult education programmes (particularly the Croatian Employment Service during the drafting of tenders within active employment measures), take into consideration the existence of various adult education curricula and the differences in their duration and to further define the type of classes, the number of hours and the quality of the programme they wish to fund pursuant to the valid Ordinance on Standards and Specifications, the Mode and Procedures for Determining the Fulfilment of Conditions in Adult Education Institutions (Official Gazette 129/2008, 52/2010).

• Establishing an external assessment system for institutions and programmes (quality control)

Beside programme standardisation, the local stakeholders emphasised the importance of ensuring the external assessment of learning outcomes and to introduce an improved institution accreditation system that is implemented by adult education institutions. This would ensure the provision of quality educational services and single out providers that offer quality programmes and contribute to enhancing participants’ competencies. Recommendations made by local stakeholders are aligned with the recommendations and guidelines of European and national strategy documents.
• Developing models for labour market monitoring at the local and national levels

Adult education programmes have to be aligned with labour market needs. In order to achieve this, stakeholders from the public and private sectors need to cooperate with each other and adequate models for obtaining, processing and analysing data need to be developed to create answers in the form of concrete policies. Since attempts to develop such models at the local level proved unsuccessful or temporary, stakeholders believe that a framework for their mutual cooperation at the local level and the means for transforming relevant analyses and sector needs into policies should be established. The Renewed European agenda for adult learning and especially the Proposal of an agenda for science, education and technology (in the form of multiple action measures) tackle this issue and consider the development of tools for labour market monitoring extremely important for the development of an adult education and lifelong learning system. The announced founding of the National Council for the Development of Human Potential as the umbrella institution for the development of this type of model and planning an education system in accordance with the actual labour market and social needs, is extremely important.

• Developing measures for the promotion of human resource development in enterprises and for the inclusion of employers in workplace education

It is necessary to improve learning, education, training and workplace training by elaborating specific educational programmes for small and medium enterprises that lack departments for human resource development. Certain enterprises may offer specific programmes for their area of operation and business on the basis of agreed competences and learning outcomes through calls for tenders for programme offers and other institutions and enterprises would be allowed to continue such practice. It is necessary to develop financial incentive/benefit models for employers that invest in the development of their human resources, as well as incentives for cooperating with schools and institutions for the purpose of improving conditions for conducting practical teaching, apprenticeship and exercises.

Beside the aforementioned key recommendations for improving the system at the national level, the following needs should also be noted:

• To draft improved standardised formal adult education programmes that include basic lifelong learning competences and insist on the inclusion of other key competences (if required) in formal and informal adult education programmes. The improved adult education programmes that include the said competences shall constitute one of the institution's accreditation elements.

• To encourage the utilisation of remote learning by creating open study platforms (e-learning). That would allow the inclusion of broader target groups from all parts of Croatia in the educational process, which would contribute to the development of education in smaller settlements, undeveloped and rural areas, and for disabled persons, persons in care homes, prison institutions etc. E-learning would replace “correspondence and consultative courses” due to being more transparent and would also improve the current teaching quality. Owners of adult education institutions would achieve long-term financial benefit, while participants would achieve short-term benefit in the context of financing long distance transportation in order to receive education in city institutions.

• It is necessary to improve the quality of the adult learning staff by defining competence profiles, providing quality training and encouraging their mobility, as well as developing quality standards for the adult learning staff. The quality of the current system is reflected in the completion of courses related to the pedagogical and psychological competences of teachers working with children as well as in the training of teachers working in ASOO's adult education institutions, which is not sufficient considering the current system requirements.

• Institutions related to adult education (ministries, agencies, centres, institutes, universities...) should actively participate in international surveys and studies, such as the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), Adult Education Survey (AES) or Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS). International surveys are extremely important for the potential creation of adult education policies because they provide direct system analysis and guidelines for strategic planning and programming. Being a member state of the European Union, the obtained data provides additional opportunities for comparing our system with other member states and are relevant for creating educational policies in line with the individual needs of our education system within the EU. Such quantitative data provides the basis for the planning and programming of development projects at the national level and the ones that include stakeholders related to adult education. MZOS may be the provider and partner of these surveys. It is necessary to encourage centres for research and analysis, universities, institutes and associations to engage themselves and become providers of international projects and their own researchers and studies on adult education systems, with MZOS or ASOO as partners in order to obtain as much relevant data as possible for the purpose of system improvement.

• Intensifying the involvement of civil associations, cultural institutions (museums and libraries) and sports organisations in formal or informal education. Taking into consideration European experience (Norway, Ireland, Austria), the involvement of civil associations in the adult education system is extremely poor. It is recom-
mended to identify civil associations and intensify their involvement in the adult education system, especially in the context of programmes that are of interest to society, and not just the labour market because the associations have an advantage in the identification of content that citizens wish to study. European practice indicates that a large number of associations gathered under an umbrella association that acts as a union and coordinator of other association, can have a significant impact on the creation of quality adult education policies. At the present moment, local communities (cities) and adult education institutions founded by companies are the founders of institutions included in the adult education system in Croatia. Associations included in the adult education system are founded either by the Association of Institutions for Adult Education (ZUZOO), which is an association of private institutions and the Croatian Association for the Education of Adults, which is an association of institutions founded by the local community. This is quite uncommon for European countries. When it comes to the civil sector, it is necessary to point out that the Croatian Employers’ Association and the Croatian Andragogy Society are involved in the adult education system and are extremely important for policy making as advisory bodies, while civic associations founded for the purpose of promoting and practicing adult education and lifelong learning are still severely underrepresented.

Table 6

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<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS:</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES:</th>
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<td>• including the adult education system in the single education system of the Republic of Croatia</td>
<td>• low and insufficiently elaborated criteria for the foundation of institutions and exercising rights for implementing an adult education programme</td>
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<td>• the existence of a separate legislative and regulatory framework that governs the adult education system (Act (2007) and Ordinances (2008))</td>
<td>• a significant disparity between regions in terms of the number of institutions, which affects the availability and quality of implementation</td>
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<td>• the existence of a large number of institutions related to adult education (518)</td>
<td>• the existence of a national Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education that deals with issues of adult education (promotion, programmes, monitoring, training of adult learning staff...)</td>
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<td>• a large number of adult education programmes are available to adult education participants (primary education, secondary education, training and learning foreign languages)</td>
<td>• experience in conducting EU adult education projects (CARDS 2004, IPA, Grundtvig)</td>
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<td>• the involvement of stakeholders from non-governmental organisations in the adult education system (Croatian Employers’ Association, Croatian Andragogy Society, Association of Institutions for Adult Education – ZUZOO and the Croatian Association for the Education of Adults -HZPOU)</td>
<td>• the involvement of various national and public authorities in adult education (MZOS, MRMS, MG, MPO, HZZ, HOK,...)</td>
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<td>• the existence of an AZUP database (a common andragogical data register)</td>
<td>• adult education programmes have already been defined as programmes that enable the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities required for the acquisition of lifelong learning competences (Article 5 of the Adult Education Act, Official Gazette 07/2007)</td>
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<td>• adult education programmes are comprehensive and contribute to the realisation of lifelong learning in compliance with the current legislative and regulatory framework</td>
<td>• insufficient involvement of civic associations in the adult education system</td>
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Table 6

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<th>OPPORTUNITIES:</th>
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<td>• a large number of unemployed persons that need to be prepared for new challenges on the labour market through adult education and lifelong learning</td>
<td>• conflict of stakeholders’ interests regarding adult education (MZOS, HUP, ZUZOO, HZPOU, HOK)</td>
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<td>• EU membership of the Republic of Croatia requires recommendations of EU strategy documents on the need for constant growth of percentage of citizens participating in adult education (2.4% at the moment in the Republic of Croatia, EU’s objective for 2020 is 15%)</td>
<td>• financial and material inequality between stakeholders, especially adult education institutions, may influence involvement and participation in further system development</td>
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<td>• utilising key competences for lifelong learning in the improvement of adult education programmes in accordance with the European Framework of References for Key Competences</td>
<td>• MZOS and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education lack the available budgetary funds</td>
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<td>• the availability of EU funds for the development of the adult education system</td>
<td>• potential budget cuts regarding adult education due to a continuing increase in the budget deficit</td>
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<td>• the pending adoption of the Strategy for education, science and technology as an umbrella document that raises awareness about adult education and places the concept of lifelong learning as the basis for the entire adult education system, which requires alignment with the current legislative and regulatory framework</td>
<td>• stakeholders’ influence on the further development of the system for assessing informal adult education depending on particular interest</td>
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<td>• the application of information and communication technology in adult education (e-learning)</td>
<td>• failure to establish a cohesive policy during the implementation of basic and key competences for lifelong learning in educational programmes (this needs to be part of the curricular reform of the entire education system)</td>
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<td>• need for developing a system for assessing formally and informally acquired knowledge</td>
<td>• defining the purpose (and planning as well as programming) of adult education and lifelong learning regarding the labour market, and the decrease in importance of programmes of broader social interest</td>
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<td>• active participation in international research and studies</td>
<td>• resuming strategic planning without conducting system surveys and studies</td>
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<td>• new occupational standards and qualifications standards</td>
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<td>• establishing criteria for the accreditation and re-accreditation of institutions and programmes to ensure quality</td>
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<td>• encouraging volunteering in the adult education system</td>
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2. EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE: IRELAND, NORWAY AND AUSTRIA

2.1. Ireland – an example of a reform of the adult education system for the purpose of quality improvement at the national level

Ireland has a long tradition of adult education, also called Adult and Community Education, which includes a wide range of programmes and courses that are implemented by formal institutions, civic associations and even individuals. The education system is structured and improved in accordance with economic, social, cultural and personal needs. The idea of forming a partnership between competent authorities and citizens and the emphasis on personal and community development is what makes the Irish adult education system truly extraordinary. The primary goal of this social partnership is to ensure that informal experience and skills acquired by adults are valorised in the sense that they grant access to the adult education system and allow the acquisition of professional qualifications. Emphasis is also placed on the reintegration of adults who dropped out of school early and workplace education, which is often organised and financed by employers and unions. The adult education system as defined includes higher education, continuing education and training and systematic formal and informal learning.

The 2000 “Learning for Life” programme that was published in the White Paper ushered in a new era of adult education in the Republic of Ireland. Increasing access to higher education, strengthening the role of the education sector in the community and promoting workplace learning were highlighted as the principal guidelines for improving the adult education system. Other important legislations related to adult education in the Republic of Ireland include the Education Act (1998), the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999), the National Skills Strategy (2007) and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007).

The formal education of adults falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education and Skills, which is mainly responsible for promoting equality, social inclusion and the concept of lifelong learning. The Department also provides educational programmes aimed at adults that include courses following the completion of compulsory education, professional training for the unemployed, adult literacy and education in the community. Employment services and related programmes fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Social Protection. New employment offices were formed in 2012 (Intreo Offices) as the main point of contact for all employment services and as support for employees and employers. Other institutions that are relevant for adult education include the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation and the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Evening classes and self-organised educational groups exist informally and are mostly linked to marginalised (refugee), volunteer (elderly) or local interest groups (creative workshops for women). Several non-governmental organisations deal with adult education in the Republic of Ireland, with AONTAS and NALA as the most significant. AONTAS or the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation is a volunteer organisation whose primary goal is to promote a quality and complete adult education system available for everyone. NALA or the National Adult Literacy Agency is an independent organisation that aids people with low literacy skills (language and numeracy) with social inclusion and ensures that education is available that is suited for their needs.

The Irish National Framework of Qualifications is aligned with the European framework of qualifications and based on an external assessment and accreditation system and includes 10 educational levels. QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland), an agency formed in 2012, is an accreditation body for providers of adult education programmes and is also responsible for the development and monitoring of the national framework of qualifications and for the external assessment of further and higher education and professional training. The Irish National Framework of Qualifications was designed to integrate lifelong learning in public education in a way that would allow recognition and transparency, thereby ensuring active social inclusion. Attempts at active inclusion have been made in order to ensure that every citizen has equal and fair access to education and training, including those who encounter obstacles in their endeavour to enter the labour market (such as people with disabilities, people who have not completed compulsory education or people with low qualifications). The ultimate goal of social inclusion is to provide flexible educational programmes suited for the needs of individuals.
Levels 1 and 2 of the National Framework of Qualifications are especially important in the context of adult education. The aforementioned levels include the acquisition of basic competences and ensure the entrance of poorly employable, poorly qualified and other marginalised groups in the education system, for which participants are given a certificate. This solution is an excellent example of a cohesive policy for the implementation of basic skills in the educational system. The National Framework of Qualifications is an example of how to ensure vertical permeability in the education system for every individual through levels 1 and 2, which are not subject to a Junior Certificate and are based on the acquisition of basic literacy skills. Level 3 (up to the age of 16) refers to compulsory education and is a ticket for entering higher levels of education. Individuals who complete levels 4 and 5 (age 17 – 19) acquire the qualifications necessary for undergraduate education. Levels 6 – 10 include higher education ranging from undergraduate to doctoral studies.

In the last couple of years, the Irish education system has undergone a major institutional reform that can serve as an example of good practice in improving organisation and management and the monitoring of adult education. The FAS – the Irish National Education and Employment Authority – was dismissed and completely new structures were formed. SOLAS, an organisation founded by the Department of Education and Skills, is responsible for funding, planning and coordinating adult education programmes. Its ultimate goal is to make the education system more permeable and suited for labour market needs through the coordination of FET (Further Education and Training). The FET sector (roughly equivalent to professional and adult education in Croatia) provides a wide range of courses for persons over the age of 16 and is the main provider of professional re-training programmes and training for the employed and unemployed. It provides education and training in order to facilitate job finding and the acquisition of personal and social skills and qualifications (levels 1 – 6) of the framework of qualifications. The notion of the importance of developing skills that lead to a reduction of unemployment, proactivity, social inclusion and mobility is central to the FET’s strategy. The NSD (National Skills Database) was established in 2003 with the goal of obtaining all data concerning skill demand on the labour market and it was envisioned as a platform for analysing and predicting developments on the labour market. Until recently, the main providers of adult education programmes in the Republic of Ireland were Vocational Education Committees (VEC). VECs were responsible for developing programmes at the local level with the purpose of systemising quality postprimary education. In June 2013, 33 Committees were aggregated, and the responsibility for providing adult education programmes was handed over to the Education and Training Boards (ETB) that act in partnership with SOLAS. 16 boards were established in total and each one is responsible for maintaining the quality of all educational institutions within its local unit.
A five-year Further Education and Training Strategy (2014 – 2019) was adopted this year for the purpose of reforming education programmes within the FET (Further Education and Training) sector. The main strategic goals of the Strategy focus on aligning skills with the needs of the economy, the development of education programmes that correspond with national and international standards of quality, integrated planning and financing based on the objective analysis of socio-economic needs, social inclusion and the development of a system for the external assessment of education programmes.

The Irish experience taught us that investing in education should be a priority. The Republic of Ireland invested 30 % of the total funds allocated from the EU social funds. This proved an excellent move resulting in an increase of workforce quality, which in turn led to economic growth. Nevertheless, reforms and the systematic improvement of the Irish adult education system continue.

2.2. Austria – the “Learning Regions” programme as an example of improving the quality of adult education at the local level

Educational activities within the context of adult education in Austria are mostly an extension of professional training and retraining and are defined by age groups and the previously achieved level of education. Participants in programmes for the professional training and retraining of adults are usually over the age of 20. Initial professional education and the training of adults usually fall under the jurisdiction of the Federation and its provinces, while many training initiatives are organised by companies, private service providers and non-profit organisations.

Despite differences regarding organisation, legal status and service, the main areas of adult education in Austria are as follows:

- professional staff training organised by companies (organised by companies or partner companies, adult education institutions and other external organisations or organised through informal staff education at the workplace);
- continuing professional and workplace education (provided by educational institutions);
- upgrading basic competences and active employment measures is organised by the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice) as tools of active labour market policy;
- general adult education (e.g. provided by adult education centres) and political education;
- second chance education (education necessary for obtaining formal education certificates due to dropping out of school early).

Pursuant to the Austrian Constitution, the adult education sector is mostly regulated by provinces and counties, seeing that it does not fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government. The regulation of funding and organisation differs from one province to another. For reasons indicated above, the Federal Act on financing adult education and public libraries (Erwachsenenbildungs – Förderungsgesetz) was adopted in 1973 and espouses the idea of the voluntary promotion of adult education at the federal level and imposes a general obligation on the provinces to promote adult education, without including the parameters of the obligation. The Act was amended in 1990 and again in 2003. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection is responsible for the professional training of the staff, which is organised by the company, and for promoting the improvement of workforce quality via the Public Employment Service. The Public Employment Service funds programmes for upgrading workforce competence, but does not provide any education programmes. Such programmes are usually provided by public adult education institutions, such as the Vocational Training Institute – Berufsfördeungsinstitute (BFI) or the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber – Wirtschaftsfördeungsinstitute (WIFI). Programmes for upgrading basic competences are measures funded by the Public Employment Service whose purpose is to re-integrate persons in the labour market as soon as possible. The main goal of these programmes is to create a balance between supply and demand on the labour market by providing skills and professional knowledge, as well as personal and social competences necessary for the social inclusion of individuals. These measures should prepare individuals for various occupations and increase their basic competences and long-term chances for finding a job that is suited to their qualifications and abilities. Adult education in Austria is currently targeted at low-skilled people, immigrants and older people and focuses on the issues of key competences, recognising informal learning, the professional orientation of adults and raising awareness of lifelong learning.

The “Learning Regions” programme was developed by the Austrian Institute for Adult Education (OIEB) as part of the LEADER programme. The programme is funded from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), despite its content being related to the implementation of the concept of lifelong learning and education management in rural areas/regions. The programme mostly includes (or at least it used to in the beginning) the undeveloped regions of eastern Austria, where the population ranges from 30,000 to 150,000. The programme’s main objectives are connecting rural development with adult education, the gradual application of adult education in local development as a strategic element, the development of innovative projects related to education and lifelong learning, the application of lifelong learning in the regions and the stable and sustainable development of rural areas/regions.
The programme is targeted at inhabitants of regions included in the programme, regional institutions and the region itself. In the first phase of the programme, emphasis was placed on the creation of a network of stakeholders participating in the programme. Programme partners include adult education institutions, regional development agencies and local government institutions, stakeholders related to the area of employment, small and medium enterprises, associations related to tourism, environment, social issues, culture, health etc. and stakeholders. A stakeholder partner was selected from the partner network in each region and was appointed network coordinator for the relevant region. Partners in each region provided the innovative project base because the idea of the project was that educational development needs and regional interests would be recognised best at the local level. The project proposal was sent to the leading partner in the region, with the consent of the OIEB as the project (programme) provider. Beside the innovative learning projects, which were financed or co-financed in each region from the project budget for the benefit of the participants, common guidelines that were the responsibility of each regional network and its partners should also be noted: the coordination of the adult education offer in the region via a common database and basic services for participants, obtaining information from partners (cooperatively) and consulting potential regional participants, as well as the continuing promotion of lifelong learning programmes and concepts. Local level projects need to be innovative and inspire the development of other projects (so-called “beacons”) and they should also be related to professional education (professional training and retraining). Projects included in the “Learning Regions” programme deal with health issues, modern scientific knowledge related to agriculture, the utilisation of renewable energy sources, the identification of regional specificities by identifying and expanding knowledge on region-specific vegetables, the improvement of science competences in the region, education festivals and even school agricultural projects and the development of intra- and interpersonal competences in adolescents. The project topics mentioned above indicate freedom and autonomy in creating the projects, which was necessary because of the local and regional development of human resources.

Viable programme elements and recommendations for the development of such projects in one’s own rural areas include:
1. Connecting the LEADER programme from the rural development fund and the lifelong learning programme was possible and ultimately successful.
2. The programme helped promote the concept of lifelong learning and make it reality and practice in rural areas.
3. The programme helped create a regional identity.
4. Partner networks should be small in size and high in quality.
5. Regional programme strategies should also be smaller in scope, but nevertheless operational.
6. Regional management is important and should therefore be funded.

The “Learning Regions” programme arranged by OIEB Austria is no longer independent, but it proved sustainable, since every region included in the LEADER programme requires a lifelong learning strategy and innovative projects are still in demand and funded directly from the LEADER’s budget.
2.3. Norway – the “Basic Skills” programme as an example of improving the quality of the adult education programme based on competences for lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is an important component and part of the adult education tradition in Norway. Adult education in Norway is currently focused on the acquisition of basic competences for lifelong learning and the development of a value system of previous formal and informal learning experiences as a result of unsatisfying results of the PIAAC survey and the economic crisis. Education is a key factor for developing the flexibility that allows individuals to adapt to the challenges caused by the current changes in the social and working environment. Adult education should be made available to everyone, since it allows individuals to improve their own capacity and acquire skills during their lifetime. This will improve the quality of life of individuals and allow flexibility in their working life.

Adults that require basic and complete secondary education (lower and higher levels of education) are entitled to free education, which includes free textbooks. These rights are governed by the Adult Education Act from 1976 and the Education Act from 1998. The Adult Education Act is an integral part of the general Education Act. All types of formal education are verified by public institutions, i.e. public schools, and are regulated by local self-government units, such as municipalities and counties (which also secure funds within their budgets), depending on the place of residence and level of knowledge. The new non-formal Learning of Adults Act from 2010 governs all forms of adult education outside the formal education sector and significant efforts have been made to establish a single system for assessing the quality of non-formal and informal forms of learning. Regarding the formal education of adults and education in general, primary education is governed by municipalities, while secondary education is governed by provinces. Formal education is under the jurisdiction of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and its content is governed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

The non-formal education of adults is popular in Norway and is mostly implemented by various associations. These associations are authorised to prepare formal education exams but are not authorised to carry out examinations or issue authentic instruments. Scandinavia as a whole has a long tradition of non-formal adult education and in Norway it can be traced back to the so-called Study circles, which have a century old tradition. Study circles are actually small groups of individuals that teach certain topics on the principle of “teaching by sharing”. They were established in Sweden and developed the practice of volunteering within the adult education system.

Several institutions that are not under the auspices the Ministry of Education and Research deal with adult education in Norway. The Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (VOX) falls within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Research and its role is to promote active citizenship, increase employability and promote adult education within and outside the working environment. VOX ensures the quality of non-formal adult education programmes, and administers the co-financing of programmes by adult education associations (association unions) and education centres. VOX is developing Basic Skills (numeracy, language, digital and communication skills required for lifelong learning) programmes, develops the curricular integration of immigrants, and carries out the professional orientation and research necessary for improving the quality of adult education. It has also intensively fostered international cooperation in the context of improving the adult education policy and founded the European Basic Skills Network (EBSN) in 2009 as a network of institutions from various countries that actively include key competences for lifelong learning in their adult education curricula. Until 2016, VOX will be the host organisation for the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL), which is a project supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers and implemented in 5 countries of the region. The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL) is an association that gathers all publicly acknowledged associations that deal with adult education. These include public universities (Folkuniversitetet) that, like other providers, provide educational services funded by the Ministry of Education and Research or a different public authority (e.g. Basic skills training for the unemployed, Basic skills and Norwegian language training for immigrants etc.), through public procurement. The Norwegian Association for Distance Education (NADE) is the umbrella organisation for all organisations dealing with flexible forms of non-formal learning ranging from traditional correspondence and consultative courses to e-learning, i.e. utilising web platforms and digital media. This type of learning has a long tradition in Norway and is still important today because of the great size and climate of the Kingdom of Norway and because of its small population. The NADA has extensively collaborated with American organisations on the development of e-learning principles.

Basic Literacy in Norway includes initial literacy programmes for immigrants, and has been included (by legislation) in primary and secondary school curricula for all adults, education programmes provided by employment services, companies and non-governmental organisations, prison education programmes and in the key part of the Basic Competence in Working Life Programme (BCWL). The latest project related to the development of basic literacy is ROADMAP - towards a basic skills qualification framework programme. The Adult Basic Skills Framework comprises defined competency goals (learning outcomes) of four basic competences: digital and numeracy competency, literacy and verbal communication in daily life, the working environment and education. Beside the competence framework, which serves as the basis for drafting individual adult edu-
cation curricula for teachers (adult learning professionals), the framework includes guides for institutions, teaching materials and tests, sources for teachers and didactic models (training) for teacher education. The teacher education model was designed in cooperation with pedagogical experts and implemented in 2009 as a pilot-project in collaboration with the university's institute for the education of teachers.

An excellent example for the development of the Croatian competence model is the "Basic skills competence goals" tools, which are set out as a simple schematic for each basic competence of the Norwegian model.

The purpose of the tool for the Adult Basic Skills programme is to establish national standards for reading and writing, numeracy competence, digital competence and verbal communication.

Competence outcomes are a tool that is used as the model for drawing up curricula that are or include Adult Basic skills programmes. They are based on the curriculum, which is the result of “Knowledge Based Reforms” and the “Basic Skills Framework” and prepared by the Norwegian Ministry for Education and Training and VOX. They can be used as a tool for adapting content for adult learning, regardless of the circumstances in which it occurs. For example, the individual curriculum of the Competence outcomes model for reading and writing as a basic skill was developed for the purpose of improving adult literacy, but it can also be utilised in certain secondary school programmes. The model also provides examples of basic skill use in everyday life and education. The examples are not detailed and should be adapted and amended with other examples and illustrations of relevance to participants during the programming of the study course. Competence outcomes are divided into four levels that describe the achieved progress in abilities and skills and the predicted learning outcomes for each of the basic skills.

1. Reading and writing competence

Reading indicates the ability to form meaning in its broadest sense and gives insight into other people’s experiences, thoughts and knowledge, regardless of time and space. Writing includes the ability to express oneself comprehensibly and appropriately with regard to various topics and communicate with others in a written form. It comprises strategies for reading and writing, reading and comprehending as well as writing and communicating with a special emphasis on the skills required for everyday life.

Reading and writing skills at level 1 – 2 include reading and writing short familiar texts with which one comes into contact frequently. It also includes support and assistance for adults when reading and writing in new situations.

Reading and writing skills at level 3 include reading and writing comprehensible texts. An individual responds actively to written information and develops strategies for improving his or her writing skills. At this level, the individual utilises reading and writing in new situations and for learning and tackling certain challenges in everyday life.

Reading and writing skills at level 4 include advanced skills of deciphering various texts. An individual reads and writes independently, critically and flexibly and chooses different strategies for reading and writing where needed.

2. Numeracy competence

Numeracy competence includes the application of mathematics in different situations and the ability to decipher numbers in everyday life, as well as the working environment and education. It comprises the following areas: Numbers, Measuring and Statistics.

Applying basic calculations at levels 1 – 2 means comprehending basic mathematical information in everyday situations and using basic calculations in familiar settings.

Calculating at level 3 means that an individual is able to actively process mathematical information and use calculations in different environments.

Calculating at level 4 means to be able to comprehend and use complex mathematical information and use that data for making decisions, communicating and presenting mathematical data.

3. Digital competence

Digital competences include knowledge and skills required for the efficient and responsible utilisation of digital tools, media and sources for the purpose of solving practical problems, finding and processing information, designing digital products and on-line communication. It comprises the following areas: ICT utilisation, Finding and exchanging digital information and the Production and presentation of digital information.

Digital skills at levels 1 – 2 include an individual's ability to utilise digital data and tools where needed and familiarity with basic safety measures when using the Internet.

At level 3, an individual is able to actively utilise digital information in new environments and situations. He/she is familiar with and uses digital tools and services.

At level 4, an individual provides feedback when utilising complex digital tools or services. Creating personal content by utilising ICT allows adaptation to the situation based on previous experience.
4. Verbal communication

Verbal communication refers to creating meaning and content by listening and speaking. It comprises the following areas: Communication and learning strategies, Listening and answering and Speech and communication.

Communicating at levels 1 – 2 means that an individual is able to engage in basic communication in a familiar environment. The main content of the message and instructions is comprehensible and basic communication strategies are applied.

At level 3, an individual is able to actively communicate in a familiar environment on topics that are of interest. Personal interests and needs in everyday life may be fulfilled and oral communication skills may be improved if required.

At level 4 an individual is able to communicate flexibly and efficiently in a familiar or unfamiliar environment. Adults may exchange opinions in a social and private environment and are able to accept responsibility for the communication process.

The summaries of each competence and learning outcome indicate that basic competences correlate, but are not equivalent to subjects at school. Competence outcomes are a tool for designing (VOX called them “local”) curricula based on competences for lifelong learning, i.e. basic competences that would allow an individual to develop skills and abilities for further learning. The Norwegian model opted for reading and writing, calculating, digital competence and communication as the basic abilities required for achieving this goal. The acquisition of these competences prepares individuals for social inclusion, the labour market and education. It should be noted that basic competences were included in the national primary and secondary school curriculum through the reform of the curriculum (“Knowledge Promotion Reform”) and this cohesive educational policy enabled the recognition of level 3 of the basic competences in the Norwegian qualification framework, i.e. the formal certificate for upper secondary education.
3. PROPOSAL OF A COMPETENCE MODEL FOR BASIC ADULT EDUCATION

3.1. Introduction

The Proposal of a competence model for basic adult education arrives at a time when the public is repeatedly expressing its doubts about the ability of the Republic of Croatia to participate on an equal footing in the European and world economic flows and to ensure a quality life for its citizens. At the same time, it seems that awareness is being raised about the fact that the country’s growth and development largely depend on how we educate our citizens, not just those currently participating in the education and training system, but also those that make up the work force and those who, for various reasons, are currently not participating in education or are unemployed. The way in which we as a society address the educational needs and challenges individuals are faced with in their everyday life is a key factor in training them for dealing with the mutable personal and social circumstances and a prerequisite for a healthy and inclusive society and ensuring an economy capable of achieving sustainable development and competitiveness on the global market in the 21st century.

In the European environment, education is stressed as a key factor in economic growth and development, since modern life and contemporary professions require a higher level of training and literacy from citizens. The results of surveys conducted within the scope of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that a large percentage of 15-year-olds and adult citizens from a significant number of EU member states do not possess the knowledge and skills required for lifelong learning and carrying out important life and job duties. Only 2.4% of adults participate in education programmes, which places the Republic of Croatia at the bottom of the list of European countries. The emphasis on the need for the greater participation of adults in education programmes makes an argument for developing new approaches and education models that focus on the acquisition and development of key competences for lifelong learning. Functional literacy and basic skills whose development can contribute to the economy, empower individuals and enhance the quality of their lives and affect the wellbeing of all citizens.

The proposal of a new model for basic adult education in the Republic of Croatia places an emphasis on the development of key competences for lifelong learning. The model is flexible and suited to the needs of adult participants, focused on learning outcomes and their assessment, applies the acquired knowledge and skills and recognises knowledge and skills previously acquired. The model is in its elaboration intended for various groups of individuals, ranging from those that are affected the most to the economically active population with the necessary qualifications. Special attention has been given to the inclusion of adults with a low or insufficient level of education who, due to being affected by the economic crisis, unemployment, unfair social or life circumstances, have not had the opportunity to develop or realise their potential so they could actively contribute to the community in which they live. Through its elaboration, the model for basic adult education ensures the inclusion of key competences in other forms of adult education. It should be noted that this model distances itself from the Curriculum for basic adult education (NN 136/03), which is relevant to the case, and envisages an alternative form of complete primary education.

The proposal for a new model of basic adult education was drafted as part of the “Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Education” project, which was implemented by the Department for Vocational and Adult Education of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports from 2012 to 2014. The proposal was developed by a working group comprising experts from different fields and the employees of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, the Croatian education and Teacher Training Agency, the Croatian Employment Service, the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System, the Association of Institutions for Adult Education, the MMV Development Consultancy and the Institute for Social Research – Centre for Educational Research and Development. The development of the new model for basic adult education was governed by European and Croatian educational policy guidelines in the area of adult education, as well as the available data on the education of citizens in the Republic of Croatia and experts’ insights into the main challenges and developments of the existing adult education system. The goal of the working group was to design a model for basic adult education that would stimulate changes to and the offer of more relevant and appropriate programmes, significantly improve existing practice, contribute to achieving desirable learning outcomes for all participants involved and increase participation in adult education. The new model of basic adult education tries to take into account the changes in the planned curriculum regarding the new education system, as well as changes to the system regarding the introduction of the Croatian Qualification Framework. The proposal of the model is the initial step in coming up with changes in adult education, followed by activities that include elaborating additional documents, empowering adult education institutions and especially provide training for adult learning professionals for applying the new model.

Before outlining the individual elements of the new model for basic adult education, the main movements of European and Croatian educational policy, as well as the existing legal framework and the elements of the valid Curriculum for basic adult education (NN 136/03) will be summarised in the following chapters. These outlines clearly indicate the need for drafting new adult education models and encouraging consideration of the possibilities of different forms of basic adult education that could meet the demands of modern society and the needs of participants in a more effective and appropriate manner.
3.2. Movements of the European and Croatian adult educational policies

The “Implementation of the European agenda for adult education” and the proposal of the model for a basic adult education shall take into consideration the guidelines of the Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning (The Council of the European Union 2011/C 372/01), as well as the guidelines on strategic documents related to the Croatian adult education policy (MZOS, 2007.; 2012., Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2014).

The Renewed European agenda for adult learning, based on the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, acknowledges lifelong learning and skill acquisition as key components in the response to the current economic crisis, population ageing and the broader economic and social agenda of the European Union. Changes in the areas of labour and society generally require citizens to acquire new skill and achieve a higher level of literacy (European Commission, 2012).

The economic crisis emphasised the potential important role of adult education in achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, allowing adults, especially low-skilled and older or unemployed workers who need to change their profession, to improve their ability to adapt to labour market and social changes.

A low level of education, unemployment and reduced life and career opportunities in different areas marginalise many adults and exclude them from the opportunities provided by the community and active citizenship. At a personal level, such a position has a negative effect on self-confidence, self-respect and confidence in one's own abilities and reduces happiness in adults (European Commission, 2012). New forms of literacy related to a lack of approach or skills to use information and communication technology in personal and professional life exacerbate exclusion. Hence the Renewed European adult agenda for adult learning places a special emphasis on the need to promote values of lifelong learning, increased quality and efficiency of education and training and to promote equality, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult education.

The following is deemed necessary:

1. enhance the possibilities for adults, regardless of gender and their personal and family circumstances, to access high-quality learning opportunities at any time in their lives, in order to promote personal and professional development, empowerment, adaptability, employability and active participation in society
2. develop a new approach to adult education and training that focuses on learning outcomes and learner responsibility and autonomy
3. foster greater awareness among adults that learning is a lifelong endeavour that they should pursue at regular intervals during their lives, and particularly during periods of unemployment or career transition
4. encourage the development of effective lifelong guidance systems, as well as integrated systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning
5. ensure the comprehensive provision of high-quality formal and non-formal education and training for adults aimed at acquiring key competences or leading to qualifications at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), supported by civil society and the social partners, as well as by local authorities
6. ensure flexible arrangements adapted to the different training needs of adults, including in-company training and workplace-based learning

Member states are encouraged to ensure that adults acquire the key competences and basic skills necessary for further learning and the labour market and to function as a means for intensifying social inclusion and active participation in the community and society. It is necessary to develop mechanisms to ensure that education better reflects the labour market needs and provides the opportunity for acquiring qualifications and developing new skills that would increase the ability of people to adapt to new demands in a changing environment. For that purpose, it is necessary to expand the offer and develop programmes for enhancing key competences in adults through application of the European reference framework on key competences in adult education.

Especially important is ensuring secure and quality education for all participants, the need for providing information and motivating participants and enabling learning while providing efficient support for the most deprived communities, for adults that are faced with poverty and social exclusion in order to enable them to live a decent life and actively participate in society. It is necessary to improve access to adult education for migrants, the Roma and groups of people with special needs, improving learning opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers, enhancing learning possibilities for older people through active ageing and satisfying the learning needs of people with disabilities and people excluded from learning in certain situations, such as persons placed in hospitals, care homes and prison institutions. Information and communication technology is also highlighted as a means of expanding and improving the quality of education for certain target groups, especially those with special needs and those living in remote areas.

The adult education policy and projects related to adult education in the Republic of Croatia endeavour to follow the aforementioned European recommendations and practice.
In the period between 2003 and 2012 the Government of the Republic of Croatia implemented an adult literacy project „For a Literate Croatia: The Path to a Desirable Future – A Decade of Literacy in Croatia” in accordance with the United Nations Literacy Decade Resolution (MPŠ, 2003, MZOS, 2014). The purpose of this project was to enable persons over the age of 15 to complete primary education and to allow people without a profession to continue their education via training programmes for performing light work. The goal of this project was to increase the level of literacy among the population and enable the acquisition of an initial profession, as well as to facilitate the employability of persons without qualifications (MPŠ, 2003).

The Strategy for adult education, which emphasises the importance of building a system of education and adult learning that will provide equal opportunities for participating in quality lifelong learning and whose educational offer will be based on and result from learning requirements and needs, was adopted in 2004 (MZOS, 2007). This strategy recognises the need for achieving a high level of new literacy forms, the so-called “21st century literacies” in the active population as a prerequisite for individual development, as well as the general development of social wellbeing. New literacy comprises the following elements: reading comprehension, verbal communication, foreign language competence and the utilisation of modern information and communication technology, a quality understanding of natural and social occurrences, problem solving training, skills and readiness for team work, accepting other people and people who are different, permanent learning training etc.

The Strategic plan of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports for the period between 2013 and 2015 (MZOS, 2012) places emphasis on enhancing the lifelong learning policy, within the scope of which it is necessary to ensure better availability and increase participation in adult education, as one of the priorities. The support for primary education and the training of adults as part of the literacy project continues, however the goal is to elevate the project to a level that would provide the acquisition of basic skills, so that persons without a primary education can be successfully included in the lifelong learning process.

Lifelong learning is included in the strategy of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports as one of its basic guidelines (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2014). Emphasis is placed on the quality and relevance of the adult education offer and the inclusion in the priority adult education programmes of adults without primary education, people of lower education, unemployed people, socially and otherwise marginalised people, senior citizens, immigrants, people with disabilities and especially people whose existing competences and qualifications are not and most likely will not be in demand on the labour market. One of the measures included in the new strategy directly refers to drafting improved programmes for the primary (as well as secondary) education of adults with content adapted to adult participants and summarised on the basis of the assessment of required key competences and the time necessary for their acquisition so that participants would at the same time be qualified for entering the labour market and continuing their education.

### 3.3. The legal framework and the existing curriculum of basic adult education in the Republic of Croatia

Pursuant to the Adult Education Act (NN 17/07), only persons aged 15 and older may enrol in adult education programmes. The education system in the Republic of Croatia offers people who lack a formal qualification basic adult education and training programmes, e.g. programmes for acquiring qualifications for performing light work in accordance with the National Classification of Occupations to people who lack formal qualifications.

Basic adult education programmes are conducted in accordance with the National Curriculum for Basic Adult Education (NN 136/03), which was adopted by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. This is a curriculum framework whose actual application implicitly includes the definition of the initial education of the individual and the drafting of implementing (operative) programmes, while taking into account individual needs and programme options (MPŠ, 2003).

The Curriculum for Basic Adult Education (NN 136/03) defines six school periods of eighteen weeks each, which means that the total duration of basic adult education is three school years.

The first and second school periods are equivalent to the regular educational level that includes grades 1-4 and are intended for educating participants who failed to complete four grades of elementary school. These periods include 180 hours of Croatian language and mathematics classes intended to provide basic educational content and literacy activities for participants.

School periods 3-6 are equivalent to the regular educational level that includes grades 5-8 and are intended for educating participants who dropped out of school between grades 5 and 8. Basic educational content is structured in the form of subjects in these periods. The total number of compulsory school hours varies between 234 (during the 3rd school period) and 354 (during the 6th school period) and the following subjects are included (depending on the school period): Croatian language, Mathematics, Art, Music, Foreign Language, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Basics of Civic Education, Technical Culture with Informatics and Physical Education.
In parallel with the fifth and sixth school periods, participants are given the chance to take elective programmes, which include various training programmes for elementary occupations (150 teaching hours) that the participants may complete simultaneously with primary school and acquire the qualifications for their initial profession.

Implemented (operative) adult education programmes are designed and adopted by the adult education institutions themselves and they are approved by MZOS based on the expert opinion of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (ASOO). For the purpose of ensuring the quality of implemented (operative) programmes, the ASOO (2012) drafted recommendations for adult education institutions on how to plan and program in adult education, and especially how to define learning outcomes acquired by the participants and how to connect them to learning content in certain topics.

Pursuant to the Curriculum for Basic Adult Education (NN 136/03), participants enrol in a specific school period, depending on the completed grade in their previous education, but the operative curriculum is suited to the participant’s knowledge, which is assessed when enrolling. However, The Adult Education Act (NN 17/07), allows adults to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities, regardless of how they were acquired, by taking an exam, which is organised and conducted by the adult education institution responsible for the implementation of the program for acquiring the aforementioned knowledge, skills and abilities.

Certificates issued upon the completion of the adult education programmes are valid equally to the certificates of equivalent programmes in the regular educational system, meaning that participants acquire the same rights deriving from the programme (continuing education, employment) as the students who took the programme during regular education.

The costs of implementing basic education programmes for adults and the costs of implementing secondary school education programmes for adults that only completed primary school are covered by the national budget pursuant to the provisions of the Adult Education Act (NN 17/07). This means that adult education and training for performing light work is free.

### 3.4. The need for a new basic adult education model

All strategy documents related to adult education at the EU level and at the level of the Republic of Croatia emphasise and advocate improving adult education programmes and developing accessible and diverse literacy development programmes adapted for adults, basic skills or key competences for the purpose of ensuring individualised learning possibilities and advancements in the personal, work and social aspects of life. Adult education needs to make a strong shift towards approaches based on learning outcomes that focus on the adult participant, regardless of whether the learning takes place in education and training institutions, at the workplace, in one’s own home or in the local community.

The existing curriculum for adult education (NN 136/03) cannot meet those requirements. Adult education programming is especially problematic, since adult education is exclusively a form of shortened regular education, even with mutually comparable education content.

The Strategy for Adult Education from 2004 identified the deficiencies of the existing curriculum and noted that one of the problems of adult education was the fact that the curriculum was only slightly modified when compared with the curriculum for the basic education of regular students (MZOS, 2007). Vican (2013) is also critical of the subject-oriented curriculum for basic adult education, i.e. the idea of adult education as a “package” of prescribed school subjects and the unrealistically programmed teaching hours and education cycles.

In addition, the examination of the prescribed content and assignments of participants in the existing curriculum for basic adult education points out the shortcomings of the content- and fact-oriented curricula that did not define the desired learning outcomes and set the expected (minimal or average) levels for achieving the said outcomes. Another problem lies in the fact that curriculum prescribes content that is largely divorced from the life experience of adults, as well as the assessment of personal education needs (Vican, 2013.). A clear example of this is compulsory reading in Croatian, such as H.C. Andersen’s fairy tales or the novel Družba Pere Kvržice (The Gang of Pero Kvržica) by M. Lovrak, which are unlikely to suit the interests of adult participants.

A lack of orientation towards a problem solving approach or an approach that requires analysing and solving the situations participants are faced with is also evident in other subjects. Teaching is programmed in a typical way within a traditional conceptual framework, similar to the programme of regular primary school education. Demands are insufficiently heeded for developing functional literacy and key competences, which are considered prerequisites for lifelong learning, employability, social inclusion and cohesion in the context of the education system. This warrants raising questions of whether the prescribed course content is sufficiently motivating for adult participants and whether the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired upon the completion of the programme are considered important accomplishments.

Recently there have been attempts to systematically alter the approach taken towards basic adult education in the Republic of Croatia. Within the scope of the 2004 CARDS project in the field of adult learning, a new proposal for a curriculum framework for basic adult education was prepared (Aarhus Technical College Denmark and the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, 2009), governed by the idea...
to align the goals and content of the basic adult education programme with the European reference framework on key competences for lifelong learning (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2006/962/EC) and with the goal of training adults for independent work and lifelong learning. The curriculum framework was defined with three modules (each with two school periods) that are equivalent to different levels of primary education and can be adapted to the needs of various groups of participants with taking into consideration the level of literacy and the need to acquire and improve competences.

Although the proposal for a curriculum framework mostly remains in line with the competence framework and focuses on defining the learning outcomes, i.e. the general final goals /competences in specific areas, the subject structure in basic adult education has remained unaltered. The idea was to elaborate subject and inter-subject curricula on the basis of a curriculum framework, but this did not come into fruition and the drafted proposal for a curriculum framework was not adopted.

By adopting the new competence model for basic adult education, attempts are being made to make systematic changes in this area of the education system, rectify the current shortcomings of the programme and promote a competence model for adult education based on key competences for lifelong learning. The goal of the proposed model, which moves away from the relevant system and is based on defining competence goals and learning outcomes, is to improve the development of key competences and functional literacy of adults in the Republic of Croatia.

The basic principles of the competence model for basic adult education that are embedded in all parts of the model, from defining target groups and the “content” of the model to proposing approaches to working with adults and assessing the learning outcomes of the participants, are defined hereinafter.

### 3.5. Principles of the new basic adult education model

**RESPECTING THE RIGHTS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING**
Everybody has a right to education and training. The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training reaffirms this as one of the basic human rights. Basic education must be available and free for everyone.

**ADULT EDUCATION AS AN INTEGRAL AND RELEVANT PART OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**
Adult education in considered an integral and equivalent part of the education system and as such strives to ensure the highest standards of education and availability for everyone.

**INCLUSION AND EQUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**
Every person has a right to reach their full potential regarding education. In order to achieve social equality, adult education must be devoid of prejudice, discrimination based on age, race, gender, national or social origin, language, religion, political or other beliefs, income, social status, disability or sexual orientation.

**BASIS ON MODERN RESEARCH AND ADULT LEARNING THEORIES**
The starting point is the most recent knowledge in the fields of andragogy, psychology, education and other social sciences regarding the learning processes in adults and the influence of individual and other factors on learning.

**FLEXIBILITY AND MEETING THE DEMANDS OF ADULT PARTICIPANTS**
Adult education needs to be flexible and focused on the needs of participants. Flexibility means the ability to embed other forms and types of adult education. The specificities of adult participants, their motivation, the existing level of development of certain competences and life circumstances must be central to designing education programmes and processes.

**FOCUS ON LEARNING OUTCOMES**
Adult education should be based on the learning outcomes expected from the participant upon the completion of the education programme. The outcomes must provide clear information and guidance to adult learning professionals and participants regarding the level of competences acquired upon the completion of the education process.

**FOCUS ON THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**
Teaching and validation is focused on the application of knowledge and skills in real life situations in the workplace, in everyday life and education and not just on their acquisition. Considering the fact that meaningful learning builds on knowledge and experience previously acquired by the participants and that it is key to understanding how to perform certain activities, as well as how, why and when to apply this knowledge and skills.

**ENHANCING SELF-REGULATED LEARNING**
Significant attention is given to enhance the capacity of participants for active, goal-oriented and self-regulated learning. Emphasis should be placed on setting learning goals, planning, monitoring and regulating learning processes. By monitoring and assessing their own learning progress, participants gain control of the learning process and become more competent and independent in learning. Adult learning professionals support participants and serve as facilitators.
VIEWING LEARNING AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY

Learning is considered a social activity that occurs in a specific and complex socio-cultural context and environment that includes family members, friends, colleagues, other participants etc. The environment can enhance or limit the level of acquired learning.

COMPETENCE, RESPONSIBILITY AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Adult education implies that all education service providers maintain the highest levels of competence, responsibility and professional ethics.

INDEPENDENCE OF ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Adult education institutions are guaranteed a high level of freedom and independence in designing activities, programmes and projects, choosing content and work organisation for the purpose of achieving a high level of quality of education programmes.

OPEN TO CHANGES

Sufficient time and a high level commitment from the participating experts and practitioners is required for drafting quality curricula. Curricula are supposed to be open, i.e. subjected to changes and improvements that are the result of new knowledge based on education practice and services.

THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION

Adult education respects national interests and provides education that prepares and creates conditions for quality life and work throughout Europe.

3.6. Target groups of the new basic adult education model

In accordance with the principles, the needs of various target groups were taken into consideration during the design of the new basic education model.

One of the target groups comprises persons under the age of 15 that have not completed primary education. Basic education needs to be ensured for those persons as a starting point for acquiring specific qualifications. This claim is supported by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, which affirms that basic education is compulsory and free and that secondary and higher education is available for everyone under the same conditions according to one’s abilities.

The information on the education structure of the population with regard to the highest level of completed education obtained from the 2011 census (DZS, 2014) shows that 87,795 (3.05 %) persons between the ages of 15 and 64 have not completed primary education. More precisely, 15,687 (0.55 %) persons have no education, 5,023 (0.17 %) have completed only three years of primary school and 67,085 (2.33 %) have completed seven years of primary school. Information on the education structure of the population shows that persons without primary education are prevalent among the older demographic, with a total of 4.13 % between the ages of 50 and 54, 6.67 % between the ages of 55 and 59 and 9.46 % between the ages of 60 and 64.

Moreover, according to the 2011 census, 582,342 persons only have primary education, which amounts to 20.26 % of persons between the ages of 15 and 65.

This information indicates that in terms of an absolute value, there is still a significant number of persons that need to be included in basic adult education, although the number has decreased in recent years. A comparison between the information on the education structure of persons over the age 15 in 2011 and information obtained from previous censuses shows a significant and equitable decrease of persons aged 15 and over with only a primary education or lack thereof and an increase of persons with secondary or higher education. 85.6 % of the population over the age of 15 completed primary school in 1961, 65.1 % in 1981, 54.0 % in 1991, 40.6 % in 2001 and 30.8 % in 2011. In 2012 Croatia recorded the lowest rate of early school leaving compared to other EU member states, only 4.2 % of persons between the ages of 18 and 24 who have completed lower secondary education, but were not included in the education and training system (European Commission, 2013), which is another positive statistic beside the decrease in the number of adults with or without primary education.

There has been a significant decrease in the number of illiterate persons since the mid-20th century. 12.9 % of the population over the age of 15 were illiterate in 1961, 9.0 % in 1971, 5.6 % in 1981, 3.0 % in 1991, 1.8 % in 2001, 0.8 % in 2011 (32,302). There are four times as many illiterate women than there are men (25,567 women and 6,735 men). Illiterate persons are prevalent among the older demographic. 0.30 % of persons between the ages of 15 and 44 are illiterate, while the percentage is higher among people between the ages of 55 and 59 (0.40 %) and over the age of 75 (4.59 %).

This information warrants the offer of adult education programmes, whose purpose is to enable adults to acquire literacy and key competences. Although the number of adults with the lowest level of literacy is decreasing, it is clear that the literacy programmes have not included all the people in the adult target group so far.
However, it should be noted that various analyses conducted nationally and internationally indicate that limiting basic adult education programmes that encourage the development of key competences for lifelong learning to adults without primary education is not warranted. A majority of adults with underdeveloped key competences have at least completed primary school, but the regular education system has not provided them with adequate support in the development of competences required for working and living in modern society.

One of the main conclusions of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), which assesses the adult competencies necessary for participating in society and employment, such as reading, literacy, numeracy and problem solving in a technologically thriving environment, corroborates this claim. The programme was conducted in 2012 in 22 OECD member and partner countries, excluding the Republic of Croatia, and the assessment showed that one in five adults in Europe possess a low level of literacy and numeracy and that one in four adults do not possess the digital competence necessary for efficiently utilising information and communication technology (OECD, 2013). A higher education does not necessarily correlate with a higher level of the assessed competences, although formal education does play an important role in the development of basic skills. There are significant disparities between persons with similar qualifications regarding the development of skills, which are connected with the quality of the education system and participation in lifelong learning and adult education programmes.

Although information about Croatian citizens is not included, it is safe to assume that the results would be similar. The results of a survey conducted within the scope of the Programme for International Student Assessment – PISA 2012 that included 15-year-olds (PISA, 2013) showed that 29.9% of Croatian pupils are below level 2 in mathematics, meaning that they do not possess the knowledge and skills necessary for completing numeracy tasks in various areas of life. 17.2% of pupils possess low science skills (below level 2), while 18.6% of pupils possess low reading skills. The mean value of Croatian pupils in all the examined areas is slightly below the EU average. The information provided by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics on the development of information literacy among the population of the Republic of Croatia (DZS, 2014) shows the level of basic literacy acquired by Croatian citizens. Only 61.94% of persons between the ages of 15 and 64 admit to being proficient in text processing, 54.65% know how to perform table calculations, 68.13% know how to use the Internet and 63.35% know how to use e-mail. 27% of persons between the ages of 16 and 74 is proficient in using computers (European Commission, 2013).

This information indicates the existence of a significant number of Croatian citizens who may benefit from the programmes for improving key competences for lifelong learning within the framework of a new basic education model. The competence model for basic adult education is suited for those with low education and literacy levels that want or need to upgrade and improve their existing competences and develop new competences that they were unable to acquire during their regular education or work and that increase their chances of adapting to new and increasingly complex demands in the changing environment of the modern world of work and society as a whole.

Various affected groups are considered potential participants in the new basic adult education model for developing key competences:

- low-skilled adults, especially those with literacy difficulties, who have not acquired the necessary competences upon completion of education
- persons affected by unemployment, reorganisation or change of occupation
- persons employed in professions for unskilled and low-skilled workers, who are in jeopardy of job loss or required to improve their ability to adapt to the changes on the labour market
- young persons that left school early and have been excluded from education, employment or training
- workers that are required to update their knowledge and skills for the purpose of retaining their current job or undergo training required for working in new conditions
- long-term unemployed persons who are inactive in job seeking and are not economically active
- persons with special needs (persons with physical and/or psychological disabilities)
- members of minority groups (Roma)
- migrants and asylum seekers
- persons placed in prison institutions, hospitals, care homes etc.

Still, the percentage of citizens of the Republic of Croatia participating in adult education (2.4% in 2012, which is low compared to the EU 2020 target value of 15% and the European average of 9%, according to the European Commission, 2013) indicates that it is unlikely that a large number of persons will be included in either of the education programmes unless activities are conducted for the purpose of attracting adults. It is necessary to intensify motivation and the inclusion of adults without qualifications and low-skilled persons with qualifications lacking prospects in adult education programmes intended for them and who display a particularly low level of inclusion in adult education.
3.7. Specificities of participating in adult education programmes – the issue of motivation and particularities of adult learning

Basic adult education based on developing key competences for lifelong learning is intended, as stated above, for various low educated and marginalised adults. The main challenge of designing a quality and efficient adult education programmes is the fact that they are usually intended for persons who lack motivation to participate in formal education and who fail to realise that it might benefit them. These persons are often burdened by everyday struggles and the fulfilment of various roles (in the family, at the workplace), which makes it difficult to expect that they would be willing to invest the amount of effort, willpower and time required to make noticeable progress towards the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the context of existing unfavourable life circumstances.

When drafting a curriculum framework for basic adult education, it is necessary to take into account the factors that affect and motivate adults in learning situations and understand the reasons why adults decide or refuse to take part in adult education (Svensrud, Winsnes and Lahaug, 2008; European Commission, 2012).

It is evident that the people who decide to participate in basic adult education include individuals who at one point in their education and life path decided to drop out of school, but who probably expect that by returning to education they will secure a better position for themselves on the labour market and improve their opportunities. In most cases, they are persons with learning difficulties, behavioural problems or persons that were exposed to circumstances that lead to exclusion from the system. It is safe to assume that these adults have had a rich life experience and have acquired knowledge and skills, but who have come to realise that they would not be able to find employment and create the life they desire without the necessary formal qualifications. Due to the disparate life experiences and paths, it should be expected that at the beginning of the adult education programmes, the participating adults differ significantly in the levels of their initial knowledge, skills and abilities and that they have different goals and expectations. This is why adult education programmes should implemented in a way that takes into consideration the individual characteristics of the participants and their various experiences, expectations and learning abilities.

One of the key factors for a successful adult education programme is the way in which the adults perceive the extent that the programme is suited to their needs and abilities. The adult participants' rich life experience should be valued as an important resource that directs new learning and is the foundation for acquiring new knowledge and skills. It is safe to assume that adults would be more willing to invest their time and effort in new learning if their life experience and hitherto acquired non-formal and informal knowledge and skills can be accepted and acknowledged as a valuable asset in encouraging further development and that methods and content that take into account interests, previously acquired knowledge and experience, as well as utilising the cultural and social value of the participants in the process of learning and teaching. When designing the content of adult education programmes, it is important to understand that adults approach learning with the intent of solving problems in a way that is practical and not segmented into subjects. They try to understand the situation that needs to be resolved and approached in a meaningful and well-rounded way in order to come up with a solution and fail to see the purpose of studying fragments of reality as defined by certain branches of science. The utilisation of concrete, actual and authentic materials and tasks from everyday life in adult education programmes, as well as insisting on applying (recently) acquired skills in a working and living context, also contributes to adapting the programmes to the adults' lives and separating them from the juvenile aspect of school.

The importance of utilising content that is meaningful and relevant to the participants’ lives in the process of teaching and learning, as well as knowing that adults are frequently motivated to participate in adult education programmes if they assess that returning to education would benefit them and improve their current situation, ensure employment and facilitate them in finding a better job or increase the quality of their private life (e.g. the ability to read and help children with homework), is the key to a successful adult education programme. It is interesting to note that offering lessons on how to use the computer, digital content or other computer related content is considered an excellent „bait“ for attracting adults to the process of learning. It is evident that adult participants understand the value of digital competence in this day and age and recognise how useful their knowledge and skills could prove in everyday life.

On the other hand, motivation for adult participation in adult education programmes could be rendered useless if adults fail to perceive that the education programme could improve their current and future life, i.e. if they fail to realise that acquiring new skills or qualifications will be valuable and useful and provide them with a better position on the labour market.

In addition, adults often consider themselves too old to study and expect to fail. Going back to school could prove a threatening experience for adults if it turns out to be similar to previous negative experiences in school and cause problems that the person encountered the first time they attended school, which ultimately lead to dropping out of school. Adults are more likely to participate in adult education if they were not traumatised by events that transpired the first time they attended school education or if they were somewhat successful academically. It is, therefore, extremely important to foster a feeling of self-efficacy in adults that stems from success. In the early stages of learning, it is particularly important to ensure situations in which participants can
prove that they can be successful and show progress, which enhances their feeling of competence and enforces the belief in their own learning abilities, which motivates them for further learning. This is extremely important because adults often feel ashamed about their underdeveloped skills, deficient knowledge and insufficient literacy, which hinders their exposure to other participant and adult learning professionals. Persons who feel that way are often reluctant to admit that they need additional education and are afraid of failure. Participants that clearly exhibit this trait, require forms of adult education that successfully “hide” this trait, for instance, learning in a computer supported environment or individual, one-on-one lessons.

When designing a quality adult education programme, it is important to take account of the need for independence and self-determination in adults, as well as the fact that their readiness for learning depends on all the roles they take on in life. It is necessary to create a learning environment in which participants will be the main actors in their own learning process, i.e. persons that will develop individual study plans in cooperation with adult learning professionals, set learning goals, identify their own weaknesses and strengths, monitor, direct and validate their own learning in relation to the goals set, and be trained to apply their own learning in a new and broader context.

For the reasons stated above, it is necessary to individualise adult education as much as possible in order to develop motivation in adults for participating in adult education and allow them to progress through the programme in an appropriate manner. It is extremely important that this new education experience is positive. It is particularly important to establish good communication between each participant and the adult learning professionals, so the participants can receive appropriate education and emotional support throughout the process of teaching and learning, as well as timely and efficient consultations for the purpose of encouraging participants to persist, make progress and make decisions on his or her further education and subsequent employment.

Also, in order to encourage adults to participate in adult education programmes, it is important to make programmes available (not just regarding funding, but also location) and to offer different forms of education that are aligned with the living and working rhythm of (potential) participants in terms of implementation length and programme duration.

Programmes for developing key competences in adults need to be sufficiently intensive, concentrated in time and long term, and the hours spent in class should be put to the maximum use in order to ensure appropriate progress in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes. Still, programmes are supposed to be flexible so that adults can coordinate their everyday commitments and social roles.

3.8. Competence model for basic adult education

The aforementioned principles and considerations on the specificities of adult participation in adult education programmes served as the basis for developing a proposal of a competence model for basic adult education. The model will be presented below. The European framework on key competences is introduced at the beginning and arguments are raised for utilising the framework in a new model for basic adult education. The specific elements of the model are described hereinafter: the proposed modules, selected key competences and the proposed approaches to their elaboration and embedding in basic adult education. The chapter ends with a description of the possible forms and procedures for validating learning outcomes within the new model.

3.8.1. European framework on key competences for lifelong learning

The introduction of key competences as the central concept of education is one of the most important European education initiatives of the early 21st century. By predicting the need for a more flexible education that can meet the challenges of a knowledge society, rapid technological development and a dynamic labour market, the European Union developed a framework of eight key competences (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2006/962/EC). The competences are called key because they are necessary for all individuals in a knowledge society and with a basic prerequisite for lifelong learning.

Key competences are defined as follows:

Competences are defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. (The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2006/962/EC).

The basic elements of the definition include integrity in terms of combining knowledge, skills and attitudes, an emphasis on the individual and the fact that the acquisition of key competences refers to all individuals in different areas of life and activity.

Table 7 shows summaries of all eight key competences.

**Table 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication in the mother tongue</td>
<td>Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts: in education and training, work, home and leisure. It also implies an awareness of the impact of language on others and a need to understand and use language in a positive and socially responsible manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication in foreign languages</td>
<td>Communication in foreign languages broadly shares the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing). An important part of this competence is developing the skills of intercultural communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical competences and basic competences in science and technology</td>
<td>Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations competence in science refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions competence in technology is viewed as the application of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human wants or needs competence in science and technology involves an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital competence</td>
<td>Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to learn</td>
<td>Learning to learn is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organise one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and civic competences</td>
<td>Includes demonstrating a sense of responsibility, showing tolerance and expressing and understanding other viewpoints, collaborations between people and cultures, mutual assistance and the acceptance of differences self-confidence, respect for others and self-respect qualified for efficiently participating in the development of democratic relations in educational institutions, the community and society, and acting according to the principles of justice and peacekeeping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Refers to an individual’s ability to turn ideas into action and includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals, not only in their everyday lives at home and in society, but also in the workplace through being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for the more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural awareness and expression</td>
<td>Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts. Cultural knowledge includes an awareness of local, national and European cultural heritage and their place in the world. It covers a basic knowledge of major cultural works, including popular contemporary culture. It is essential to understand the cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and other regions of the world, the need to preserve it and the importance of aesthetic factors in daily life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key competences that young people need to fully develop before completing regular education are the basis for further learning and provide training for adult life and work in particular. Regarding adult education, it is extremely important to stress the lifelong perspective contained in the framework, which emphasises that the competences acquired during regular education should continue to be developed, improved and maintained throughout one's entire life. Research shows that lack of usage may lead to individual loss of competence (EC, 2012). It should also be noted that competences that were not acquired during the initial education of adults should be developed from the start.

Integrity, which is expressed by defining competences as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes emphasises moving the focus away from content to the individual. It should be noted that attitudes within a European framework include motivation and the ability to apply knowledge and skills in real life situations (EC, 2010).

The focus on all individuals means that the acquisition and development of key competences occurred in accordance with the principles of equality and the availability of education for everyone. This suggests that the framework is appropriate for groups of people adult education was intended for, such as persons that left school early, low-skilled persons, long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities, immigrants etc.

3.8.2. Elements of the competence model for basic adult education

According to the definition of the European framework for key competences and following its adoption and inclusion in all current documents of the education policy in the Republic of Croatia, it has been suggested that the new model for basic education in the Republic of Croatia should be based on the framework on key competences. A curricular approach should be employed for drafting documents and alignment with other curricular changes set out in the Strategy for Science, Education and Technology (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2014). The key elements of the new model include defining broader competence goals and learning outcomes in specific competence areas, as well as principles and approaches to validating learning outcomes. These elements are described in greater detail hereinafter.

3.8.3. Proposed modules

Three different modules of basic adult education intended for different groups of persons and for different purposes should be elaborated. A summary of modules is shown in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODULE</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Basic competence level of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The purpose is to acquire literacy and provide support for affected groups of persons in order to get by and actively participate in private life and the life of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Competence level of acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable individuals to continue adult education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Elements of key competences are embedded in other adult education programmes. For example, digital competence goals and learning outcomes from module A are included in retraining.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Module A

The purpose of this module is to develop the personal knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals in specific key competences that enable active participation in the life of the community and raise assumptions for further personal development and learning. This module is mostly intended for groups that are particularly affected, such as persons with special needs, immigrants, and persons that throughout the course of their education did not have the opportunity to acquire certain competences. Module A is not intended for acquiring certain qualifications for continuing education, but it can serve as a transitional solution towards meeting requirements set out in Module B.

Module B

The purpose of this module is to reach a level of acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in specific competences that allow individuals to continue their education. It is equivalent to completing primary school and clearly moves away from the current subject-oriented curriculum for adult education. By successfully completing this module, an individual acquires the basic qualification for continuing education (level HKO 1) and can participate in various forms of adult education. It should be noted that, in accordance with the principles of the proposed model, initial validation determines the level of an individual's competence development and which serves as the basis for drafting an individualised implemental curriculum. If an individual achieves a sufficient
level of development regarding a specific skill or area within the scope of a competence, it is not necessary to include it in the individualised implemental programme. This model is intended for all persons that wish to continue their education, especially persons that have not completed primary education or persons that left school early for whatever reason.

Module R

The purpose of this module is to embed knowledge, skills and attitudes of specific key competences in different forms of education (professional retraining and education). This is a matter of developing key competences in the context of specific professions, since different qualifications, apart from key competences, require certain levels of key competence development. An example of this would be numerous jobs in the service sector that require a certain level of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to digital competence. Since many individuals have not been given the opportunity to acquire this competence during their initial education, it is necessary to ensure key competence elements that can be included in their education. Different professions require different profiles of key competence elements to efficiently perform work and the learning outcomes of specific competences will be extracted from Modules A and B and subsequently embedded in various professional retraining and training programmes.

3.8.4. Key competences of the basic adult education module

The eight key competences are of similar importance because each improves the lives of individuals in its own way. Although defined as transversal, certain key competences lean heavily towards certain knowledge domains and consequently towards subjects in formal education. Many competences overlap and link up in such a way that certain areas of one competence serve as a basis for the development of another. The European Commission notes that basic language, verbal, writing, numeracy, information and communication literacy are prerequisites for learning, and that “learning to learn” supports all learning activities (EC, 2006).

As a result, the new model suggests the following competences as the basis for basic adult education:

- communication in the mother tongue (Croatian)
- mathematical competences and basic competences in science and technology
- digital competence
- learning to learn

This does not mean that other key competences are not important and that they should not be developed. The selection of these four key competences was an attempt to meet the specific needs and characteristics of potential users and form the basis for inclusion in the process of lifelong learning and adult education programmes. It is extremely important to clarify why the key competence “communication in foreign languages” has been omitted. Basic adult education in Modules A and B is intended for individuals that require infrastructural and psychological support for a return to education and begin or continue their education path. Including “communication in the foreign language” would be an excessively demanding requirement and an insurmountable obstacle. Such a competence should be developed within the scope of Module R for professions that require this communication.

Each of the modules was based on the key competences “Communication in the mother tongue (Croatian)”, “mathematical competences and basic competences in science and technology” and “digital competence”, which includes the key competence “learning to learn”.

The plan is to design a curriculum framework as part of developing an adult education competence model that defines competence goals in subareas of specific competences and modules. This general framework provides guidelines for adult learning professionals and participants in the planning and implementation of a programme, but does not specify the content and tasks related to the process of teaching and learning. The implemented curricula are developed at the institutional level and are adapted to the age, interests, abilities, previously acquired knowledge and skills, existing working and living situations and the expectations of the participants. This allows the curriculum and the process of teaching and learning to adapt to the learning needs and goals of certain participants and groups of participants.

3.8.5. Defining key competence subareas

The subareas of all four selected competences need to be defined. Examples include the Norwegian model of developing basic skills (Vox, 2013) and the Slovenian model of developing key competences in adult education (Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, 2013). Regarding basic skills in the Norwegian model, the following subareas have been defined: numbers, measuring and statistics. Regarding mathematical and basic competences in science and technology in the Slovenian model, the following subareas have been defined:
mathematics, science and technology. Mathematics is then further divided into the subareas of numbers and calculation, data processing, ratio of quantities, geometry and measuring. Regarding the Croatian competence model for basic adult education, it is necessary to connect the existing subareas with the upcoming reform of the primary and secondary school curriculum.

3.8.6. Defining competence goals (broadly defined learning outcomes)

It is necessary to define the competence goals, i.e., broadly defined learning outcomes for each key competence and its subarea. This refers to descriptions of what the participant is required to know, understand and be able to do within the scope of a certain key competence after completing a specific adult education module. Competence goals will be determined separately for each key competence of each model.

3.8.7. Realisation of competence goals in different areas of individual action

Each competence goal within a specific module needs to be realised and made approachable to users and adult learning professionals by defining the descriptors and content in three areas within the individual scope (personal/social, world of work, education). If the Norwegian model is anything to go by, it is not difficult to predict that the utilisation of ICT systems is one of the subareas of digital competence. The realisation may transpire as follows:

Key competence: Digital competence
Subarea: ICT system utilisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODULE</th>
<th>SCOPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Personal/social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to use a cash machine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Able to connect to WI-FI Internet and recognise threats and various expenses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extracted in the manner advocated by Vox (2013)

The concrete descriptions mentioned above may serve as a basis for self-assessment and as a guide for drafting implementing curricula.

3.8.8. Profiling key professional competences as the basis for module R

The profiling of key competences in certain professions was suggested as the basis for including elements of competence models in other forms of adult education. This implies making lists of situations and job duties for certain professions that require communication in the mother tongue (Croatian), numeracy competence and basic competences in science and technology, as well as digital competence. For example, carpentry would require making lists of situations and duties carpenters face at work and that require mathematical competence. That way it would be possible to design a specialised programme that would be embedded in other forms of education and training for carpenters and that would be based on the defined competence goals in certain sub-areas of mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology.
3.8.9. Evaluation of learning outcomes in the competence model for basic adult education

The design of the new model of basic adult education took into account that the evaluation of participants' learning outcomes, including in other segments of the education system, presents an extremely sensitive area that can influence the participants' entire motivation and approach to learning, even their willingness to take part in the education programme. Therefore, the starting point for defining evaluation purposes and procedures was the idea that evaluation should be an integral part of the learning process and that participants learn through evaluation (Scottish Executive, 2005).

In the new model of basic adult education, the evaluation of participants' learning outcomes is based on the following principles:

a) the evaluation of learning outcomes is an integral part of the teaching and learning processes;
b) the main purpose of all forms of monitoring, evaluation, assessment and reporting is to enhance the learning process of the participants of the education programme;
c) the participant must act as the main player in the learning process and the skills of self-evaluating one's own learning process must be developed in order to evaluate the process and the results of learning, as well as goal-setting, planning and managing the learning process;
d) a strong focus on defining learning outcomes in curricular documents enables the transparent and clear determination of the criteria of outcome acquisition, leading to a more objective, more valid and more reliable assessment;
e) the evaluation of learning outcomes is not focused only on assessing the acquisition of knowledge, but also on the development of skills and attitudes in terms of competence;
f) in evaluation, participants are presented with challenging tasks that serve to demonstrate all their abilities, acquired knowledge and skills of resolving problems in a context that is both relevant and interesting to the participants;
g) evaluation procedures for learning outcomes do not put certain participants in a privileged position and nor do they give priority to certain groups of participants over others;
h) evaluations are frequent, different in nature and dispersed throughout the entire period of education in order to enable the participants to show their abilities and progress in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes;
i) during the entire education process, a clear and timely exchange of information on the elements and results of evaluation and assessment is encouraged between participants and the adult learning staff;
j) the provision of descriptive feedback to participants, which is clear, specific, timely and focused on enhancing the learning process, is encouraged.

The evaluation of participants' learning outcomes within the framework of the new model of adult education includes the following elements:

1. Assessment of existing competences

The initial evaluation of the level of the participants' competences aims to determine the appropriate level or module to be applied within the education programme. This serves to determine the needs of the adult participants and to plan a specific education programme; therefore, this evaluation assess learning itself rather than what has been learned. The initial evaluation provides the participant with valuable information necessary for self-analysis, self-evaluation and planning a personal learning plan.

Although the assessment of existing competences is an extremely important and useful element of evaluation in adult education, it can be omitted in some categories of adult participants, i.e. those that exhibit high levels of anxiety and particular resistance to "testing" due to previous negative school experience and negative assessments of their own capabilities. It has been determined that such participants should be immediately enrolled in the first level (in the first module) of the education process rather than insisting on the assessment of existing competences, which might even discourage the participant from taking part in the programme (Svensrud, Winsnes & Lahaug, 2008).

2. Assessment of progress in the acquisition of competences during the education process

Evaluation used during the education process also has a formative role of strengthening and focusing the participants' learning capacity. In addition to procedures and tasks applied by the adult teaching staff, this evaluation is based on self-assessments of participants' competences to perform specific tasks. For this purpose, assessments of acquired competences are used from a list of descriptors of competences in specific subfields, serving as clear indicators of what needs to be mastered in certain areas. The participants, in cooperation with the teaching staff, monitor progress and the achievement of the learning objectives set at the beginning of the education process based on which they adapt the personal goals and approaches to learning. Furthermore, on the basis of this evaluation, the adult teaching staff adapts approaches to teaching and the selection of learning materials and tasks for participants.
3. Assessment of acquired competences

It is envisaged that, after the completion of module B enabling the continuation of education on a higher level, there would be a possibility of introducing an external examination of education attainment. This examination would be summative and assess what has been learned during the education programme, thus serving as a means of communicating the level of the acquired competences.

In the case of completion of other modules, the assessment of final competences within the final examination remains in the domain of work in adult education. The assessment of final competences, in addition to achieving the purposes of summative evaluation, can be a good indicator for participants of the progress made during the entire educational process.

3.9. Prerequisites and further steps in the development of the competence model for basic adult education

The proposal of a new competence model for basic adult education presented in this text is considered to be just a first, small but significant step towards the implementation of a new approach to basic education in the adult education system.

It is understood that the achievement of this ambitious goal will be preceded by the implementation of numerous measures and activities and the establishment of new projects, and that the implementation of the new approach will depend on the commitment, dedication and persistence of numerous stakeholders in the adult education domain, primarily employees of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, the Croatian Employment Service, the Education and Teacher Training Agency, institutions for adult education, adult teaching staff, non-governmental organisations and many other stakeholders.

Currently, the following phases of the development of the new model for basic adult education are envisaged:

1. Acceptance of the competence model for basic adult education

The competence model of basic adult education must receive broad and unequivocal support from relevant and interested stakeholders if its elaboration and implementation are to be ensured. With this goal in mind, even the proposal of the new model of basic adult education was drafted according to the principles of the involvement of various stakeholders, the acceptance of pluralism of perspectives, and democratic and participative decision-making on all the relevant elements of the model. Therefore, it is necessary to further promote the new model of basic adult education in a wider circle of interested stakeholders and ensure their support. Certainly, it is crucial to ensure the acceptance of the competence model for basic adult education in terms of legislation, as well as to prepare the necessary legislative changes simultaneously with the elaboration of the model.

2. Elaboration of the competence model for basic adult education

The proposal of the new model for basic adult education provided only basic guidelines and set grounds for creating an overall framework of the curriculum for basic adult education. In the forthcoming period, it is necessary to take the following measures in order to develop the competence model for basic adult education and the curriculum framework:

a) analysis of the needs of specific target groups, institutions and organisations that provide programmes of basic adult education and the needs of employers;

In cooperation with the National Council for the Development of Human Potential, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts, the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, the Croatian Employment Service, the Association of Institutions for Adult Education, the Croatian Employment Service, the Association of Institutions for Adult Education, an analysis of the needs of specific target groups - groups of potential participants in the programme will be conducted, as well as of the needs of institutions and organisations that provide programmes of basic adult education and the needs of employers. The objective of this analysis is to use the gathered data to fine-tune the proposal of the new model of basic adult education and adjust the recommended levels, areas, examples of content and instructions for teaching and the evaluation of learning outcomes. The conducted analysis will serve as a basis for determining the list of professions for which a module for the development of key competences will be developed.

b) the organization and training of expert working groups for developing the framework of the curriculum for basic adult education and for developing the module for the development of key competences in the context of specific professions;

Expert working groups will necessarily consist of education experts from various fields, adult teaching staff and employees of agencies, as well as others if necessary.

c) the development and adoption of the framework of a curriculum for basic adult education and the module for the development of key competences in the context of specific professions;

As previously described, these documents include the development of competence objectives (broader learning outcomes) in different modules, subfields and professions, as well as the definition of descriptors competences in various areas of activity.
3. **Piloting the new model of basic adult education – the development of implementing (detailed) curricula, test launch and evaluation**

Before the implementation of the new framework of the curriculum for basic adult education, it is necessary to test it using a smaller sample of institutions and adult participants. When determining the sample for piloting, different target groups and purposes of joining the programme of the development of key adult competences should be taken into account. The test launch of the new model of basic adult education includes the development of implementing (detailed) curricula in selected institutions in cooperation with the developers of the curriculum framework, the application of the new curriculum for the duration of a single cycle of basic adult education, and the evaluation of the effects of the new curriculum from the perspective of programme participants, participating institutions and creators of the new model of basic adult education. Following the piloting of the new model, it is reasonable to expect certain modifications and improvements of the prepared curricular documents, as well as materials provide for compiling manuals for adult teaching staff and preparing certain learning materials.

4. **The development of evaluation tools, learning materials (digital, written, specific) and manuals for adult teaching staff**

The successful implementation of the competence model for basic adult education means that institutions and organisations providing basic adult education are given support in creating learning materials, manuals for adult teaching staff and tools for the evaluation of the learning process and learning outcomes. Special attention should be paid to the development of external final examinations in the area of basic adult education that is the prerequisite for continuing education. The development should include different institutions and various experts, while the process itself should be coordinated with the creators of the new model of basic adult education.

5. **Informing and training adult learning staff on the application of the new model of basic adult education**

One of the most important measures for achieving the final goal of the successful implementation of the new model of basic adult education is informing and training all adult learning staff on the application of the new curricular documents in the education process and the provision of high-quality support for adult participants while they develop key competences. The design of the procedures and methods of training of adult teaching staff should take into account the fact that basic adult education is mainly carried out by teachers employed in the regular system of education, lacking the necessary knowledge and skills for adult teaching and often without much experience in working with adults. The fact that teachers are trained to teach a specific subject may pose a problem. Therefore, teacher training should be focused not only on the application of new curricular documents, but also on the process of empowering them to work with adults.

Simultaneously with the training of existing teaching staff, support should be given to existing ideas on the establishment of a system of initial education of teachers for work with adults.

6. **Public informing and attracting adults to basic adult education system**

Potential participants in basic adult education should be targeted and informed of the new model of basic adult education, as well as of the benefits arising from their participation in the education. In order to attract them to the system of adult education, it is particularly important to focus on providing psychological support for their involvement, as well as eliminating all organizational and institutional obstacles to participation. It is worth considering imposing participation in the education programme on certain target groups as one of the prerequisites for acquiring other (social) rights in order to ensure their entry into the educational process. This approach is not suitable for other potential users and should be left open.

7. **Introduction of the new model for basic adult education into the adult education system**

The final introduction of the new model of basic education means that all the necessary material, infrastructural and staffing conditions have been met. Due to the complexity of the system of adult education and the need to ensure guarantees of equal minimal learning outcomes in all institutions and organisations providing adult education programmes, the introduction could be envisaged as a multi-phase process accompanied by the establishment and monitoring of a quality assurance system for institutions in the accreditation process, as provided for in other segments of the education system.

It is necessary to provide the financing of costs of conducting basic adult education from the state budget, as hitherto.

8. **Evaluation of the new model for basic adult education**

The evaluation of the process and effects of the new model of basic adult education is an obligatory phase in the final assessment of the quality and efficiency of the entire approach. It is assumed that this evaluation will ensure important insights, which will help in the future development of this segment of adult education.
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