
GUIDANCE AND OUTREACH FOR
INACTIVE AND UNEMPLOYED

CROATIA



Please cite this publication as:

Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (2018). Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed – Croatia. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2018/guidance_outreach_Croatia_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf

Author: Thomas Farnell

Contributors: Teo Matković, Nino Buić, Igor Ilić-Sokačić

Reviewed by Cedefop

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This thematic perspective was prepared based on data/information from 2017. The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of Cedefop. Thematic perspectives are co-financed by the European Union and ReferNet national partners.

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Guidance and outreach for inactive and unemployed

Many countries across the European Union (EU) have high levels of unemployment and of inactive adults. These phenomena are frequently associated with low levels of qualification and insufficient basic skills. They may also reflect lack of adjustment between skills demanded in the labour market and skills developed in formal education and training. In both cases up-skilling and re-skilling solutions could be explored to increase the employability of adults.

The national reports developed by ReferNet partners reflect efforts done by Member States to reach vulnerable groups affected by unemployment and inactivity and help them reengage in learning and employment. The reports refer, in particular, to measures which may include young adults not in employment, education or training (NEET) and adults undergoing long term unemployment (LTU), given their persistence in many countries and the high challenges these groups face.

The policy strategies and initiatives in focus shed light over ways to support the most vulnerable to find learning and qualifying solutions. Career guidance and counselling support to people with decaying skills, low levels of motivation and insufficient basic skills are addressed. Its instrumental role in providing information, identifying skills needs, clarifying career options and developing positive attitudes towards learning is made clear.

Whenever possible, outreach measures were described, addressing the ones who fall out of the scope of standard policies to support registered unemployed or recent education drop-outs. Many reports entertain an important discussion on the entitlement to social protection and its effectiveness in addressing the challenges of all demographic groups.

Lastly, Cedefop trusts that these reports will provide an important characterisation of current opportunities and challenges across the EU in establishing appropriate upskilling pathways for adults. Current European policy initiatives urge MS to integrate skills assessment measures with flexible learning and validation solution, where guidance services and outreach will necessarily play a key role.

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CHAPTER 1.

Upskilling: indicators and issues in Croatia

1.1. Labour market and educational attainment trends

Croatia has recently made progress in terms of economic recovery (World Bank, 2017), but the labour market in Croatia is still characterised by high levels of unemployment and inactivity. The unemployment rate fell from 17.4% in 2013 to 13.3% in 2016, although it is still much higher than the 2016 EU average of 8.5% (Eurostat, 2017.a). The inactivity rate in 2016 in Croatia is 34.4%, compared to the EU average of 27.1% (calculated based on Eurostat, 2017.b). Youth unemployment has been of particular concern in Croatia, reaching a record high of 49.9% of the 15-24 age group in 2013.

Although youth unemployment rate has dropped to 31.1% in 2016, Croatia still has the fourth highest rate in the EU (where the average rate is 18.7%) (Eurostat, 2017.c). The proportion of adults with low levels of qualifications is much lower in Croatia than in most EU Member States. In 2016, only 16.9% of the population in the 25-64 age group had an educational attainment lower than upper-secondary education (EU average: 23.0%), while the proportion of young adults (aged 25-34) with less than upper-secondary education is the lowest of all Member States (5.5%, compared to the EU average of 16.5%) (Eurostat, 2017.d). In accordance, Croatia has one of the lowest early school-leaving rates in the EU (2.8% in 2016, which is far below the EU target of 10% – Eurostat, 2017.e). Regarding other levels of education, Croatia has a higher than average proportion of adults who have completed upper-secondary education (60.0% compared to the EU average of 46.3%), and a lower than average proportion of adults who have completed higher education (23.1% compared to the EU average of 30.7%) (Eurostat, 2017.d – data for 2016).

Regarding the link between education and employment, according to a European Commission's (2016) country report, the employment rate for the low-skilled population in Croatia in 2015 (40.2%) saw 'the most striking deviation from the EU average' (53.2%) and the employment prospects for upper-secondary graduates were also significantly below the EU average (63.8% compared to the EU average of 73.9%). Although lack of opportunities on the labour market partially explain these outcomes, skills mismatches in the Croatian VET system and outdated curricula that do not equip VET graduates with the skills needed by employers have been reported as equally problematic (see e.g. ETF, 2012; Matković et al., 2013; European Commission, 2015.a).

Upskilling the labour force is therefore an urgent need in Croatia. A major obstacle to achieving this goal is that the proportion of adults participating in lifelong learning (3.0% in 2016) has persistently been one of the lowest of all EU Member States over the last decade, and is far below the EU average of 10.8% (Eurostat, 2017.f). The European Commission (2017.a) emphasised this problem in its 2017 European Semester country report on Croatia, noting that 'Croatia is lagging behind in upgrading skills and re-skilling the working-age population' (p. 36).

1.2. In focus: persons not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

Croatia is one of the EU Member States with the highest NEET rates: in 2016, 16.9% of young people in the 15-24 age group were NEETs, (compared to 11.5% in the EU) as were 19.5% in the 15-29 age group (compared to 14.2% at the EU level) (Eurostat, 2017.g). Although the latter NEET rate is almost 3 percentage points lower than in 2013 (22.3%), Croatia still remains the Member State with the fourth highest NEET rate after Italy, Greece and Romania and the NEET rate is still far above Croatia's pre-crisis (2008) level of 11.6% (ibid).

The characteristics of NEETs in Croatia have been analysed in Tomić (2016) and Eurofound (2016) (both based on data for 2013) and can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Age: NEETs are mostly in the age groups of 25-29 (43%) and 20-24 (41%), while only 17% of them are in the 15-19 age group (Tomić, 2016), which is most likely due to the low levels of early school-leaving.
- (b) Gender: The proportion of women in the NEET population (48%) is the second lowest rate in the EU. Nevertheless, an in-depth analysis confirmed that women are still more at risk than men of becoming NEETs in Croatia (Eurofound, 2016).
- (c) Educational attainment: According to Tomić (2016), the proportion of NEETs who completed secondary education is identical to their proportion in the employed population (71%). Those who have only completed primary education, however, are three times more likely to be NEETs (13%) than to be in employment (4%). As expected, those who have completed higher education are less likely to be NEETs (17%) than to be in employment (26%).
- (d) Geographical location: There is a disproportionately high NEET rate in Central and Eastern Croatia, compared to North-western Croatia and Adriatic Croatia (Tomić, 2016).

- (e) Unemployment: According to EU-SILC data (in Eurofound, 2016), 74.6% of all NEETs in Croatia were registered with the Croatian Employment Service, which is the highest observed share among all Member States. This places Croatia at a relative advantage compared to other Member States in being able to reach a large proportion of NEETs through active labour market measures

According to EU-LFS data (ibid), the long-term unemployed constitute the single largest group among all NEETs (39%, which is much higher than the EU average of 23.1%), while the second largest group are the short-term unemployed (29% compared to the EU average of 25.5%).

- (f) Inactivity (and reasons for inactivity): According to EU-LFS data (ibid), the largest group of inactive NEETs are those that are not seeking work due to family responsibilities (14.3% of all NEETs), which is lower than the EU average of 20.3%. Persons not seeking work due to 'discouragement' make up 7.6% of NEETs, which is only slightly higher than the EU average (5.9%). Although across the EU 6.4% of NEETs are temporarily inactive while waiting to re-enter an enrolled education programme or an agreed job, only 2.5% of NEETs in Croatia correspond to this group. Also, although in the EU 7.1% of NEETs are inactive due to illness or disability, only a negligible proportion of NEETs in Croatia fit this category (0.8%). Finally, only 6.5% of NEETs in Croatia are inactive for 'other reasons' (EU average: 11.8%).

1.3. In focus: Long-term unemployment

Between 2005 and 2014, the long-term unemployment (LTU) rate in Croatia increased from 7.6% to 10.1%, after reaching its lowest at 5.3% in 2008. The LTU rate has since dropped to 6.6% in 2016, which is still higher than the EU average (4.0%) (Eurostat, 2017.h). According to an analysis by the European Commission (2015.b), the characteristics of the long-term unemployed in Croatia in 2014 were the following:

- (a) Age: One notable trend is that youth have been particularly hard hit by LTU: the LTU rate of youth (in the 15-25 age group) increased from 10.5% to 22.5% between 2008 and 2014.
- (b) Gender: Women were more likely to be in LTU than men in 2008 (6.8% compared to 4.3% for men), but since a result of the economic crisis was a larger increase in unemployment among men, this narrowed the gender differences in LTU rates (women: 10.8%; men: 9.7%).
- (c) Educational attainment: As expected, persons with lowest levels of education in Croatia have the highest levels of LTU (18.8%, compared to

11.9% at the EU level). However, those with secondary education are still vulnerable, with their LTU rate (11%) being more than double the EU average (5.2%). Persons with higher education qualifications in Croatia have lower risk of LTU (4%), with the rate only slightly higher than the EU average (3.3%).

1.4. Specific issues in Croatia: vulnerable groups

Certain groups are highlighted in policy documents as being more vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market and hence of broader social exclusion. The Roma national minority in Croatia is faced by poverty, poor living conditions, lack of access to (and completion of) education and widespread unemployment/inactivity (GRC, 2012.b; UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF Croatia, 2014). Persons with disabilities are also group with less access to quality education (and progression to higher levels of education) and quality employment (GRC, 2016.a). These groups are therefore at high risk of becoming NEET or LTU and are identified as priority groups for additional educational support and active labour market measures.

CHAPTER 2.

National strategies relevant to upskilling, NEETs and long-term unemployment

2.1. Overarching strategic framework

The 2016-2020 Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (GRC, 2016.b) has a specific goal entitled 'Employment of young people and the long-term unemployed', which focuses on activation and strengthening employability through formal education (especially in programmes for shortage occupations) and upskilling. In line with this Government Programme, one of the three goals and reform areas of the Government's 2017 National Reform Plan (GRC, 2017), submitted to the European Commission as part of the European Semester, is increasing employability and linking education with the labour market, including measures for upskilling the unemployed, improving adult education and bringing education in closer line with labour market needs. These measures are discussed in more detail below.

Another overarching strategic document is Croatia's national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (hereafter: YGIP) (MLPS, 2014), adopted in 2013 in line with the European Commission's Youth Guarantee initiative to tackle the problem of NEETs in the EU. Croatia's YGIP follows on the previous Croatia-EU frameworks for addressing (youth) unemployment: the Joint Memorandum of Social Inclusion (2004) and Joint Assessment Paper for Employment Priorities (2008). Croatia's YGIP is a policy framework that links existing governmental strategies and policies related to youth employment and education/training, that strengthens them (financially and institutionally) and that complements them with new measures. The YGIP includes both reform measures (to ensure that relevant institutions better respond to the policy challenges) and direct provision of measures to beneficiaries. The YGIP is governed by an inter-ministerial body and the plan was developed and monitored by a multi-stakeholder advisory body including line ministries, business representatives, unions and youth NGOs. The YGIP has recently been revised following its first few years of implementation and (as will be presented in more detail below) the new plan (MLPS, 2017) is highly relevant in the context of this report since it has an explicit objective and set of measures dedicated to outreach.

Finally, another overarching framework is the Government's ESF Operational Programme for Efficient Human Resources 2016-2020 (GRC, 2014),

which defines objectives and priorities in the Croatia's use of European Social Funds. The document includes investment priorities relating to access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people (8i) and integration of youth into the labour market (8ii), whose specific objectives directly address NEETs and long-term unemployment.

2.2. Specific strategic framework: labour market/employment policy

The objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Labour and Pension System 2016-2018 (MLPS, 2016) include encouraging the employment of disadvantaged people and youth, as well as increasing the availability of lifelong career guidance services. The Government's earlier Guidelines for Active Labour Market Policy 2015-2017 (GRC, 2014.a) included objectives that specifically focus on 'Reducing and preventing long-term unemployment to prevent poverty and social exclusion' and 'Increasing employability of young people, with a specific emphasis on NEETs. It should be noted, however, that active labour market policies (ALMPs) in Croatia focusing on upskilling have so far been rather limited in scope (covering 0.75% of the registered unemployed in 2015)¹ and an external evaluation in 2016 showed that the measures had not been effective (CES, 2016.b). The European Commission (2017.b) has also noted how expenditure and coverage ALMPs, retraining measures and lifelong learning are 'very low'. Croatia's ALMPs have since undergone a revision, with more emphasis placed on upskilling of the long-term unemployed and the low-skilled (GRC, 2017) – but the results of the measures will only be visible in 2018. The revised ALMPs also do not include have any specific outreach dimension other than the standard guidance services provided by the CES.

A policy with a more specific focus on outreach and guidance is the Strategy for Lifelong Professional Guidance and Career Development of the Republic of Croatia 2016-2020 (GRC, 2015). This strategy links its goal of developing a national career guidance system to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the need to both identify NEETs and provide them with guidance. The Strategy also has measures to target guidance at the long-term unemployed and to counsel adults on the recognition of prior learning. Croatia's national career guidance system was established in 2013 through a network of Lifelong Career

¹ 2142 unemployed persons took part in education programmes, out of 285906 unemployed (CES, 2016).

Guidance Centres (CISOK centres). CISOKs are established in 10 cities in Croatia for providing information, advice and guidance on careers and educational opportunities, and have been highlighted in the YGIP as the central place to reach and activate NEETs. This measure will be presented as a good practice in the following section.

The strategic document that places the most specific emphasis on outreach is the already-mentioned YGIP, whose revised 2017-2018 plan (MLPS, 2017) devotes a section specifically to 'Outreach' (making this the only strategic document to use this specific term). While part of the outreach measures relates to strengthening existing services (i.e. the expansion of the network of CISOK centres), some new measures are also planned, which are highly relevant:

- (a) Tracking NEETs: An agreement was signed in 2016 between the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute and the CES for the exchange of databases among relevant institutions in order to track NEETs in Croatia. The data will enable to track individuals' educational and career paths and therefore identify those who drop out from education system and/or who are otherwise inactive (CES, 2016.a). These data will allow for the development of more effective outreach strategies towards NEETs.
- (b) Public awareness campaign: Targeted specifically at NEETs and at employers, the awareness campaign aims to raise the visibility of the Youth Guarantee measures and to increase the involvement of NEETs in those measures.
- (c) Engagement of NEETs: Projects will be financed that will develop innovative ways of activating NEETs that are currently not registered as unemployed, or provide support to NEETs to (re)integrate them into education or the labour market. Youth organisations and networks will be also supported to better target and engage NEETs.

2.3. Specific strategic framework: education and training policy

While the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology (GRC, 2014.b) does not identify NEETs as a target group or specifically mention long-term unemployment, a number of objectives and measures address the prevention of youth becoming NEETs and the upskilling of vulnerable adults. In terms of prevention, one of the Strategy's objectives (1.6) is to develop support measures for pupils in pre-tertiary education to address learning difficulties, behavioural problems and early school-leaving. In tertiary education, one of the objectives

(2.6) relates to the social dimension of tertiary education, including the provision of financial support and targeted measures for disadvantaged groups. In adult education, the Strategy aims to increase the proportion of low-qualified adults taking part in adult education in order to upskill them, make them more employable and lower their risk of social exclusion. Finally, lifelong learning is framed as a cross-cutting priority of the Strategy, and among the planned measures is to establish a system of recognition of prior learning (which would allow both the validation of non-formal/informal upskilling and would open new pathways into formal education).

The VET System Development Programme 2016-2020 (GRC, 2016.c), which complements the aforementioned Strategy, includes a measure (3.4) for the inclusion of disadvantaged VET pupils and for the prevention of early school-leaving.

While many measures within the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology are relevant to upskilling, none of them appear to have an explicit 'outreach' component. However, a recent initiative (that was not planned in the Strategy, but is fully in line with its objectives) is to implement a national lifelong learning promotion campaign as a response to the low participation of adults in lifelong learning (with NEETs, the low-skilled and the long-term unemployed among the target groups). The campaign's plan has been drafted and will be implemented in 2018. This measure will be presented as a good practice in the following section.

CHAPTER 3.

Examples of practice

3.1. LIFELONG CAREER GUIDANCE CENTRES

3.1.1. Type of measure

One of Croatia's recent initiatives for reaching out to both youth and adults throughout the country and providing career and educational guidance is the network of Lifelong Career Guidance Centres (Centri za informiranje i savjetovanje o karijeri – hereafter 'CISOK centres'). The network of CISOK centres was established by the Croatian Employment Service (CES) in 2013 for ensuring more attainable provision of information, advice and guidance on careers and educational opportunities through 'one-stop-shops' at the local level. The network of 11 CISOK centres effectively acts as an outreach mechanism by covering 10 cities around Croatia, with a plan to expand and cover each of Croatia's 21 counties by 2020.

3.1.2. Coverage and target groups

The main target groups of CISOK centres are: students of primary and secondary schools; higher education students; unemployed persons; employed persons (who are changing jobs or careers); employers; parents; school staff; career advisers; and others who have an interest in career development (CES, 2016.c). CISOK centres have been recognised in the YGIP as a focal point for reaching out and activating NEETs and for coordinating with local partners to define measures to (re)integrate them into the labour market and/or education (MLPS, 2017).

Since 2013, CISOK centres had a total of 134,740 users² (until April 2016) (CES, 2016.c). In 2015 alone, CISOK centres provided services to a total of 60,834 users. Although CISOK centres provide services for all age groups, the users of CISOK centre services are primarily young people (77,952 users, or 57.8% of all users since 2013, were under 29 years old). The largest group of users are unemployed persons (51,193), followed by students from primary/lower-secondary schools (35,373), students from upper-secondary schools (20,196) and job-seekers (7,090) (CES, 2016.c). Regarding NEETs, in

² The number of users refers to the number services provided to individuals, rather than the number of 'unique users/visitors'.

2016 CISOK centre resources were used by 2719 NEETs, of which 2519 were active job-seekers whereas 200 were inactive (MLPS, 2017).

3.1.3. Description of practice

Types of services provided

Regarding opportunities on the labour market, CISOK centres provide information and advice on employment, self-employment, labour market needs, occupations and active labour market policies. Regarding educational opportunities, CISOK centres provide information and advice on secondary education, higher education and adult education, as well as information on scholarships and loan opportunities (CES, 2016.c). CISOK advisers provide users with the following forms of information and advising:

- (a) Individual information, advising and counselling services;
- (b) Group-based information and counselling sessions/workshops;
- (c) Round-table discussions, lectures, presentations and seminars;
- (d) Access to resources such as informational material and on-line career advising tools developed by CES.

The majority of users are informed through access to informational materials and on-line tools, while a smaller proportion of users attend individual and group counselling on career management skills development and improvement of active job-seeking skills (CEDEFOP, 2016).

Assessment and profiling of users

CISOK centres provide services to users based upon their identified needs and their willingness for making decisions regarding their career. The initial tools used for assessing the needs and profile of users are specialised computer programmes and questionnaires that have been developed by CES to guide individuals in taking informed decisions on starting, changing or advancing their career:

- (a) My choice (Moj izbor): Self-assessment questionnaire on interest and competences for citizens above 13 years old who are choosing a profession or for adults that are thinking about changing professions, as well as those who want to learn more about specific occupations.
- (b) Self-Assessment Questionnaire on Personality Traits: Self-assessment questionnaire to help individuals determine how their personality traits can be of value to in different types of jobs.

All users can also access in-depth individualised services. The users who tend to make most use of these services are persons with disabilities, persons

that are “hard to place” and other disadvantaged groups. Advisers at the CISOK centres provide such services in a flexible way to users based on the needs and interests of users. All CISOK services are standardised. The type and choice of services depends upon the assessed needs of clients in a specific area.

Tracking

The general method for reaching and attracting users to use CISOK resources is promotion via partner institutions and networks. For example, local CES branches refer unemployed persons to make use of the CISOK centres and educational institutions can organise group visits and/or refer their students to the CISOK centres. CISOK centres have also developed a range of promotional tools, including the CISOK web site (see below), posters, leaflets and promotion via media appearances. With regards to reaching out towards specific vulnerable groups, they are primarily identified by advisers at local CES centres or are referred to the CISOK centres by partner institutions that work with such groups (e.g. social welfare institutions, NGOs, etc.). Many NEETs are reached through CISOK services, since (as noted earlier in the report) a large majority of them are registered as unemployed. The current challenge for CISOK centres, however, is to reach NEETs that are not registered as unemployed at the CES. This challenge will be overcome in 2017 thanks to the measure planned in the Youth Guarantee for tracking inactive NEETs (as mentioned in previous section).

Web services

The CISOK centres make extensive use of e-services. The central web page for the network of CISOK centres (<http://www.cisok.hr/>) provides informational materials, links to on-line assessment tools, information on the labour market and lists/timetables of upcoming activities in the CISOK centres. The main guidance tool used by CISOK centres when working with users in E-guidance web site (E-usmjeravanje, <http://e-usmjeravanje.hzz.hr/>), developed by the CES in 2015, which provides a “Career Compass” that is adapted to different user profiles (e.g. pupils, students, the unemployed and the employed). The web site also incorporates the self-assessment questionnaires mentioned above, as well as advice on how to write a CV and how to conduct a job interview. The CISOK centres also refer users to the central CES e-tool listing available jobs in Croatia (<https://burzarada.hzz.hr/>).

3.1.4. Management and funding arrangements

- (a) Financing: The overall cost of the network of CISOK centres in 2015 was around 368,000 EUR (324,000 EUR for staff; 19,000 EUR for rent; and

24,000 for operational costs), which was covered through the Croatian state budget (CES, 2016.c). It should be noted, however, that eight out of 11 CISOK centres do not pay rent. The costs of establishing new and strengthening the capacity of already existing CISOK centres are planned through financing from the European Social Fund (MLPS, 2017).

- (b) Staffing: There are 24 expert advisers employed in CISOK centres and two expert advisers at the Central Office. There are two career advisers in each centre, except Osijek and Split (3 advisers), due to the size of the centres (CES, 2016.c).
- (c) Management: All CISOK centres work as units of the CES, and each CISOK centre functions as sub-units of the local CES office in the town where it is established. In addition, one office located in the CES headquarters in Zagreb acts a central coordination office for all CISOK centres.
- (d) Networking: The network of CISOK centres is the result of an innovative, cross-sectoral partnership between local municipalities, local chambers, educational institutions (at the primary, secondary, tertiary and adult education levels), youth organisations, NGOs, social institutions and social partners. These partners contribute in different aspects, including through funding, providing premises and service-delivery (CES, 2016.c).

3.1.5. Results

Users have shown a high satisfaction rate with the quality of CISOK centre services. According to satisfaction surveys, out of 27,928 surveyed users in 2015 97.9% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the services provided and 95.4% rated the services as being useful or very useful (CES, 2016.a). Although there has not yet been an external evaluation of the coverage, outcomes and impact of the CISOK centres, internal assessments by the CES have been positive and there is support for strengthening the CISOK network (CES, 2016.a, CES 2016.c). The CISOK network has also been recognised by international stakeholders (e.g. European Commission, CEDEFOP, European Network of Public Employment Services) as an example of good practice (CES, 2016.a).

3.2. Lifelong learning promotion campaign 2016-2021

3.2.1. Type of measure

The Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETA) developed a three-year national project entitled 'Promotion of Lifelong Learning' that was granted funding through the European Social Fund in 2016. The project's goal is to raise awareness of the importance of lifelong learning and

to increase adult participation in lifelong learning in order to strengthen their competitiveness on the labour market.

The project will fund national, regional and local campaigns to promote lifelong learning (especially adult education), as well as a series of activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of institutions and stakeholders involved in adult education (including professional development for 550 educators) (MSES, 2017). The campaign (which began in 2016) therefore directly addresses the need for upskilling of the labour force in Croatia using outreach methods (including towards hard-to-reach groups), as well as incorporating guidance and counselling.

3.2.2. Context

As previously mentioned in this report, adult participation in learning in Croatia is one of the lowest in the EU. An analysis of data on participation levels in Croatia confirms what can be expected: lower participation is characteristic for older people, people with lower education, people who work in manual labour, people who live in rural areas and for vulnerable groups such as Roma or persons with disabilities (AVETAE, 2017). According to the 2007 Adult Education Survey (Eurostat, 2007),³ the most prominent obstacles to participation in adult education in Croatia are:

- (a) high costs of lifelong learning programmes (54.1%);
- (b) lack of time due to family obligations (50.4%);;
- (c) and lack of support by employers (23.8%).

In the context of these challenges, the Lifelong Learning Promotion campaign has two objectives:

- (a) To raise awareness of the social role of lifelong learning as a positive value and to foster a positive and proactive attitude towards learning at all ages and among all stakeholders in society.
- (b) To raise awareness of concrete lifelong learning possibilities.

3.2.3. Coverage and target groups

The Lifelong Learning Promotion campaign adopts a broad approach that aims to reach all stakeholders and beneficiaries of lifelong learning, with due emphasis on those groups that would most benefit from upskilling for their employment and

³ Croatia has not participated in the Adult Education Survey since 2007, so these data are the only ones available. They are arguably still pertinent since the level of participation of adults in lifelong learning in Croatia has only marginally improved since 2007.

social inclusion (including NEETs and the long-term unemployed, who are identified as specific target groups). Based on an analysis of available data on access to lifelong learning in Croatia, a total of 16 target groups of the campaign have been defined as follows:

- (a) Participants in the formal education system:
 - (i) Pre-school children
 - (ii) Primary and secondary school pupils
 - (iii) Higher education students
- (b) Existing and potential participants in adult education – specifically:
 - (i) Unemployed and long-term unemployed adults
 - (ii) Employed adults
 - (iii) Adults who are learning for personal development
- (c) Employers
- (d) Vulnerable social groups – specifically:
 - (i) Persons with low skills or without qualifications
 - (ii) NEETs
 - (iii) People living in rural areas
 - (iv) Roma
 - (v) Persons with disabilities
 - (vi) Migrants
 - (vii) Senior citizens
- (e) Education policy-makers and lifelong learning providers (especially adult education institutions)

The campaign effectively consists numerous different ‘targeted campaigns’, with separate communication objectives, methods, tools and activities for each target group.

3.2.4. Description of practice

All activities of the campaign are aimed at communicating the personal, economic and social benefits of lifelong learning, while adapting the information to the needs of each of the identified target groups. The campaign also aims to inform potential users of concrete learning programmes, measures and incentives, as well as about high-demand occupations. Finally, the campaign addresses broader challenges in the education system, for example: the need to foster a positive perception of VET and work-based learning; the need to better adapt education to the needs of the labour market; the need to implement recognition of prior learning; etc.

Although each target group has its own set of activities, the types of activities can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Organisation of national informational campaigns via events, press releases, media/ social media promotion;
- (b) Organisation of promotional events (info points, info days) at the local level aimed at presenting lifelong learning opportunities;
- (c) Creating catalogues of educational programmes available to specific target groups;
- (d) Individual and group counselling for specific target groups;
- (e) Sharing testimonials of personal experiences on the benefits of lifelong learning;
- (f) Engaging NGOs, unions and other stakeholders working with specific target groups to promote specific learning opportunities (including work-based learning);
- (g) Development of promotional materials;
- (h) Engaging public and private companies such as banks, post offices and supermarket chains to help distribute materials in their premises.

3.2.5. Management and funding arrangements

Financing: The funds for the project implementing the campaign have been ensured and amount to around 1.55 million EUR over three years, of which 85% is covered by the European Social Fund and 15% by the Croatian State Budget.

Management/networking: The project is managed by AVETAE and the development of the campaign involved a multi-stakeholder working group including representatives of relevant state institutions, educational institutions, NGOs and experts. The campaign's implementation is also led by AVETAE and aims to engage the ministries responsible for education labour and the economy; local and regional authorities; the CES and its CISOK centres; trade unions; chambers and business associations; educational institutions (especially adult education providers); NGOs and the media.

3.2.6. Results

Since the project is still in an early phase of implementation, it is too early to make an assessment of its success. However, the lifelong learning awareness campaigns implemented by AVETAE until 2016 have succeeded in covering all Croatian counties and in involving cooperation of state institutions, counties, the CES, social partners, educational and cultural institutions, NGOs and the local community as a whole. In previous campaigns, a total of 700 institutions held over 660 events aimed at promoting lifelong learning, including workshops,

lectures, round tables, theatre performances and exhibitions, resulting in over 5,000 press clippings.

What is clear, in any case, is that the campaign is a highly relevant national initiative that addresses the urgent need to increase participation in lifelong learning in the country, and thus make a direct contribution to upskilling the labour force and to lowering the risk of social exclusion (including for NEETs and the long-term unemployed).

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