

# Development of a quality assurance system in adult education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 CROATIA

## Timeline



ID number 42778

## Background

There is no structured and coherent system for monitoring the quality of adult education institutions' work in Croatia. There are more than 1 000 programmes offered by about 600 adult education institutions, many of which were established without adhering to high quality criteria.

A quality assurance system in adult education is needed. Such a system could also bring about the necessary support measures for the working population. Currently, there is no structured and coherent system that would monitor the quality of work of adult education institutions, and that would implement necessary development and improvement measures based on reliable indicators of the existing and required competences of employees. There is a lack of systematic adult skills tests or coherent assessments, as well as the implications on labour market and economic competitiveness. The lack of such procedures impact the overall quality of existing education provision.

Due to the limited offer of quality and relevant educational programmes, adults in Croatia are not motivated to engage in lifelong learning (SOZT, 2014). In 2017, participation in adult education programmes was only 2.3% of the population aged 25-64, which is significantly below the EU-27 average of 10.9%. It is also stated that, despite the need to strengthen the competences of the working population, there is no confidence in the quality of adult education institutions, cost-effectiveness of investment in lifelong learning or positive evaluation by employers and applicability of acquired competences in the labour market.

Although different quality monitoring procedures are implemented in the system, they are insufficiently interconnected, they are not applied to all levels and types of formal adult education, and are not used sufficiently to improve existing practices and adopt development measures.

## Objectives

To eliminate the problems identified and improve adult education quality, the project plans to develop a quality assurance system through the development of models of self-evaluation and external evaluation of adult education institutions in order to improve adult education based on relevant research data.

## Description

The project Development of a quality assurance system in adult education is financed under ESF Operational programme Effective human resources 2014-20. The implementation period of the project is 40 months beginning from January 2019. The project has a total value of EUR 2 368 780 (HRK 17 838 099). The body responsible for the implementation is the Agency for VET and Adult Education (ASOO). The project is aimed at improving the quality of the adult education system through the development of a model of self-assessment and external evaluation of adult education institutions to improve adult education based on relevant research data. Within the framework of the project, Croatia will also participate in the Programme for the international assessment of adult competences (PIAAC), the comprehensive international survey on adult competences of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The PIAAC survey measures adult (aged 16 to 65) proficiency in key information-processing skills: literacy, numeracy and problem solving, in more than 40 countries.

The necessary mechanisms and instruments of the quality assurance system in adult education will be developed. The capacities of decision makers, andragogy workers, education professionals working in public institutions, responsible for the development and implementation of education policy at the macro and micro level, will be improved. By implementing self-assessment and external evaluation procedures, adult education institutions will gain fact-based insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. Based on this data, they will be able to plan measures to improve the quality of the institution's work. The project consists of four elements:

- (a) project management and administration;
- (b) national adult competence survey (PIAAC);
- (c) establishment of a quality assurance system in adult education;
- (d) promotion and visibility.

The work on a quality assurance system for adult education started in 2020. So far, a comprehensive model of quality assurance for adult education has been proposed and manuals for self-assessment and external evaluation of adult education, including CVET providers, have been developed.

An external evaluation committee is being set up and support for education institutions will be provided.

### 2021 Design

Although the project consists of four elements, during 2021 the most common activities were related to the first two, one of which relates to the national examination of adult competences (PIAAC), and the other to the establishment of quality assurance systems in adult education.

Key activities in 2021 for project element Quality assurance system include 15 meetings of the working group for the establishment of a quality assurance system in adult education, as well as two meetings with representatives of adult education institutions involved in piloting the model of self-assessment and external evaluation. A working version of the complete model of quality assurance system in adult education has been prepared, which includes the following: Model of quality assurance in adult education institutions; Manual for self-assessment of adult education institutions; and Manual for external evaluation of adult education institutions. During the IX International Andragogical Symposium, a workshop was held to present the model of quality assurance system in adult education.

### 2022 Implementation

Activities of the ESF project Development of a Quality Assurance System in Adult Education continued. The methodological framework for self-assessment and external evaluation of adult education providers was finalised and self-assessment was piloted

in 25 adult education providers. A pool of external evaluators was formed and trained.

### **2023 Implementation**

A framework for external evaluation was piloted in 25 adult education providers and e-tools for self-assessment of adult education providers were finalised. These e-tools for self-assessment allow adult education providers to submit their self-assessment reports, as well as candidate applications and schedule for the final examination and defence of the final practical assignments of adult learners completing programmes at adult education institutions, which supports external evaluation of learning outcomes in adult education. In line with the Regulation on the procedure of external evaluation of adult education institutions, external evaluation is conducted every 5-7 years based on the Annual plan of external evaluation published by the Agency for VET and Adult Education or at the request of providers. The methodology for self-assessment does not define the mandatory length of the self-assessment cycles, leaving the decision on the frequency of self-assessment to providers. However, the self-assessment cycles should minimally correspond to the external evaluation cycles, as self-assessment reports form the basis for external evaluation. In the external evaluation, the continuity and effectiveness of self-assessment is reviewed among the evaluation criteria. Providers are recommended to conduct self-assessment in 1-3-year cycles. In 2023, 22 adult education providers underwent an informal external evaluation as a piloting exercise, whereas 3 institutions underwent the formal external evaluation procedure. External evaluation reports and quality level assessments for these three institutions were published at the website of the Agency for VET and Adult Education.

After the successful development of a complete model for the quality assurance system in adult education, based on the analysis of the submitted self-assessment reports, advisory visits were held, during which individual consultations were carried out with a representative of each institution with the aim of providing support and gathering feedback on the self-assessment model. Institutions were also advised on how they can improve their reports. Furthermore, the Agency for VET and Adult Education organised 15 workshops and 3 symposia for over 500 adult education providers and external evaluators to build capacities and familiarise stakeholders with the new quality assurance procedures in adult education. Manuals were published with guidelines and tools on internal and external quality assurance for adult education providers.

The quality assurance processes (self-assessment and external evaluation) in adult education assess 5 quality areas, each with the corresponding quality standards and assessment criteria:

- (a) Institutional management and quality assurance system;
- (b) Educational programmes, teaching and learning;
- (c) Learning achievement and support for learners;
- (d) Human and material resources;
- (e) Public relations, communication and collaboration, integrity and ethics.

### **2024 Implementation**

Self-assessment and external evaluation continued as a regular practice. The Agency for VET and Adult Education publishes the annual schedule of external evaluation of adult education providers at its website, as well as external evaluation reports and decisions on the quality level assessment for the evaluated institutions. In 2024, 10 adult education providers underwent external evaluation. In 2024, the Agency for VET and Adult Education received EUR 10 469 060.56 from the ESF+ funding to continue strengthening the new quality assurance mechanisms and promote lifelong learning through the project, Further development of the quality assurance in adult education and promotion of lifelong learning (2024 - 2029). The project activities are oriented at supporting the implementation of new quality assurance mechanisms in adult education and promoting opportunities for lifelong learning in Croatia. Through the external evaluation of adult education providers, the project will encourage further improvements and commitment to quality.

## 2025 Implementation

Self-assessment and external evaluation continue as a regular practice. 30 adult education providers are undergoing external evaluation in 2025.

## Bodies responsible

- Agency for VET and Adult Education (ASOO)

## Target group

### Learners

Adult learners

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

### Education professionals

Adult educators

### Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

## Thematic categories

### Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

### Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

## European priorities in VET

### VET Recommendation

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

VET underpinned by a culture of quality assurance

## Subsystem

CVET

## Further reading

[Development of a quality assurance system in adult education](#)

[Agency for VET and Adult Education \(2023\). Manual for external quality assurance in adult education: Guidelines for external evaluation. \[Prirucnik za vanjsko osiguranje kvalitete: Smjernice za vanjsko vrednovanje\].](#)

## Related policy developments

### 2025 Implementation

#### National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027

In response to the challenges affecting VET, the National Education System Development Plan for the period up to 2027 proposes a number of measures, building on key reform initiatives from the previous strategic period. The specific measures related to VET (Area 3 of the Plan) include:

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##### Type of development

Strategy/Action plan

##### Subsystem

IVET CVET

### 2025 Implementation

#### The Law on Adult Education

The 2021 Law on Adult Education provided guidelines for the development of a comprehensive quality assurance system and allowed for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

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##### Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

##### Subsystem

CVET

### 2024 Completed

#### Participation in Programme for the international assessment of adult competencies (PIAAC)

In 2018, Croatia committed to participate in the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) for the first time.

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##### Type of development

Practical

measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

CVET

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“ … ” **Cite as**

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