Historical Development

Croatia has a century-old tradition of institutional adult education. Adult education in Croatia was pioneered at the beginning of the 20th century by Albert Bazala, founder of public university lectures, and Andrija Štampar, founder of the School of Public Health. In 1907, pursuing the initiative of Alberta Bazala, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Theology in Zagreb started organizing lectures open to the interested public.

Adult education offer in Croatia bloomed between 1919 and 1941 through establishment of a number of „people's universities“ andragogical societies. In years following the end of World War II system of publicly organized adult education further expanded in response to the increasing demand for skilled labour due to intense industrialization and economic development of the country.

The golden age of development of adult education system in Croatia were the sixties of the XX century, when a rich network of people's universities was established. In 1954 these developments led to the establishment of the Croatian Federation of Peoples Universities - the first association of this type of educational institutions - which still operates today as the Croatian Association of Open Universities.

The federation was founded with the goal of connecting peoples' universities in order to facilitate sharing of educational programs and experiences among them, pooling of their teaching staff and expansion of the adult education institutions' network in regions and local communities where they did not exist yet. The Federation is organized as the national, non-profit and non-governmental organization and since 1996 it is a full member of the European Association for Adult Education.

The Federation subsequently founded the Andragogic Centre as the institution catering for the advancement of adult education. The Federation and the Centre jointly established and published journal „Adult Education“. Besides the Federation, two more organizations involved in representing and promoting the interests of adult education institutions exist in Croatia: Croatian Andragogic Society and Association of Adult Education Institutions. Despite the long tradition of adult education in Croatia, during the Homeland war period (1991-1995) andragogic activity dwindled and in following years its recovery was hindered by the country's economic difficulties. This in turn led to the sharp decrease in the number of adult education institutions and programmes.
Present Situation

Adult education in Croatia is today recognized as part of a unified education system of the Republic of Croatian (Adult Education Act (Official Gazette 17/07, Article 1). Adoption of the Adult Education Act in 2007 created the preconditions of re-institutionalization and legal and statutory regulation of the education system adults. Law was preceded Adult Education Strategy, which was adopted by the Croatian Government in 2004.

Adult Education Strategy (2004) represents in twofold manner an important step forward in the development of this system. It first signifies stronger public sensitization regarding the lifelong learning. Second it officially recognizes and positions adult education as a distinct and fully fledged element of total education system in Croatia. Consequential legislative framing marked by the adoption of the Adult Education Act in 2007 and a year later the associated legislation. Finally, the necessary institutional framework was provided by establishing the Agency for Adult Education in 2006, and subsequent merger (in 2010) of the Agency for Adult Education and the Agency for Vocational Education in the Agency for vocational education and adult education and establishment of the dedicated public body titled the Council for Adult Education (in 2007), as an advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

Today, adult education system in Croatia is based on the principles of:

- lifelong learning;
- rational use of educational resources;
- geographical vicinity and access to education for everyone under the same conditions, in accordance with their abilities;
- autonomy and freedom in choosing the mode, content, type, means and methods of education;
- respecting differences and inclusion;
- professional and moral responsibility of the andragogic staff;
- educational offer quality guarantee;
- respecting the personality and dignity of all learners.

European Perspective

Under the implementation of the European education policy and the promotion of adult education and lifelong learning in Croatia, with the emphasis on the unskilled and low-skilled workers, in 2012, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports launched the projects under the Implementation of EU Agenda for Adult Education, which were part of the Lifelong Learning Sub-Programme Grundtvig from 2012 till 2014, and became a part of the Erasmus+ programme of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission. The primary focus of the projects is the implementation and promotion of the Council Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning (2011/C 372/01,) with a special focus on bringing together and networking between the stakeholders in the adult education system at the local and national levels.

Implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006/962/EC) promotes the acquisition of key competences for lifelong learning, with the emphasis on the unskilled and low-skilled Croatian workers, forming a basis for their further personal and professional development. Within the
framework of the previous two-year project Implementation of the EU Agenda 2012-2014, the Ministry passed the Recommendations for the quality development of the adult education and lifelong learning system in the Republic of Croatia, which included the Proposal of the competencies model for the primary adult education. The Strategic plan of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports for the period 2013-2015 set an increased accessibility and participation in the adult education programmes as one of the priorities in the dissemination of the lifelong learning policy and emphasises the necessity of focusing on increasing the attractiveness of adult education and expansion of the network of programmes and institutions for adult education.

In this context, a continued support for the primary adult education and training is planned within the framework of the literacy project, with the objective of facilitating the inclusion of individuals who did not complete the primary education into the lifelong learning process.

In the period 2012 – 2014, as a follow-up to the European education policy and the promotion of adult education and lifelong learning in the Republic of Croatia, focussing on the low-skilled workers, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports implemented the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning through the project “Implementation of European Agenda for Adult Education”, which is a part of the Lifelong Learning Sub-Programme Grundtvig of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Sustainability of the project will be ensured by the reform of the adult education system under the new Strategy for Adult Education of the Republic of Croatia which is based on the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning, the amendments to the Adult Education Act and all relevant secondary legislation, the competences model for fundamental skills and the curriculum for the primary adult education.

**Adult Education in the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology**

The recommendations for the adult education quality development at the national level are based on the analysis of the implementation of the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning within the proposal for the *Strategy for Science, Education and Technology* (2013), the analysis of the recommendations and conclusions of the local stakeholders adopted at 25 panel discussions that took place across Croatia, and three coordination meetings held during the project on the topic of the SWOT-based reform of the system.

The objective of the *Strategy for Education, Science and Technology* with respect to adult education is to provide access to high-quality adult education programmes and to structure and provide accreditation for a diverse and extensive offer of formal and non-formal education programmes, with the emphasis on education and training.

The relevant regulations should be amended, maintaining the role of the Ministry of Science and Education in approving the programmes in accordance with the regulations for the implementation of the CROQF, in order to harmonise and, if possible, standardise compulsory learning outcomes and the evaluation criteria for certain qualifications or learning outcome units. The integral system for adult education quality assurance, which will, besides the existing CROQF mechanisms, include additional elements and procedures, will be designed.

All programmes complying with the mentioned requirements for the quality assurance in the adult education system will be considered formal programmes. Alongside formal programmes, non-formal
programmes can also exist. In accordance with the **CROQF Act**, programmes can be designed by the adult education institutions according to the approved qualification standards and with the obligation to adjust the qualification title and the programme content.

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