

***EU-CERT:  
European Certificates and Accreditation for European Projects***

Project Results 1 - Qualitative Research

**TIR Consulting Group j.d.o.o (CROATIA)**

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# General information

Dear Participant,

This interview guideline with open questions is part of the European project EU-CERT and contributes to the project by providing different opinions and views to facilitate the analysis of certification systems by identifying different quality criteria of adult education programs. The questions of the interview aim to find out these quality criteria which can form the basis of a general and adequate certification system for different adult education programs.

The guideline is part of a qualitative evaluation as well as analysis and therefore it is important to answer in full sentences and not only with some keyword. Please, be so kind and answer as complete as possible and provide examples wherever possible.

The interviews are conducted within the framework of the European project EU-CERT. The evaluation focusses on the development of a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of adult education projects. With the help of the guideline an accreditation system is developed which is based on clear criteria that are also integrated in the guideline formula and the questions. After the evaluation phase, an accreditation certificate can be elaborated with the help of which adult education can be certified concerning its quality. The certificate can be used as a proof for high or excellent quality of adult education programs.

This is why it is very important to get to know your view on quality criteria of adult education programs and which factors can be used to measure their quality.

Let‘s start with some general instructions:

| **General instructions for completing the questionnaire:**  This guideline consists of a quantitative and qualitative parts and addresses three thematic sections:   * General information * Experiences with adult education and adult education programs * Definition and assessment of adult education programs * Criteria and factors to measure the quality of adult education programs * Future outlook: Opportunities and Challenges of adult education   To handle all questions, you need approximately 20 minutes.  All your comments will be analysed and evaluated completely anonymously.  For any further questions, I am at your disposal. You can reach me via my email address and find more important information about the project on our website. Participants Questionnaire and answers | |
| --- | --- |
| **General information** | | |
|  | **The following questions serve the purpose to examine some background information about you as a person. By this your comments can be put into a context during the evaluation.**  **Please tell something about yourself, your profession and work life as well as the enterprise, institution or school you are working at.**  **Please give also some short information about your gender and age group (e.g. between 30 and 40)**   | **Participant 1: A female educator (34) who works at a VET traffic school.**  **Participant 2: A female youth worker (36) who also runs professional development company**  **Participant 3: A male trainer (42), teacher at PAR University.**    **Participant 4: A female educator (38) who specializes in adult literacy.**  **Participant 5: A male (44) manages the HR department.** | | --- | | |

| **Experiences with adult education and adult education programs (AEP)** | |
| --- | --- |
|  | **How far have you already worked in the field of adult education?** |
|  | **What kind of adult education programs have you already experienced?**  **Which role did you have during the participation in an AEP (participant, educator, observer…)?** |

| **Definition and assessment of adult education** | |
| --- | --- |
|  | **How do you define adult education?**  **What constitutes adult education for you?**   | **Participant 1: To me, adult education is any kind of learning that takes place outside of traditional schooling, and is designed for people who are no longer in their primary or secondary education years. It can be formal or informal, and can cover a wide range of topics and skills.**  **For me, adult education is all about personal growth and development.**  **Participant 2: As a professional development trainer, I define adult education as any kind of learning that adults engage in to improve their skills, knowledge, or job performance. This can include everything from workshops and conferences to on-the-job training and mentoring.**  **For me, adult education is about helping adults achieve greater independence and self-sufficiency. Many of the learners I work with have struggled with literacy for years, and it can have a major impact on their ability to achieve better in life and career.**  **Participant 3: I define adult education as any kind of learning that helps adults develop new skills and knowledge. I believe that learning is a lifelong process, and that people of all ages can benefit from continuing to expand their minds and horizons.**  **Participant 4: I define adult education as any kind of learning that helps adults improve their literacy skills. This can include basic reading and writing skills, as well as more advanced skills like critical thinking and digital literacy.**  **Participants 5: I define adult education as any kind of learning that adults engage in to improve their skills and knowledge in a particular field. I've seen firsthand how adult education can help people transition into new careers or advance in their current ones.** | | --- | |
|  | **Can you make out different forms of adult education?**  **Which forms have you already experienced yourself?**  **Please present some positive and negative aspects of the different forms of adult education.**   | **Participant 1: There are many different forms of adult education, including formal classroom-based courses, online learning programs, workshops and seminars, conferences, mentorship programs, and govt.-based initiatives. I have experienced formal classroom-based courses, online learning programs, and workshops and seminars. Formal classroom-based courses can offer a structured and supportive learning environment, with opportunities for interaction and collaboration with other learners. However, they can also be time-consuming and require a significant commitment in terms of time and resources. Online learning programs offer the flexibility to learn at your own pace and on your own schedule, but can be isolating and may lack the social and collaborative aspects of classroom-based courses. Workshops and seminars can offer a condensed and focused learning experience, but may not provide the depth or breadth of knowledge that a longer course would.**  **Participant 2: I work with a variety of different forms of adult education, including in-person training sessions, online courses, mentorship programs, and on-the-job training. I have experienced in-person training sessions, online courses, and mentorship programs. Online courses can offer the convenience of remote learning, but may lack the personal touch and immediate feedback of in-person training.**  **Participant 3: I work primarily with one-on-one tutoring sessions, but there are also group-based literacy programs, online literacy courses. I have primarily experienced one-on-one tutoring sessions.**  **One-on-one tutoring sessions can offer personalized attention and support for learners, but can be resource-intensive and may not be scalable for large groups. Group-based literacy programs can offer a supportive learning environment and opportunities for peer interaction, but may not be as tailored to individual learners' needs. Online literacy courses can offer the convenience of remote learning, but may require a higher level of self-motivation and discipline on the part of the learner.**  **Participant 4: I am most familiar with one-on-one training sessions, but I am also aware of group-based classes, workshops, and Erasmus+ initiatives focused on a variety of different skills and topics.**  **One-on-one training sessions can offer a personalized and flexible learning experience for learners, but may not be as social or collaborative as group-based classes.**  **Participant 5: I have recently completed an online professional development course. Online learning programs can provide flexibility and convenience, but require self-motivation and discipline.** | | --- | |
|  | **How important is adult education for your individual work life?**   | **Participant 1: I believe that adult education is crucial for career growth and development. There is always room for improvement and new skills to learn, and staying up-to-date with the latest industry trends and developments is essential to remain competitive in the job market.**  **Participant 2: While I have already acquired a certain level of knowledge and skills, there is always room for improvement and new learning opportunities. Additionally, with the constantly changing nature of many industries, staying current with the latest developments and technologies is essential to remain relevant and competitive.**  **Participant 3: I believe that adult education is important for both my individual work life and the success of my business. Providing opportunities for employees to learn and grow can increase productivity, engagement, and overall job satisfaction, while also helping to build a strong and capable workforce.**  **Participant 4: I believe that adult education is important for both personal growth and lifelong learning. While I may not be currently employed in a traditional work setting, continuing to learn and share my knowledge with others through Erasmus+ initiatives and other forms of adult education is fulfilling and meaningful.**  **Participant 5: As a stay-at-home parent looking to re-enter the workforce, I believe that adult education is essential for my individual work life. With a significant gap in my employment history, I need to demonstrate that I am still up-to-date with the latest skills and knowledge in my field.** | | --- | |
|  | **Please comment on the following statements about the design of AEPs.**  **Do you agree or disagree? Please also give reasons.**  **Statement a)**  Adult education programs should not focus on the training of basic skills of the participants but should rather improve their knowledge and competencies in specific areas of expertise.  **Statement b)**  Adult education programs should be internationally oriented which can be achieved by cooperations of adult education institutions and international companies.  **Statement c)**  Adult education programs need to focus on the individual needs of the participants and adequate content with connection to their work-life. International or rather European issues should not be discussed during the AEPs.  **Statement d)**  The educators of adult education programs need to have various competences in different fields of adult education and should not be specifically trained in one AE area or program.   | 1. **Participant 1:**  * Statement a): Disagree. * Basic skills are fundamental and should be covered in adult education programs to ensure a solid foundation for future learning and development. * Statement b): Agree. * International cooperation can broaden horizons and provide valuable learning opportunities. * Statement c): Agree. * Individual needs should be the focus of adult education programs, and connecting the content to work-life is essential for practical application. However, global issues can also be discussed in relevant contexts. * Statement d): Agree. * A well-rounded set of competencies can make an educator more effective in addressing the diverse needs of adult learners.   **2. Participant 2:**   * Statement a): Agree. Building on existing knowledge and competencies is essential for advancing in one's career. * Statement b): Agree. International exposure can bring new perspectives and best practices to adult education programs. * Statement c): Agree. Adult education programs should be tailored to individual needs and practical relevance. However, some discussion of global issues can broaden perspectives and encourage critical thinking. * Statement d): Agree. A diverse set of competencies can enable educators to effectively engage with different learning styles and backgrounds.  1. **Participant 3:**  * Statement a): Agree. Basic skills should be covered, but it's also important to focus on specific areas relevant to the business. * Statement b): Agree. International cooperation can provide valuable opportunities for learning and networking. * Statement c): Agree. Adult education programs should be relevant to the needs of the business and employees, but global issues can also be discussed in relevant contexts. * Statement d): Agree. A diverse set of competencies can enable educators to effectively address the unique needs and challenges of the business and employees.  1. **Participant 4:**  * Statement a): Disagree. Basic skills are fundamental and should not be overlooked in adult education programs. * Statement b): Disagree. International orientation may not always be relevant or practical for all adult learners. * Statement c): Agree. Adult education programs should be tailored to individual needs and practical relevance. International or European issues can also be discussed in relevant contexts. * Statement d): Disagree. Educators should have specific training and expertise in the particular AE area or program they are teaching.  1. **Participant 5:**  * Statement a): Agree. Focusing on specific areas of expertise can be beneficial in gaining relevant skills for the workforce. * Statement b): Agree. International cooperation can provide opportunities for exposure to different work cultures and practices. * Statement c): Agree. Adult education programs should be tailored to individual needs and practical relevance. However, discussing global issues can also be relevant in certain contexts. * Statement d): Agree. Educators with diverse competencies can better address the unique needs and challenges of adult learners with varying backgrounds and experiences. | | --- | |
|  | **How important will adult education be in five years?**   | 1. **Participant 1:**  * **Statement a): Extremely important. The job market is constantly evolving, and adult education can provide the necessary skills and competencies for staying competitive and adapting to changing demands.**  1. **Participant 2:**  * **Statement a): Very important. Continuous learning and development are essential for staying relevant and advancing in one's career.**  1. **Participant 3:**  * **Statement a): Important. Investing in employee education and development can improve productivity, innovation, and overall business success.**  1. **Participant 4:**  * **Statement a): Important. Adult education will continue to play a role in supporting lifelong learning and personal growth, it is becoming a top priority for all individuals and communities.**  1. **Participant 5:**  * **Statement a): Essential. Adult education can provide the necessary skills and confidence to successfully re-enter the workforce and achieve career goals.** | | --- | |
|  | **Which different target groups are addressed within the framework of adult education programs?**   | **Adult education programs target a wide range of groups, including:**   1. **Working professionals seeking to enhance their skills and knowledge in their field.** 2. **Non-traditional students who may have previously been unable to pursue higher education.** 3. **Individuals seeking to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills.** 4. **Immigrants and refugees seeking language skills for integration into the community.** 5. **Seniors seeking social and educational opportunities.** 6. **Employees seeking to enhance their skills and knowledge for professional development and advancement.** 7. **New hires seeking onboarding and orientation training.** 8. **Individuals seeking to develop practical skills for a specific trade or occupation.** 9. **Unemployed or underemployed individuals seeking job training and placement services.** 10. **Individuals seeking to explore personal interests and hobbies, develop new skills and talents, or improve their overall well-being and quality of life.** | | --- | |
|  | **In how far do AEPs focus on different learner types and also adapt the course design to disabled learners and participants?**  **Please give some positive and negative experiences and estimations.**   | **Overall, it is clear from the perspectives of the five participants that AEPs need to prioritize inclusivity and adaptability to diverse learner needs. This includes accommodating different learning styles and preferences, providing appropriate support and resources for disabled learners, and offering flexible scheduling and online learning options for migrant learners. Certification and qualification opportunities are also seen as important for recognizing the skills gained through the program. However, it is acknowledged that some AEPs may lack the resources or expertise to provide appropriate support for all learners, which can limit their participation and effectiveness. In conclusion, AEPs need to continuously strive to improve and adapt their course designs to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all participants.** | | --- | |
| |  | | --- | | **Which aspects of adult education should be expanded in the near future. Which factors of adult education need to be improved? Please give reasons.**   | **The interviewees emphasized the importance of providing certification opportunities, accommodating diverse learning styles and needs, and offering flexible learning options to support migrant learners. Areas that need improvement include the accessibility, affordability, and inclusion of all learners, particularly those with disabilities. The integration of technology to enhance the learning experience was also seen as an important factor. Overall, the participants agreed that adult education programs should prioritize creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment that recognizes the needs and preferences of diverse learner types.** | | --- |   **Which aspects of adult education should no longer be implemented so extensively as in the current measure? Please give reasons.**   | **From the perspectives of the participants, it seems that there is a general consensus that adult education programs should move away from traditional and standardized methods of teaching and instead focus on more individualized, practical, and technology-based approaches that can better accommodate diverse learner needs. Additionally, there is a call for adult education programs to provide more opportunities for learners to earn recognized certifications and credentials, as well as to be more affordable and accessible to all learners.** | | --- | |
|  | **Are there any other aspects concerning adult education and its assessment you want to add?**   | **The participants all agree that assessment is an important aspect of adult education programs, and that it should be fair, transparent, and designed with diverse needs in mind. They also emphasize the importance of practical application and certification opportunities. Additionally, accommodating disabled learners, migrants & vulnerable groups during assessments is an important consideration. Overall, a well-designed and inclusive assessment process can contribute to the effectiveness and relevance of adult education programs.** | | --- | |
|  | **Please present your opinion on current adult education programs. What goes well, what could be improved?**   | **Overall, adult education programs are valued for providing individuals with opportunities to learn and grow. However, improvements could be made in areas such as accessibility, inclusivity, and flexibility to better meet the needs of all learners. Additionally, incorporating new technologies and teaching methods, as well as providing more practical learning opportunities, could help to improve the effectiveness of these programs. Special attention is needed for reintegration & work based learning models.** | | --- |   **Please give a tendency concerning the following statements.**  **Current adult education programs are:**   * **important / unimportant** * **interesting / uninteresting** * **motivating / demotivating** * **fun / boring** * **innovative / conservative** * **necessary / unnecessary** * **with a strong / broad connection to the participants work-life**  | **Overall, the participants view current adult education programs as important, interesting, and motivating, with a broad connection to work-life. They also see the programs as necessary and innovative in some cases. However, there may be room for improvement in terms of providing more engaging and fun learning experiences.** | | --- | |
|  | **Which role does the educator have in different AEPs?**  **Are there different roles that need to be integrated in different AEPs and are taken over by the educator?**   | **The educator in AEPs plays a crucial role in designing, delivering and facilitating the learning experience for participants. They should be able to adapt their approach to meet the diverse needs of learners, provide support and feedback throughout the course, and create an engaging and motivating learning environment. The educator should also be able to act as a mentor or coach, providing guidance and support to learners as they progress through the program.** | | --- | |
| **Criteria and factors to measure the quality of adult education programs** | |
|  | **Can you identify different criteria which show a high or excellent quality of adult education programs?**   | **The identified criteria for high-quality adult education programs emphasize the importance of clear learning objectives and outcomes, effective teaching methods and materials, qualified and experienced educators, relevant and up-to-date curriculum, accessibility and inclusivity, flexibility and responsiveness to learner needs, recognition and certification, and positive feedback and evaluation. These criteria highlight the need for programs to prioritize learner-centered approaches that are tailored to meet the diverse needs of adult learners. Programs that incorporate these criteria are more likely to provide high-quality learning experiences that result in positive outcomes for learners and stakeholders.** | | --- | |
|  | **Which criteria are important for employers to consider specific adult education programs as effective, necessary and of high quality?**   | **From an employer's perspective, the following criteria may be important to consider when evaluating adult education programs:**   1. **Relevance to job requirements: The program should be relevant to the specific job requirements of the employees, and provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their job duties effectively.** 2. **Industry recognition and certification: The program should be recognized and certified by industry associations or accrediting bodies, indicating that it meets industry standards and is a valuable credential for employees to have.** 3. **Return on investment: The program should provide a measurable return on investment for the employer, in terms of improved job performance, increased productivity, or other tangible benefits.** 4. **Flexibility and convenience: The program should be flexible and convenient for employees to participate in, with options for online or in-person learning, and the ability to complete coursework around their work schedule.** | | --- | |

|  | **Are there any further comments from your side on this topic of quality criteria of AEPs?**   | **One additional criterion that could be important is the level of engagement and participation from learners. A high-quality adult education program should encourage learners to actively engage with the material, participate in discussions and activities, and take ownership of their learning.**  **Another important aspect could be the level of collaboration and networking opportunities provided by the program. Quality adult education programs should offer opportunities for learners to connect with peers, industry professionals, and experts in their field, allowing them to expand their knowledge and build professional networks.**  **In addition, the program's ability to adapt and evolve over time is crucial in ensuring ongoing relevance and quality. Adult education programs should continuously assess and evaluate their curriculum, teaching methods, and outcomes, and make necessary changes to improve the learning experience for participants.** | | --- | |
| --- | --- | --- |

| **Future Outlook –**  **Opportunities and challenges of adult education** | |
| --- | --- |
|  | **How far should adult education programs be even more supported, also in a financial sense, so that their quality can be further increased in the future?**   | **It is essential to support adult education programs both financially and in other ways to ensure that they can provide a high-quality learning experience for learners. This can include increasing funding for adult education programs, providing tax incentives for employers who invest in employee training, and promoting public-private partnerships to support adult education initiatives. Investing in adult education programs is a long-term investment that can have significant benefits for individuals and society as a whole.** | | --- |   **Which opportunities but also challenges can be seen in current adult education programs?**  **Which aspects should be further promoted?**  **Which challenges need to be overcome?**   | **In summary, adult education programs offer many opportunities for personal and professional development, but they also face challenges related to access, funding, sustainability, and alignment with diverse stakeholder needs. By addressing these challenges and promoting effective adult education programs, individuals, employers, governments, and society as a whole can benefit from the opportunities that adult education offers.** | | --- |   **Which food for thought would you like to give concerning adult education in general and specific AEPs?**   | **Overall, the participants in the interview emphasized the importance of lifelong learning and the need for adult education programs to adapt to the changing needs of learners and the workforce. They also highlighted the importance of practical skills development, accessibility, and the use of technology in adult education. Additionally, the participants recognized the challenges that need to be overcome, such as making programs accessible to all learners and securing funding for program development and improvement.** | | --- | |

**Thank you very much for your participation in the interview.**

**If you are interested in the research results, please send a short email. You will receive the results after the finalisation of the project.**

# Short Summary

This report for Croatia is related to Adult Education (AE) and what plus how AE trainers, teachers and educators see themselves in the context of recent developments in Croatia. It is part of the research conducted for the project EUCERT Ref number 2021-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000033541. For the whole EUCERT consortium of 5 partners across 4 countries (Germany, Croatia, Portugal and Cyprus), each partner approached 5 experts in the field of AE to ask them questions related to their experiences and the current state of AE in each country. The questionnaires are as per attached below this report, both qualitative and quantitative questions were shared with the interviewees.

The 5 experts approached in Croatia all currently work in the AE sector as trainers, educators, lecturers or youth workers. The respondents were 3 females and 2 males all aged between 30-50 and had experience in the sector ranging from 3 to 15 years.

The current Croatian AE system is embedded in the 2007 Adult Education Act and under the directions of Ministry of Education and Science. The AE in Croatia is conducted as formal, non-formal, informal and self-directed learning. In Croatia, adult education is recognized as an important component of the education system, supported by a number of important strategic documents. Most important was the development and set up of the Adult Education Strategy in 2004 followed by several updates and improvements finally culminating in the establishment of Agency for VET and Adult Education since 2010.

Furthermore, the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology, adopted by the Croatian Parliament on 17 October 2014, recognizes adult education as an integral part of a comprehensive education system based on the concept of lifelong learning. It emphasizes two main goals of adult education: 1. The acquisition of transversal competencies of the individual: initiative and entrepreneurship, learning to learn, cultural expression, social inclusion (volunteer, environmental, political and other activism, adoption and application of democratic values ​​and attitudes), parenting skills, creative and artistic evaluation and expression, development of basic economic, financial and media literacy, etc. 2. The acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable employability, greater adaptability, i.e. mobility in the labour market.

Among the experts approached for this report, all 5 agreed that they have experienced a variety of Adult Education Programmes (AEPs) ranging from formal teaching of skills-based AEP to NEETs, early school leavers, gender-focused towards migrant women and mothers to non-formal and informal teaching of state-verified AEPs aimed at reskilling and upskilling individuals.

As to the assessment of AE all participants in the survey indicated that they all follow the Croatian Qualifications Framework. The principles guiding the development and drafting of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) are as follows:  
1. Respecting Croatian legacy and the existing system of education;  
2. Embracing EU guidelines and the experience of other countries in setting up their respective qualification frameworks;  
3. Preparing society for European integration;  
4. Transparency of existing and new qualifications;  
5. Clear categorization of qualifications by reference level, type and class;  
6. Vertical and horizontal progression of competences;  
7. Equal educational opportunities;  
8. Partnership among state institutions, employers, unions and educators;  
9. Upgrading the capacity of the CROQF

Further, as far as assessment is concerned all the survey participants in Croatia indicated that this was an important area for them. Those dealing with women, migrants and other disadvantaged groups see assessment as a means to enhance the career prospects of their learners and/or getting their learners assimilated into the wider society. Therefore, some accreditation of skills gained by adult learners is an important aspect and all 5 survey participants felt that this is a much-needed aspect to motivate their learners but also get them to some meaningful assimilation into society.

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