

Varaždin County, Croatia



Local Initiatives for Stimulating Employment

Keyword(s):

learning for employment
vulnerable groups, career guidance,
entrepreneurship, mentoring



Introduction

In the last twenty years, partnerships of labor market stakeholders have been established throughout Europe and the need for such partnerships has arisen in Croatia as well. It is derived from the fact that local governments do not decide enough on the development of their region. Thus, through local employment partnerships, representatives of the public, private and civil sectors come together to jointly discuss the problems of the local community and try to find the best way to improve it. Local Partnership for Employment is a body that includes institutions and organizations aiming to identify problems, but also solutions related to employment policy and labor market at the local level. The partnership brings together representatives of the public, private and civil sectors who can actively contribute and improve labor market opportunities through active cooperation. The partnership was established in 2010 and the technical secretariat is placed in Varaždin County and was mostly co-financed by the EU projects. Project “Local Initiatives for Stimulating Employment in Varaždin County - LEPEZA VŽ” was

actually the third such project in a row, which enabled continuity and strengthening of partnership.

Main challenge

Development of innovative initiatives to encourage employment in accordance with the Human Resources Development Strategy of Varaždin County 2016-20.

Timing

May 2018 - November 2020

Objective

The objective of the programme was the development of competencies aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the local economy and (self) employability of the population based on the principles of inclusiveness, innovation, and lifelong learning in accordance with the Human Resources Development Strategy of Varaždin County 2016-2020. Moreover, the initiative aimed to further development and increase of quality (administrative, financial, operational and human) of the capacity of the Local Partnership for Employment of Varaždin County

Target groups

Vulnerable groups include the long-term unemployed, young people up to the age of 29, who have been unemployed for more than 6 months, and people over the age of 29 who have been unemployed for more than 12 months, as well as women, people with disabilities and people aged 50 and over. Unemployed persons, wanting to start their own business, could apply within Public Call if they were members of vulnerable groups, registered in the records of the Croatian Employment Service and have their permanent residence in Varaždin County. The minimum amount of self-employment support that could have been awarded to an individual selected applicant was 15,000 kunas (2.000 euros), while the maximum amount is 35,000 kunas (4.700 euros)

Geographical range

Varaždin County

Stakeholders and partners

Main partner was Varaždin County and other partners were Croatian Employment Service - Regional Office Varaždin, Public Institution for Regional Development of

Varaždin County, Development Agency North-DAN and the association "Her Second Chance".

Strategy / materials

Through the project, training sessions were held upon the topics such as public procurement, reading financial reports, mind mapping, public relations and protocol, marketing, partnership management etc. One of the main activities was education of the unemployed in a way that the Employment Service formed career groups in order to motivate members of target groups, to activate them and to ease their entrance within the world of work. Participants gained knowledge upon identifying their role in the labor market, employer's expectations, presentation skills, writing a resume, preparation for a job interview, etc. Moreover, the unemployed could complete the educational modules such as "Entrepreneurship", "Financial Planning" and "Marketing" posted on-line.

Through the project LEPEZA, many other activities were also carried out such as: technical activities, activities related to promotion and visibility, participation in the organization of Job Fair, updating and evaluating Human Resources Development Strategy, production of project website, team buildings and project cafes, where various stakeholders talked and discussed the problems, they have in hiring and finding a good worker and the mismatch between the market and the education system.

Resources

The project of the Local Initiative for Stimulating Employment in Varaždin County - LEPEZA VŽ worth almost two million kuna (270.000,00 euros) and was fully funded by the European Social Fund.

Compliance with SDG's

The project is anchored with SDG 8 that promotes sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Innovation(s)

Within the project, business mentoring experts were hired. This means that for the first 6 months to 1 year of newly formed business, they were available for all questions in order to help entrepreneurs with specific questions by sharing their knowledge and contacts harvested through their years of experience aiming to ease

the whole "getting into business" process. This mentoring included instructions and answers to questions from the fields of finance, marketing, sales, business planning, negotiation skills, tax system, market challenges, labor and commercial law.

Evaluation

These entrepreneurs have been in market for about a year and a half today and they are all still open, in fact, many of them have hired more new people. We are hoping to have more project like this in the future and continue to promote benefits of lifelong learning. New entrepreneurs were extremely satisfied especially with mentoring phase because they could turn to these experts who had answers at any time.

Success parameters

Through this call/project, 12 new crafts were opened such as clothing store, hairdressing studio, project implementation office, construction works and others.

Concluding remarks

What we are extremely proud of in this project as almost half a million kunas (cca. 68.000 euro) was directly ensured for the unemployed in order to help new entrepreneurs in starting their own business.

Website/Facebook profile of the initiative: <https://www.lepeza-vz.eu/>

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