



Intellectual Output 4 - Pilot Reports

DIVERSITY AND CONNECTING WITH KEY INSTITUTIONS | POU SAMOBOR

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project “Diversity Capacities - Improving the Capacities of Adult Education Institutions to Successful Dealing with Diversity”

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The Organisation

Pučko otvoreno učilište Samobor (POU Samobor) - the open university is located in the center of Samobor where visitors pass.



Illustration 1: Academy of Art Zagreb, Exhibition of the International Festival of Artistic Flags at the Prica Gallery in Samobor © POU Samobor

1. POU Samobor - a center of cultural and educational programs

Pučko otvoreno učilište Samobor (POU Samobor) is a public institution for lifelong education, and it carries out its activities as a public service. The institution carries out its activities according to the law, the founder of the law, the Statute and other general acts. The founder of the Puko Open University is the City of Samobor and is represented by the director.

Adult education represents one very important area of activity of the University within which a whole range of training and training programs in the fields of agriculture, tourism, management and sales and personal services, as well as education and retraining are taking place.

The framework of the Samobor Open University is: adult education, adult primary education, adult secondary education, secondary and vocational education, lower education programmes, retraining programmes, teaching playing musical instruments, dance lessons outside the mainstream education system, organising music seminars for children, young people and adults, teaching children, young people and adults foreign languages, IT literacy for children, young people and adults, achieving and promoting multicultural, national and intercultural values, organising and promoting all forms of cultural and artistic creativity, decorating theatres, music, entertainment, film and other cultural and artistic programmes of their own production or in cooperation with other institutions and much more.

The mission of Pučko otvoreno učilište Samobor as a public institution for lifelong education, culture and information is to affirm Samobor as the center of cultural and educational programs. Respecting the tradition of Samobor openness to new challenges and cultural expressions, the mission of the Open University is to create new values in all artistic fields and popularize cultural products and cultural creativity in the local community, region and beyond, and to promote positive lifestyles.

The mission statement of POU Samobor through lifelong education programs works to raise the general knowledge of the community in the field of current knowledge and skills nowadays, in support of the general progress of our community towards the new challenges of the modern world and the world of human values.

The internal structure of POU Samobor consists of departments or centres, such as the Department for Education, the Department of Culture, the Department of Joint Affairs, the Youth Centre and the Accounting Department. The bodies of POU Samobor are the Governing Council, the principle, the Professional College and the Expert Council. POU Samobor employs 15 people and conducts over 500 cultural and educational activities annually.

2. Diversity all around POU Samobor

In the first phase of the process, a case study was conducted to explore the status of diversity in the organisation. Respondents of the case study were from different departments such as secretary, teacher, head of education. Through the interview, respondents said they had no experience with groups of migrants, but encountered differences of all ages, educated and physical or mental disabilities that they successfully coped with and embedded in their educational programs



One of the interviewees in POU Samobor:

"It is our institution that should be engaged in promoting diversity, giving lectures, workshops on diversity - that's why we were founded."

The case study at the management level showed that it was necessary to establish a link with other organizations that provide support and which can enable POU Samobor to get involved in activities related to migrants and provide education. The recommendation was to develop support for new users and intercultural staffing policy.

Staff in POU Samobor believes that you are what you do and accordingly base your value. They appreciate performance, no matter who you are. One of the main goals of POU is the lifelong learning of the individual. Through the goals of POU Samobor it is evident that the individual is the active ingredient of the community. By developing an individual, a community is also developing. That's how every individual matters. His or her needs matter not only to him or her, but to all of us. Because if we say we don't care about the individual, soon we won't care about the whole community.

The case study showed, that visibility of the organization (mission document, diversity of visions) is enough. Also, in terms of communication that may be a little more international in terms of language. Focus on Europe and international languages (English) are essential. This should be reflected in the organisation's vision and existing staff should be trained in international/European guidance.

2.1. Open minded POU Samobor

POU Samobor is open to people to build trust and relationships. Staff have a positive attitude, body language and useful emotions to communicate their own goals.

When employees first encounter a "diversity" with which they have not cooperated before, the first step is to have an individual conversation with a person. Then when education begins, they discuss with the whole group the topic of diversity associated with that person. If a translator or assistant is needed, they have provided it, but they are directing the teacher's attention to be more open and accept the person and assistant. The goal is to accept and feel that everyone in this process does not have to deal with everything on their own.

Interviewees work passionately on a job that helps others. They value teamwork and are always willing to stay late if someone is late within an important time frame. This has led to a culture of trust, kindness and mutual respect within the team.

As a collective, they believe that cultural norms play a big role in interpersonal relationships at work, but they do not take norms of behavior in society for granted and reflect reactions, preferences and feelings, which allows them to deviate from the central tendencies in Croatian society. On the other hand, they expect (based on their previous experience) from people who grow up in a certain culture, to adopt their (Croatian) culture if they live here.



Employee of POU Samobor:

"In addition to ethnic and cultural origin - what topics of the project are also important: Disability - mental, physical. Probation beneficiaries - social work in an institution "

2.2 Values and Mission

According to the values of the organization's workplace, people understand each other in the organization, they all do the right things for the right reasons, and this common purpose and understanding helps people build great working relationships. Matching the value helps the organization as a whole accomplish its main mission. The mission of POU Samobor as a public institution for lifelong education, culture and informing is to affirm Samobor as a centre of cultural and educational programs through its activities. Respecting the tradition of Samobor openness to new challenges and cultural expressions, the mission of the Public Open University is to create new values in all artistic fields and to popularize cultural products and cultural creativity in the local community, region and beyond, and to promote positive lifestyles.

2.3 Participation in numerous projects

POU Samobor have participated in numerous projects through which they worked on his own competencies and competencies of teachers and management, some of them are project "Together we can move forward!", "Digitize your knowledge and improve your communication skills", "Gastronomic Club for Smart Employment", "Media and us", "Project Place for You" and much more. Projects are described below.

3. Process of change and learning

3.1 Aims

Through questionnaires and interviews with employees of the Samobor Open University, it became apparent, that they are aware that changes from monocultural to multicultural organization are necessary and are open for change and for cooperation with migrants.

The main goal is to improve the structure of the college, to move from a monocultural college to a multicultural one. Change is a long-term process, in which an organization develops when employees also develop. Only when employees see the changes and new things they can deal with and the behavior will naturally change.

„Starting with change from yourself is the hardest, but the biggest step.“



Furthermore, it is crucial that management effectively manages differences and engages in new and fairer power relationships and creates learning settings using the organization's development interventions.

The most important thing is to use techniques and strategies that take into account the experience and expertise (knowledge) of an adult student / migrant / asylum seeker / minority group member. One recommendation was to connect with organizations that support migrants and establish cooperation with these organizations.

3.2 Activities

When the world was affected by the COVID-19 crisis, this brought with it numerous other circumstances and ultimately consequences. Piloting has not been fully fulfilled due to the focus on the financial aspects of the university and ongoing problems that have arisen in POU Samobor due to the overall situation related to the COVID-19 crisis.

The Open University participates in numerous projects that are facing marginalized groups in society. Here the approach to reach diverse target groups becomes apparent. Through the DivCap project, the awareness was enhanced for the diverse composition and needs of the various target groups. Connectivity with key institutions was one of the tasks in the case study. Through the DivCap stakeholder committee, the Jesuit Refugee Service - JRS and the Public Open University were connected and could share expertise in working with diverse groups, in particular migrants and refugees.

3.3 Awareness about diversity of target groups in projects

Diversity invisible to all

POU Samobor turned towards online education and education through the COVID-19 period.

POU is implementing the project "Gastronomic Club for Smart Employment" which has designed several educational programs for young people and ensured the departure for these newly conceived programs for the so-called " Smart Employment Club". Gastro club helps to recruit young people.

Through the project "Gastro club" POU Samobor had workshops with an individual approach. The ad for entering the workshop read "Each participant is special and has different requirements. That is why in our workshop we have an individual approach that seeks to emphasize your virtues in order to be noticed on the labour market."

Ads for participation in the workshop were turned towards all those who want to participate in workshops regardless of possible diversity, and marginalized group, i.e. unemployed young people.

Through the project "Media and us" a multimedia manual for teachers has been developed. Written in the language of modern media, it serves as a tool in youth work. The project is funded by the Agency for Electronic Media. The overall goal of the project is to realize it in a way that mobilizes the interest of students by using topics, digital formats and media content that are part of their youthful world and contemporary social context. Through the project, various groups of participants could be reached.

Through cultural activities to integration



In POU Samobor there are "Civil Tuesday", public lectures that are held for over 6 years. Through that event there are a lot of topics that are interesting to citizens, from the changes happening around us, to protecting the environment, to human health and others. From collaboration with the Obrtničko učilište OU / Craft College and the DivCap project, POU Samobor decided on topics facing marginalized groups of society and sensitive topics. In order to involve all interested citizens and listen to a free lecture that can help them in their further life and development.

POU Samobor organizes lectures on various topics such as ecology, health, child education, social topics, etc., as part of the information activities, which are called Civil Tuesday. The Civil Tuesday programme is a series of public lectures aimed at raising public awareness of current topics. It was created from the need to inform citizens about a whole range of tip-offs that have been happening in our society since joining the European Union onwards. It also discusses topics important for health and environmental protection, as well as all other topics that interest the citizens of Samobor.

As part of Civic Tuesday, the Open University organizes self-help workshops. As they turned more to diversity, they realized that diversity was possible in visible and invisible differences between persons.

The data shows that adolescents and young people are age groups who, along with people over 80, are most at risk of feeling lonely. Workshops "How to recognize loneliness, how present it is, what are the effects of the experience of loneliness and how to deal with it", "How to deal with unpredictable life situations?" are organized as one of the approaches that raise awareness of diversity and acceptance of oneself and then others.

Equal opportunities for all through an inclusive teaching approach

The POU Samobor was a partner on the project "Together we can move forward!", the project leader was the City of Samobor. The main goal of the project is to reduce the social exclusion and poverty of unemployed users and guaranteed minimum benefits by increasing their employability by participating in training programmes and soft skills development programmes and by raising the quality of work of social workers who will motivate, advise and mentor them. Through the call for tenders for the implementation of training programmes in the construction and geodesy and tourism and hospitality sectors, the POU Samobor applied for the competition and they were selected.

Through a cooperation, an Obrtničko učilište OU / Craft College employee did training for simple jobs of photovoltaic installers in POU Samobor where he had the support of the university. Three students who were different from each other participated in the training, and some of the participants had mental and some of them physical difficulties. The Samobor Open University has a culture of trust, friendship and mutual respect, which leads to how welcome the participants feel.

The training was attended by trainees with physical difficulties, i.e. they did not have all parts of the body. The teacher in cooperation with POU Samobor conducted training for a welder. Through a special and customized approach, participants are not provided for other people in the group.

In a welding simulator, a person showed that people with disabilities point out that awareness of their own limitations is extremely important when choosing a profession, including people with disabilities.

Another person who participated in the training had mental difficulties that were not visible at first glance. With the student in the classroom, he was a mentor throughout, who, along with the teacher, helped to go at odds with other students.



Through an inclusive approach to learning, the teacher responded to the needs of the students covered by the education process. In order to conduct quality inclusive teaching, good cooperation between teaching and non-teaching staff is required, which was also between the POU Samobor and the teacher who carried out the training.

It is necessary to introduce an obligation to inform teachers in a timely manner about enrolment of students with disabilities or other differences so that they can prepare in time for the realization of adjustments in teaching.

3.4 Connecting with key institutions

By applying educational programmes, POU Samobor cooperates with many institutions and institutes, but faces a common problem of non-diverse organisation regarding migrants: insufficient cooperation. When homogeneous leadership teams engage in groupthink, "they do not take into account the external perspective" and therefore create blind spots that will later lead them to problems.

POU Samobor is open to cooperation with migrants and other marginalized groups. But there are no instructions regarding the education of migrants from the state, government, local self-government and self-government units or from organizations dealing with migrants. POU Samobor is aware of the fact that migrants are in their environment and has made contact with some of the organizations engaged actively with migrants.

POU Samobor has liaising with the Jesuit Refugee Service - JRS through the cooperation partner Craft College. The JRS is an international Catholic organization whose mission is to monitor, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. POU Samobor is interested in future cooperation with the association if there will be opportunities for future projects and future participants. Through meetings and workshops, the Jesuit Refugee Service - JRS has conveyed realities of migrants' lives, the most common problems they encounter and their goals they want to achieve. The Open University was introduced to working with migrant groups through examples of good practice, which they could hear and use through cooperation with the Jesuit Refugee Service.

Connect with organizations that support migrants and establish cooperation with these organizations



POU Samobor participates in the Erasmus+ project "Digitize your knowledge and improve your communication skills". Through this project, the institution wants to offer professional staff quality education through participation in structured courses. This will enable the acquisition of competences for further advancement. It is planned to monitor the work in the institutions that are also engaged in adult education.

Participants of mobility cover various activities within POU Samobor and they are carefully selected to participate in certain courses that respond to their learning needs with their content. By participating in this project, they intend to improve access to their users, make the institution more accessible and ensure active participation through additional and improved programs. Making new contacts opens the door to new collaborations and opportunities for education and multicultural awareness.



4 Analysis of the process of change and learning, and recommendations

4.1 Let's change ourselves and then the environment

POU Samobor is a monocultural organization according to the 7-stage model, but it has an ambition to be a multicultural organization. Adapting and embracing the environment is a time-consuming process in the human view of the world. POU Samobor is oriented towards the needs of intercultural policy and opportunities for intercultural training. They believe that the competence of teaching and non-teaching staff, i.e. collective is essential to maintain employee satisfaction and improve financial performance. In the open university, the level of diversity of employees is low.

The environment as a mass of people has a hard time accepting change, we have evidence all around us and even in the media. In Samobor, a lady reported employees of a renowned Croatian company walking through the shopping centre because she thought they were migrants. In order to change the prejudices of the environment, we need to change ourselves and our immediate surroundings and then, by their example, influence the wider community.

The change in views and attitudes starts from a young age from family, kindergarten, school and this is reflected in society as a whole. Respect and acceptance of diversity among children is actually the basis for creating incentives in learning and teaching processes.

Changes are happening in the institution as well as in the environment. POU Samobor is constantly interacting with various groups of participants, and in one year most often many participants with visible and not so visible differences pass through. POU Samobor is focused on lifelong learning and is the holder of numerous cultural events, and some of them are already mentioned in the report.

A change in approach could also be observed in this time of closure and COVID-19 crisis. They conducted classes in online form and teaching and non-teaching staff had to adapt to a way of working that they had not previously applied.

4.2 Management-level changes

For management POU Samobor change means starting from a monocultural institution towards a multicultural organization. Working in a multicultural organization has more benefits, one of them is enriching the organization, reducing prejudices, providing a more comfortable environment in both private and business life to people with differences, broadening horizons and facilitating problem solving because of the way things are viewed.

Intercultural training that would improve intercultural cooperation or leadership to exchange views.



According to the completed questionnaires, management is open to cooperation with migrants both in terms of employment and in terms of education. Most important lesson is that diversity is a much border concept, and includes a number of components that make a person small different form the average person. Through the projects POU Samobor works on social exclusion and poverty of unemployed users and guaranteed minimum benefits by increasing their employability and they will continue doing that kind of projects to helping local community and learners.

With an open attitude we can solve our own prejudices



4.3 Meaning for Learners

Students who will be part of the educational group in POU Samobor will feel more comfortable and will more likely connect with the environment in which they are educated if there is someone who is similar to them or just understands them.

Changes in the organization through lifelong learning and raising awareness of students and employees to the positive impact of lifelong learning affects their intellectual and professional growth.

Adult education represents another very important area of activity within which a whole range of training and training programs in the fields of agriculture, tourism, management and sales and personal services, as well as education and retraining are taking place.

POU Samobor also has a number of programs for children such as programming workshops for children Code club, Small School of Comics and dance workshops within the Modern Dance Studio.

*Teacher in POU Samobor:
"Motivated students are the best students regardless of race, religion and other differences."*



4.4 Meaning for Staff

The teaching staff is in direct contact with the students. Changing attitudes and opinions and building a society is a lengthy process that has been building over generations. Without prejudice, staff change perceptions and allow people to judge objectively. In order to at least mitigate discrimination, the creation of mutual relations and friendships should be encouraged. In order for cohabitation and teaching to work well, teaching staff should first analyse his or her own views and reject those that have arisen under the influence of prejudice.

Changing people is a long-term process, changing employees means a change in the organization. Big changes are made in small steps in the organization. The first and foremost is to bring the organization from monocultural to multicultural.

4.5 Meaning for the Organisation

Cultural stereotypes stem from disrespect and misunderstanding of another culture, whose members then appear to be crude or rude. The culture of the Samobor Open University is the promotion of equal opportunities, so employees are governed by interaction with each other without the regulations that govern it.

If there are employees of different cultures, religions and other differences, soon besides employees and colleagues, the situation may happen that clients are from different cultures. In adult education institutions, they will immediately connect with the organization and teachers and will build trust if they are associated with a person who speaks their language, comes from their midst, knows their holidays and understands their customs.

A support system should be developed for new beneficiaries (migrants) and intercultural personnel policy.



Changes for the organisation mean easier access to financial investments - special equipment is needed (access by people with disabilities, e.g. lift in the building). Organisational and financial requirements need to be taken into account. Introducing new programmes - opens up new opportunities. Enrichment by getting to know different things, characteristics of other people. It is not known about the problem that may arise until they encounter such groups (migrant groups primarily).

It is necessary to familiarize employees in the way they need to approach and deal with diversity - ours in relation to them and theirs compared to us.



Through the connections with organisations that are linked to migrants, and that have experiences with working with that kind of diversity, helps POU Samobor to do the job shadowing, provides support to such organizations in the area of the town of Samobor and offers education and gain experience in working with migrants.

5. ANNEX - Good Practice Examples

5.1 Civil Tuesday - public lectures for all

The public lectures “Civil Tuesday” have focused in recent years on marginalized groups, such as youth, the elderly population, disadvantaged people. It helps and presents active topics that concern residents. Through Civic Tuesday, an attempt is made to make citizens aware of current topics such as loneliness in young people, how to deal with anxiety and other. In collaboration with the DivCap project, Civic Tuesday turned more to marginalized groups. POU Samobor noted how this COVID crisis has affected people and that they need to be made aware of it.

Lectures around these issues are organized and exhibitors are professionals such as psychologists, sociologists, professors and other relevant exhibitors. It is clear how this COVID crisis has affected the lives of all of us, as well as the quality of our lives. Customized lectures are through online workshops so that everyone can participate in these difficult times as well. One of the last lectures was on "music therapy". This lecture focused on music as a universal language, as an instrument that connects people regardless of their knowledge of the language, and music as a motivator. Musical experiences (singing, playing, movement ...) are designed to influence positive changes in behavior and thinking. Through the lecture, one session also turned to physical diversity such as torture and the problems most often encountered by children in the quarantine period. During the quarantine period in Croatia, POU Samobor raised a topic that tormented many young people, but also the population of all ages, and that is loneliness. Loneliness of persons was present even before the COVID crisis, but an additional risk is the COVID crisis. Through this lecture, the psychologist introduced the participants to the symptoms of the onset of loneliness, how present it is and what the possible effects are and how to deal with it. Other topics encountered by marginalized groups, and some topics are taboo for someone and they don't want to talk about these topics. These workshops are also motivating and are mostly located on the You tube platform, so interested people can also look when they need it.



Illustration 2: web page of POU Samobor © POU Samobor



Illustration 3: Web page of POU Samobor © POU Samobor 18



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