



## Report: International Seminar on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Croatia

The “**International Seminar on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**” was organized jointly by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and the Institute for the Development of Education (IDE) and held on **6th December 2012** at the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in Zagreb, Croatia.

**The aim of the seminar** was to discuss the concept of RPL and how it fits into the broader policy topic of the National Qualifications Frameworks. It provided a unique opportunity for discussion on critical factors for implementation of RPL amongst the key stakeholders in Croatia, ERI SEE member countries and EU countries with established RPL practices. Seminar target groups were representatives of the universities in Croatia; representatives of the labour market; researchers; relevant national agencies; civil society and participants in the ERI SEE Cluster of knowledge on NQFs.

The seminar was opened by Ms Ružica Beljo Lučić, Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Ms Ana Tecilazić Goršić, Head of Sector for Development of Higher Education and Ninoslav Šćukanec, Institute for the Development of Education, who introduced the EU strategic framework for RPL, as well as, the current legislative framework for RPL in Croatia as a part of the Croatian Qualifications Framework implementation process.

Presenters at the seminar were European experts on RPL from France and Scotland, who are also project partners on Leonardo da Vinci project “URPL: University Recognition of Prior Learning Centres-Bridging Higher Education with Vocational Education and Training”, which also has partners from Poland (Jagellonian University, Krakow) and Croatia (Institute for the Development of Education, Zagreb). RPL experts from France (Pascal Lafont and Marcel Pariat, Université Paris-Est Créteil Val de Marne) gave an overview of RPL in EU member states. Project partner from Scotland (Jaime Brogan, University Napier) presented an overview of Scottish RPL as an example of advanced RPL model. Participants from Poland (Grazyna Prawelska-Skrzypek and Beata Jalocha, Jagellonian University), presented goals, current progress and findings of the URPL project, as well as, their views and critical factors relevant for the implementation of RPL in Poland.

The seminar introduced examples of **current RPL practices in Croatia** – RPL in Maritime Studies at the University of Zadar (Leonardo Marušić, Vice-rector for mobility and projects) and current status of institutional introduction of RPL at the University of Rijeka (Dunja Škalamera Alilović, President of the Working group on recognition of prior learning).

The seminar also provided an overview of current status and upcoming Law on Croatian Qualifications Framework and the role of RPL within the CROQF, which was presented by Mile Dželalija (Vice-president of the CROQF Committee), Mislav Balković (Association of Employers in Education, Croatian Employers Association) and Michael Graham (Specialist in Qualifications Systems, European Training Foundation).

In summary, the seminar opened a discussion on the pre-conditions necessary to implement a functioning RPL system and presented main issues and challenges in implementation of such a system. The main pre-conditions discussed relate to:

- Setting the values and the understanding of RPL in the right context. It is necessary to have a common understanding of what RPL includes, why it is needed, what we want to achieve with it and what it brings to the society. It can be concluded that RPL can be seen as a response to the changing needs of labour market and economy, society and new ways of understanding processes



of learning and acquiring knowledge. A well implemented RPL system can help in bringing more equality in the society by creating more opportunities to those outside of the formal system of education.

- Connecting RPL with national qualifications frameworks. National qualifications frameworks can have different roles and in some countries, like in Croatia, they are reformative instruments. They are important in setting up the RPL system as they emphasize the learning outcomes approach which is crucial for the RPL as opposed to the regional heritage which puts a lot of stress on the academic way of learning and knowledge is perceived as an outcome of formal learning.
- Quality assurance. Quality assurance has been identified as an essential requirement for a well-implemented and functioning RPL system.
- Importance of stakeholders. Although the setting up of the RPL system is often a state-driven approach, the importance of active involvement of all stakeholders is crucial.

The following main challenges were identified:

- Changing the way we perceive knowledge, accepting new ways of learning, moving towards learning outcomes approach;
- Understanding qualifications frameworks as a tool for reform;
- Setting up of an efficient quality assurance system.

In conclusion, the seminar opened a wider debate about different aspects of RPL and the necessary requirements for setting up an efficient RPL system.

The seminar gathered more than **80 participants**.

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