

Strengths and challenges in prevention practice: State of the art in Croatia



Valentina Kranzelic (1), Martina Feric (1), Dijana Jerkovic (2)

1-University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia
2-Government of the Republic of Croatia, Office for Combating Drugs Abuse, Zagreb, Croatia



INTRODUCTION

Since the year of 2014 efforts to enhance **the quality of drugs abuse prevention** interventions in Croatia have been made in cooperation of the Office for Combating Drugs Abuse of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (OCDA) and the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences of the University of Zagreb (ERF UNIZG).

The **assessment of needs and resources** in **27 prevention projects** (25 non-governmental organizations) was conducted within the project “Enhancing quality of drug prevention interventions in Croatia” (2013-2014), implemented in partnership of the Office for Combating Drugs Abuse of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (OCDA), Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences University of Zagreb (ERF UNIZG), and non-governmental organizations in Croatia.

European Drug Prevention Quality Standards - EDPQS (Brotherhood & Sumnall, 2011) were used as a basis for the assessment. Special attention was put on the programmes development, their implementation and evaluation. Analysis was based on the available projects documentation, visits to the non-governmental organizations and unstructured interviews with project providers.

PROCESS OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

2011
2012

- Regional workshops on drug abuse prevention projects and on minimum standards in drug demand reduction and evaluation (OCDA, TAIEX, EMCDDA’s experts)
- Database of Drug Abuse Prevention Projects becomes fully operational (www.programi.uredzadroge.hr)

2013

- OCDA’s call for tender; decision of financing projects that fulfil minimum quality criteria (EDDRA, Level 1)

2014

- Project „Enhancing quality of substance abuse prevention projects“ (OCDA and ERF UNIZG)
- Joint call for tender (OCDA, Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Ministry of Health)
- Committee for assessment of minimum quality criteria projects (experts, researchers)

2015

- Prevention programs implementation within regular OCDA activities (part of the year) – no assessment process developed within Project (2014)
- No call for tender from OCDA – decision made on higher level of administration and decision making

2016

- Call for tender - OCDA
- No programs financed within call priority based on EDPQS Toolkit 1: Selecting quality drug prevention initiatives for funding and support “Funding and Decision-Making Toolkit” (Felvinczi et al. 2015)
- Research project „Substance abuse prevention programs compatibility with EDPQS“ (OCDA and ERF UNIZG) – assessment of needs and resources for substance abuse prevention in Croatia

RESULTS OF THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT

- **Cooperation of the national coordination body (OCDA) and research/higher education institution (ER UNIZG)** was a building stone for the process
- Use of the **existing standards and materials** (European Drug Prevention Quality Standards –Quick guide, EDPQS Toolkit 1) saved time and financial resources
- Main **results** of substance abuse prevention **programs assessment (EDPQS)** – areas of needed improvement:
 - **Program development** – needs and resource assessment, logic model of prevention programs
 - **Implementation** – process monitoring and use of obtained monitoring data, ensuring needed (pre)conditions for program implementation in different settings, development of partnerships in the community
 - **Evaluation** – outcome evaluation, process evaluation
- Mentioned results provide **guidelines for future steps** in the process of quality improvement in the field:
 - staff **trainings** and education – competence based approach
 - development of existing and new models in creating and maintaining **effective prevention programs database** on national level

FUTURE STEPS IN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

- **Linking quality standards and funding** enhanced cooperation with project providers in the first phase but due to the lack of continuity of the process cooperation was weakened and resulted with poor projects assessment within 2016 call for tender – no program passed the threshold (60% of total score).
- Investment of efforts in **establishing and maintaining partnership** with program providers, key stakeholders on all administrative levels, research/academic community and target populations.

2016

Project “Substance abuse prevention programs compatibility with EDPQS” – data collection about needs and resources regarding substance abuse prevention programs (Phase 1. i 2. of EDPQS).

Plan for 2017

Training of prevention programs providers with intention of preparation for call for tender
Call for tender with one of the priority based on EDPQS