

Centar za informiranje i savjetovanje o karijeri (CISOK)

Career Information and Counselling Centre in Varaždin, Croatia

- **Type of project** : onsite career counselling centre
- **Duration** : all year
- **Beneficiaries** : all

DESCRIPTION



CISOK in Varaždin opened in July 2017 as one among 13 similar regional career centres in Croatia. As the other centres, CISOK Varaždin is an organizational unit of Croatian public employment service.

CISOK's mission is to be a regional centre for lifelong learning in the area of career management; provider of career and labour market information and a place of onsite career counselling.

CISOK is open to clients of various age, educational and work backgrounds and all services that it provides are free for all users.

CISOK is focused on activities which prevent long term unemployment, especially among youth, through supporting competent and proactive career management behaviour.

CISOK offers several services as :

- lifelong vocational guidance
- individual and group career counselling
- education in career management and job search skills for end users
- providing professional support to career counsellors employed in schools
- providing information on labour market and career related topics
- establishing, organizing and maintaining networks with relevant partners in local community – schools and higher education institutions, NGO, entrepreneurs and employers.

The main CISOK's goal is to empower clients in their careers, but its strategic goal is not to connect the clients with employers. CISOK is not a place for networking of employers and job seekers. Furthermore, CISOK does not receive any financial donations or organizational support from private and business sector. For main partners, schools and NGO, CISOK organizes different workshops, lectures and presentations primarily for the final grade students but also for educational professionals (teachers, school psychologists). CISOK also provides vocational guidance and career counselling to students and support career events in higher education. In stated activities, CISOK collaborates with the Agency for Mobility and EU Programs.

CISOK tried to motivate various youth associations for different activities related to youth (un)employment. A good example of such collaboration is with a civil youth association in Lepoglava for which CISOK organized workshops on volunteering, self-employment, self-presentation and job search skills. Another example are CISOK's workshops for foster parents and for foster children, and a cooperation with the house of opportunities "For a better life" that accepts adolescents leaving the foster care system.



CONTACT

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KEY FIGURES



- Annually an average of **4,759 users**
- **60** partnerships contracts in the local community.
- **2** persons involved in the governance
- Number of working days/hours dedicated: **1 per week**
- CISOK Varaždin is one of **13 local CISOK centres** in Croatia
- **100%** public funds
- Distribution of activities on-site/out-site/online: **65% on-site ; 30% out site ; 5% online**

GOVERNANCE



CISOK Varaždin is one of the 13 local CISOK centres in Croatia, which operates under the Croatian employment service. However, partnership is managed on the level of each CISOK centre itself. There are two professional associates employed by CISOK Varaždin. Both are responsible for establishing, organizing and maintaining partnerships, as well as organizing and conducting activities for CISOK's partner organizations and wider community. Support in formalising the partnership is provided by legal service of the Croatian Employment Service. All CISOK's activities are coordinated by the Croatian Employment Service which is a big and centralized state-owned organization. Formal contracts with partners are prepared by the legal service of Croatian Employment Service.

FUNDING



CISOK is a part of Croatian public employment service which covers salaries of two CISOK employees and material costs of their work. CISOK was established within the EU structural and investment funds as a service that has been offered by the Croatian Employment Service regional offices since 2003 to everyone who needs the information on employment opportunities, labour market situation, professions and education opportunities. In order to improve the availability of career guidance services to all citizens of the Republic of Croatia, the establishment of such Centres has been planned outside the premises of the Croatian Employment Service. The Croatian Employment Service which provides funds for its work. Initially, the establishment of CISOK was financed within the EU project. As it operates under the Croatian Employment Service (HZZ), CISOK does not have its own budget. HZZ covers annual salary costs and overheads, and provides funds for the implementation of activities. There is no dedicated budget for those activities, it depends on clients' needs and agreed activities with partners.



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MULTIPARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATION



CISOK has established more than 60 partnership contracts in the local community. Almost all primary and secondary schools in Varaždin area are CISOK's partners as the centre is primarily focused on activities which prevent unemployment among youth. With this goal, CISOK organizes and implements various activities on a regular base. In the focus are students in the final grades of primary and secondary schools. CISOK offers labour market information, vocational guidance and career counselling. Local institutions of higher education are also CISOK's partners. Another important group of partners are various civil youth associations (NGO sector) with a special emphasis on providing support to underrepresented and vulnerable groups – foster parents', kids and adolescents raised in institutions (orphanages), students under special care of social welfare institutions, individuals with disabilities.

The third and the smallest group of partners are employers and entrepreneurs. This collaboration is not based on formal contracts and these partners are included in CISOK activities which goal is to present various occupations to current and future students. As an organizational unit of Croatian public employment service, CISOK collaborates with other organizational units of the national employment service. With that respect, CISOK provides special workshops and career counselling to selected groups of unemployed individuals registered in the local branch of national employment service.





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COMMUNICATION



The centre has several communication channels : face to face meetings, e-mails, local radio station and printed brochures. It can also use the Facebook page of the central office. The entire communication with partners and the promotion of activities to a wider community is done by CISOK employees. In general, common goals are agreed with the partners when signing the agreement, and everything else is resolved on a "daily" level, through the realization of certain activities.

Once a year meetings with partners are organized in order to communicate partners' needs. CISOK employees individually negotiate with each school regarding the aimed activities.

Communication of activities is done through the channels of CISOK's partners (i.e. posters in schools and social media channels of youth associations etc.). Additionally, a lot of people hear about CISOK through local newspapers, radio and TV.

OBSTACLES/LIMITS



CISOK is relatively autonomous but as an organizational unit of national public employment service, CISOK cannot :

- establish networking activities between employers and job seekers on its own;
- organize marketing and PR campaigns using its own social media platforms;
- receive any financial donations or support from private sector.

QUALITY



The quality of work is monitored on the basis of anonymous evaluation questionnaires completed by users after each group activity (workshop or training). The satisfaction and benefits of the activity are monitored. The quality of individual counseling is monitored orally through direct communication with the user.

The Croatian Employment Service refers adult jobseekers to CISOK, but a minority of adult clients come to CISOK on their own initiative after communicating with former CISOK clients. Recommendations from CISOK clients are the best feedback on the work of CISOK.

IMPACTS



The positive impact is achieved for all stakeholders. In the beginning of its work, around 70% of CISOK clients were unemployed persons (job seekers), but as the situation changed in the latest years and the unemployment rate in the country significantly decreased, CISOK could focus on activities which goal is to prevent unemployment.

Croatian Employment Service collaborates with schools for years, but with the establishment of CISOK centres, career information and counselling of students are raised to a higher level. Each year, numerous final year students in primary and secondary schools from Varaždin county use the opportunity for group and individual counselling related to their future career development. In recent years, one of the target groups are vocational school graduates. CISOK prepares the students for successful school-to-work transition.

Additionally, young people can participate in different activities organized as a part of partnership between CISOK and different youth associations. Those activities are not closed only for association members, but usually open for a broader audience. Finally, CISOK is a local onsite career counselling service that is open to community and free for end-users of various demographic and social background.

CISOK wants to strengthen cooperation with NGO, especially with youth associations – these organizations usually express their interest for various activities but do not show proactivity and initiative in its realization. There are not enough partnership contracts with business companies, but certain efforts are being made with that respect.