

PARTNER ORGANISATION

OID	E10168511
PIC	944251545
Full legal name (national language)	Pučko otvoreno učilište Čakovec
Full legal name (in English)	Public Open University Čakovec
Acronym	POU Čakovec
Address	Kralja Tomislava 52
Post Code	40 000
City	Čakovec
Country	Croatia
Website	https://pou-cakovec.hr/en/
E-mail	project@pou-cakovec.hr
Telephone	+385 40 395 236
Establishment/Registration date of the organisation	28/07/1997

PROFILE

Is the organisation a public body?	No
Is the organisation a non-profit?	Yes
Type of organisation	School/Institute/Educational centre - Adult education

ACCREDITATION

Has the organisation received any type of accreditation before submitting this application?	Yes, Erasmus accreditation in the field of adult education (until 2027)
Has the organisation received/applied for any EU grants?	See the annex.

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Please briefly present the organisation (e.g. its type, scope of work, areas of activity and if applicable, approximate number of paid/unpaid staff, learners).

Pučko otvoreno učilište Čakovec (POUC) is a prominent adult education institution in Croatia, founded in 1960 and recognized as the first lifelong learning centre in Međimurje County. Dedicated to providing lifelong learning opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups, POUC supports the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies through innovative and inclusive programs. POUC emphasizes high-quality professional development and holds **Erasmus+ accreditation in the field of adult education**, reflecting its strong focus on international cooperation.

SCOPE OF WORK AND AREAS OF ACTIVITY

POUC offers over 100 formal and non-formal educational programs designed to meet the needs of learners and the labour market. Key offerings include:

- Primary adult education:** Providing free education for adult learners to complete their primary education.
- Vocational training for adults:** Over 70 programs available, covering areas such as IT, IoT, programming, sustainability, entrepreneurship, accounting, marketing, human resources, hospitality, caregiving, and project management.
- Foreign language learning:** Courses with a focus on cultural and historical knowledge.
- Croatian for foreigners:** Including state exam preparation for permanent residency.
- Agricultural education:** Tailored to rural community needs in Međimurje County, including sustainable pesticide use, organic farming, and reuse workshops.
- Digital literacy courses:** Covering topics such as digital basics, social media, digital footprints, and the ethical use of AI, these courses are designed for learners with varying levels of digital literacy.
- Programs for vulnerable groups:** For the elderly, Roma communities, and marginalized populations, with notable successes in primary adult education for the Roma community, digital literacy courses for the elderly, and training for the unemployed.
- Non-formal activities:** Creative workshops, including pottery, natural cosmetics, and culinary classes aimed at providing new experiences, developing soft skills, and promoting social inclusion.

POUC is a leader in adopting **micro-credentials**, offering over 65 accredited programs to unemployed adults through a voucher system that provides free education in green, digital, and labour-market-relevant skills. These programs primarily cater to **unemployed individuals** seeking new or upgraded qualifications. This positions POUC as an expert in designing, creating, and implementing micro-credential programs tailored to the needs of both learners and the labour market.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

POUC actively fosters partnerships to promote lifelong learning and educational innovation. Locally, it collaborates with entities such as the **Town of Čakovec**, **Međimurje County**, **Croatian Employment Service**, **Faculty of Education**, **Technology Innovation Centre Međimurje**, and the **Public Institution for Development of Međimurje County (REDEA)**. On a national level, it partners with organizations like the **Agency for Vocational and Adult Education**, the **Croatian Association for Education of Adults**, and the **Ministry of Science and Education**.

Internationally, POUC has built a robust network of over **75 European partners**, including many adult education institutions, through Erasmus+ and ESF projects. These collaborations drive the development of new programs, tools, and approaches that align with **EU priorities** in adult education.

STAFF AND LEARNERS

POUC is supported by a core team of **seven highly skilled staff members**, specializing in leadership, finance, project management, educational development, inclusion, IT, and marketing. This team works alongside **more than 100 associates and lecturers**, delivering education to **600–700 learners annually**, predominantly adults aged 18 and older from disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, elderly, Roma, and individuals with low literacy or socio-economic status. Over the past 25 years, POUC has proudly supported more than **18,000 learners** in achieving their goals.

What are the activities and experience of the organisation in the areas relevant for this project?

What are the skills and/or expertise of key persons involved in this project?

ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES // please review the list of projects at the end of this document for more information; the final answer to this question will be formulated based on the project proposal

POUC is a **prominent adult education institution in Croatia** with decades of experience in delivering **innovative and inclusive learning solutions**. Our expertise spans diverse areas, including **digital literacy, vocational training, sustainability education, and lifelong learning programs** tailored to adult learners.

POUC is particularly skilled in **integrating technology into education**, with extensive experience in developing **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), e-learning hubs, and digital content**. Our **learner-centred approach** ensures accessibility and engagement, catering to participants with varying levels of prior knowledge, including those from **vulnerable or disadvantaged groups**.

Additionally, we design and deliver **micro-credential programs** that respond to the **evolving demands of the labour market**, focusing on skills in **digital technology, green practices, and entrepreneurship**. By leveraging **modern tools such as hybrid learning platforms, smart technologies, and innovative teaching methodologies**, POUC ensures that its programs meet high standards of **quality and relevance**.

Our **capacity to adapt our expertise to a project's specific needs** enables us to contribute effectively to a wide range of educational initiatives. We are committed to **tailoring our resources and methodologies** to align with the objectives and priorities of any project we engage with.

KEY STAFF // final selection of people involved will be based on the project proposal

-Mario ZAMUDA, Principal - Administration Department

Principal (2012–present), Primary Adult Education Manager and Language School Manager (2007–2012). Holds MA in Primary Education. In 2018, took up position as lecturer at **Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education**, teaching courses entitled *Teaching Methodology in Adult Education*. In 2011, underwent professional training for management and implementation of EU projects and in 2015 became assistant trainer. As

of 2022, member of expert group for external evaluation of adult education institutions. Member of **CEDEFOP's steering committee** for TCR on Upskilling Pathways in Croatia (2023-2025).

-Marta MIKAC, Head of Andragogy - Adult Education Department

Holds MA in English Language and Pedagogy. Lead coordinator for adult vocational education initiatives. Skilled at tracking, adapting, and incorporating new findings into POUC's educational offerings to create **quality and in-demand programmes**. Highly proficient in Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign. Has experience working with people with special needs. Professional interests include development of **new teaching methodologies, innovative educational programmes**, and making adult education more accessible to **vulnerable adult learners**.

-Ivica JEĐUD, Head of Institutional and Interorganisational Cooperation – PM & IT Departments

Project coordinator. Holds MA in English Language and Pedagogy. Background as pedagogical advisor in diverse educational settings (primary, secondary, adult). Vast experience in managing **Erasmus+ and ESF projects**, centred on **empowerment, ICT, and social inclusion**. Actively engages with NGOs and associations. Very proficient in **digital content creation** (WordPress, Moodle) with 15 years of experience. Completed **"Elements of AI" course** by University of Helsinki. Member of **CEDEFOP's steering committee** for TCR on Upskilling Pathways in Croatia (2023-2025). In 2025 selected as the most active EPAL member from Croatia, attended the EPAL Community Conference 2025, and has been a member of EPAL work group on AI and transforming learning landscape. Professional interests include **MOOCs, AI and digitisation of education, open science**, as well as **pedagogy of the oppressed**.

-Andrea ŠTEFIĆ, Head of Language Centre - Languages Department

Holds MA in English Language and Pedagogy. Language school managing director. Vast experience of working and teaching English to **learners from ages 8 to 80**. Skilled photographer, highly proficient in **Lightroom**. Experience working as **counsellor for adults with disabilities and behavioural problems**. Professional interest in language acquisition aimed at adult learners, **human and LGBT+ rights**, use of **gamification** in adult education.

-Darja SPAHIJA, Head of Administration – Administration Department

Provides **vital administrative support** across all projects and programmes. Oversees documentation, finances, and daily operations. Expertly handles client interactions and correspondence. Ensures **smooth institutional function and coordination**. Skilled in managing administrative processes and financial records. Proficient in maintaining efficient office operations and supporting project teams. Professional interest in optimising administrative workflows, enhancing financial management systems, and improving institutional efficiency.

-Maja KUTNJAK VRTARIĆ, Co-Head of Andragogy - Adult Education Department

MA in **Social Pedagogy**. Certified **specialist in children's rights**. Her expertise spans **social pedagogy, program evaluation, and educational program development**, with a focus on **inclusivity and support for vulnerable populations**, including Roma communities. Significant experience of implementing tailored interventions to support learners at risk of behavioural. Consultant for parenting programs and authored publications addressing **children's rights, inclusion, and education**. At POU Čakovec, she contributes her extensive knowledge to designing and implementing **innovative, inclusive educational frameworks and supporting lifelong learning initiatives**.

-Nikolina BAKAČ, Financial and Accounting Officer – Finances Department

MA in **Economics**. Professional background includes roles as a **financial advisor, team coordinator, and financial operator** in both private and public sectors. Skilled in **project budgeting and financial reporting**, Nikolina is adept at ensuring **financial transparency** and compliance in educational and community projects. Her technical proficiency includes expertise in **financial management software** and Microsoft Office, alongside strong organizational and

interpersonal skills. At POU Čakovec, she plays a key role in managing financial operations and supporting the smooth execution of the institution's diverse programs.

-Miljenko HAJDAROVIĆ, Associate in adult education and project implementation

Holds MA in History and Sociology. Experienced educator, researcher, and lecturer with a strong background in human rights, citizenship education, and cultural heritage. Actively involved in developing innovative teaching methodologies and integrating critical thinking, digital tools, and participatory approaches into history education. Engaged in numerous international projects focused on democracy, remembrance culture, and intercultural dialogue. Author of textbooks, educational materials, workshops, and courses promoting tolerance, media literacy, and active citizenship. Professional interests include historical memory, Holocaust education, civic engagement, and the use of AI in education.

-Jana BRAČKO, Associate in project development and implementation

Jana has a strong academic background in political science and public policy. She holds a Master's degree in Political Science (Public Policy, Management and Development). She gained practical experience during her work as the Representative of the European Commission in Croatia, where she worked on event organisation, administrative tasks, media monitoring, and the analysis of EU projects. Jana has experience in research and data analysis through participation in fact-checking and policy-related projects, strengthening her analytical and problem-solving skills.

Would you like to make any comments or add any information to the summary of your organisation's past participation?

NOTE: the final answer to this question will be formulated based on the project proposal

As a **longstanding institution in adult education**, POUC has participated in **numerous national and international initiatives**, enhancing its expertise in delivering **impactful and scalable educational solutions**. These projects have strengthened our competencies in areas such as **digital literacy, ICT integration, and social inclusion**, and have allowed us to develop **innovative tools and methods** to support adult learners.

Our experience includes creating **MOOCs and other digital learning formats** that provide **accessible and flexible learning opportunities** for diverse audiences. We have also worked on projects that emphasize **professional development for educators**, focusing on the effective use of **digital tools** and **learner-centred teaching strategies**.

POUC is well-versed in fostering **collaborative partnerships across Europe**, working with public institutions, NGOs, and other educational organizations to promote **lifelong learning**. Our **proactive approach** ensures that we can contribute meaningfully to a variety of initiatives, offering expertise in **program design, digital content development, and capacity-building for educators and learners alike**.

We welcome the opportunity to adapt our **skills and experience** to meet the specific goals of future projects. For more detailed information about our past contributions or tailored proposals, we remain at your disposal.



LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

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CONTACT PERSON

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EU Projects in which POU Čakovec has been involved

EU Programme	Year	Project Title	Topics / Themes	Contract Number	Applicant / Partner
Erasmus+ KA220	2026-2028	BARVALO: Budgeting, Awareness, Responsibility for Valuable Opportunities	financial literacy, Roma adult education, financial inclusion, household budgeting, fraud prevention, community-based learning, social inclusion	2026-1-SI01-KA220-ADU-000460291	Partner
Erasmus+ KA220	2026-2028	AI4ID: Improving Rehabilitation and Independent Living Skills of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities Using Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence	intellectual disabilities, virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), rehabilitation, independent living skills, personalised learning, digital inclusion	2026-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000460363	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2026-2028	NATUREscapes: Nature-Based Soundscapes for Adult Learning	mental wellbeing, digital fatigue, nature-based learning, soundscapes, stress reduction, adult education, environmental awareness	2026-1-HR01-KA210-ADU-000451696	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2026-2028	RENEW: Retirees' Engagement in New Media and Environmental Wisdom	senior education, digital skills, environmental education, podcasting, waste reduction, intergenerational learning, social inclusion	2026-1-SI01-KA210-ADU-000460510	Partner
Erasmus+ KA220	2025-2027	Seniors' Media Awareness & Resilience in the Digital Age	media literacy, AI, virtual learning, elderly learners, DigComp	2025-1-AT01-KA220-ADU-000354002	Partner

Erasmus+ KA220	2025-2027	GamifiedEd: Gamification in Adult Education	innovative teaching practices, AI, gamification, critical thinking, language teaching, soft skills	2025-1-HR01-KA220-ADU-000351906	Applicant
Erasmus+ KA220	2025-2028	Experiential Sustainability Education for VET Learners	green and digital transition, sustainability, hackathons, strategic institutional change, GreenComp	2025-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000352279	Partner
Erasmus+ KA220	2025-2027	Transforming Vocational Education Through AI and Future Classroom Labs	AI, FCL, personalized professional development, learner-centred education, DigComp	2025-1-PL01-KA220-VET-000360782	Partner
EU4Health	2025-2028	Cancer Literacy Education and Awareness Resources for Prostate Care	health literacy, prostate cancer, digital tools, prototyping, educational context analysis	EU4H-2024-PJ-02-2-101219353	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2025-2026	HER[AI]TAGE: Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage and Environmental Knowledge Through AI Technology	artificial intelligence (AI), cultural heritage, environment, seniors	2024-2-HR01-KA210-ADU000291871	Partner
Erasmus+ KA220	2024 - 2026	Advancing professional learning through the implementation of Future Class Labs (FCL)	classroom innovation, FCL, professional training	2024-1-PL01-KA220-VET-000250900	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2024 - 2026	InclusiGardens: Digital and Sustainable Pathways to Social Inclusion through Urban Gardening	urban micro-gardening, sustainable practices for disadvantaged groups, digital educational resources, social inclusion, food security	2024-1-SI01-KA210-ADU-000244829	Partner
Erasmus+ KA220	2024 - 2026	Microcredential Kitchen Basics for Gastronomy	digital education in hospitality, micro-qualifications for chefs, labour market adaptation, workforce mobility in Europe, inclusion of vulnerable groups	2024-1-AT01-KA220-VET-000246024	Partner

Erasmus+ KA210	2023 - 2025	Raising Awareness for a Greener Tomorrow	environmental education, sustainable practices, adult education, waste management, digital educational tools	2023-1-HR01-KA210-ADU-000155794	Partner
Erasmus+ KA120	2023 - 2027	Erasmus+ Accreditation in the field of Adult Education (2023 - 2027)	Objectives: • Development of teaching competencies of foreign language lecturers with the purpose of encouraging and motivating learners to learn foreign languages. • Improvement of andragogic competences of staff and lecturers. • Enriching the educational offer from different domains with the aim of increasing the motivation of participants for lifelong education.	2022-1-HR01-KA120-ADU-000111011	Applicant
ESF	2022 - 2023	IKT Cloud-IO	tourism and environmental protection, financial management for CSOs, IT tools and communication, volunteer program management, partnerships with educational institutions	UP.04.2.1.11.0424	Partner
ESF	2022 - 2023	Pouči me! (Teach me!)	support for disadvantaged children, social inclusion, volunteer program development, partnerships between CSOs and educational institutions	UP.04.2.1.11.0400	Partner

Erasmus+ KA220	2022 - 2024	Adult Education Addressing Today's Challenges	civic engagement for adult and senior learners, professional development for adult educators, social media for social change, educational tools for civic participation, empowerment of disadvantaged adults	2022-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000089906	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2022 - 2024	Build Quality, Ensure Success	quality assessment in adult education, digitization of quality assurance systems, transnational collaboration, staff competency development, continuous improvement in adult education	2021-2-SI01-KA210-ADU-000048077	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2022 - 2023	Developing the Cultural Capital of Roma Students	Roma education, cultural capital, reading literacy, teacher development, inclusive education	2021-2-SI01-KA210-SCH-000050241	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2022 - 2023	Recycling of Waste with Handicrafts	environmental protection, waste recycling, handicrafts, adult education, international cooperation	2021-1-TR01-KA210-ADU-000034997	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2021 - 2023	Bringing the European Dimension Closer to Remote Rural Areas	rural education, digital skills, cultural heritage, environmental protection, European cooperation	2021-1-SI01-KA210-ADU-000035010	Partner
Erasmus+ KA210	2021 - 2023	Higher Education for Roma	Roma education, teacher empowerment, vocational education, dropout prevention, educational inclusion	2021-1-SI01-KA210-VET-000032917	Partner

ESF	2021 - 2022	Pikač UŽIVO (Pikač ONLINE)	social inclusion, intergenerational learning, cultural heritage, artistic workshops, digital skills	UP.02.1.1.14.0063	Partner
Erasmus+ KA220	2021 - 2024	Help to Opportunities	Roma health literacy, healthy lifestyles, community education, e-learning, health prevention	2021-1-SI01-KA220-ADU-000033626	Partner
Erasmus+ KA220	2022 - 2024	EmpowHERment LAB	women's empowerment, digital skills, ICT sector inclusion, entrepreneurship, adult education	2021-1-HR01-KA220-ADU-000029700	Applicant
Erasmus+ KA227	2021 - 2023	Creative at Home	online arts education, creativity, entrepreneurship, digital transition, social inclusion	2020-1-PL01-KA227-ADU-095748	Partner
Erasmus+ KA226	2021 - 2023	Developing Digital Competence of Roma Children	digital literacy, Roma education, distance learning, teacher training, educational technology	2020-1-SI01-KA226-SCH-093610	Partner
Erasmus+ KA122	2021 - 2022	Raising Competences: Better Teachers - Better Education	inclusive education, vulnerable groups, intercultural competence, teacher training, anti-discrimination	2021-1-HR01-KA122-ADU-000018257	Applicant
Erasmus+ KA204	2020 - 2023	Common Framework for Adult Education Providers to Support Engagement for Learners with SplDs	specific learning difficulties, adult education assessment, inclusive learning, educational effectiveness, upskilling pathways	2020-1-SI01-KA204-075962	Partner
Erasmus+ KA204	2019 - 2022	New Education with Success	adult education innovation, critical thinking, media literacy, youth employment, e-learning	2019-1-EE01-KA204-051675	Partner

Erasmus+ KA204	2019 - 2022	New Chance for Us	Roma adult education, social integration, teacher competencies, dropout prevention, minority education	2019-1-HR01-KA204-060807	Applicant
ESF	2019 - 2021	Gastroturisteduca - Improving access to vulnerable groups in the tourism and hospitality sector on the labour market of Međimurje and Zadar counties through gastronomic and tourism education	employability, vulnerable groups, vocational training, tourism and hospitality, soft skills development	UP.02.2.2.03.0021	Applicant
ESF	2018 - 2020	Istakni se, osvoji posao 2 (Stand out and get the job 2)	unemployment, job-seeking skills, transversal skills, digital competence, language skills	UP.01.3.1.01.0104	Partner
ESF	2018 - 2019	ISKRA - Experience of Creative Activities	senior education, cultural activities, creative activities, intergenerational learning	UP.02.1.1.03.0145	Partner
ESF	2018 - 2019	Prvi sam izbor na tržištu rada - obrazovan, kompetentan i lako zapošljiv (I am the first choice on the labour market - educated, competent and easily employable)	adult education, vocational training, employability, basic education, labour market competitiveness	UP.03.2.3.02.0025	Applicant
Erasmus+ KA204	2016 - 2019	Give Them a Chance	Roma adult education, teacher training, minority education, educational empowerment, inclusive learning environments	2016-1-SI01-KA204-021624	Partner