

# Enhancing the quality of drugs abuse prevention in Croatia: linking the prevention evidence, practice and policy making



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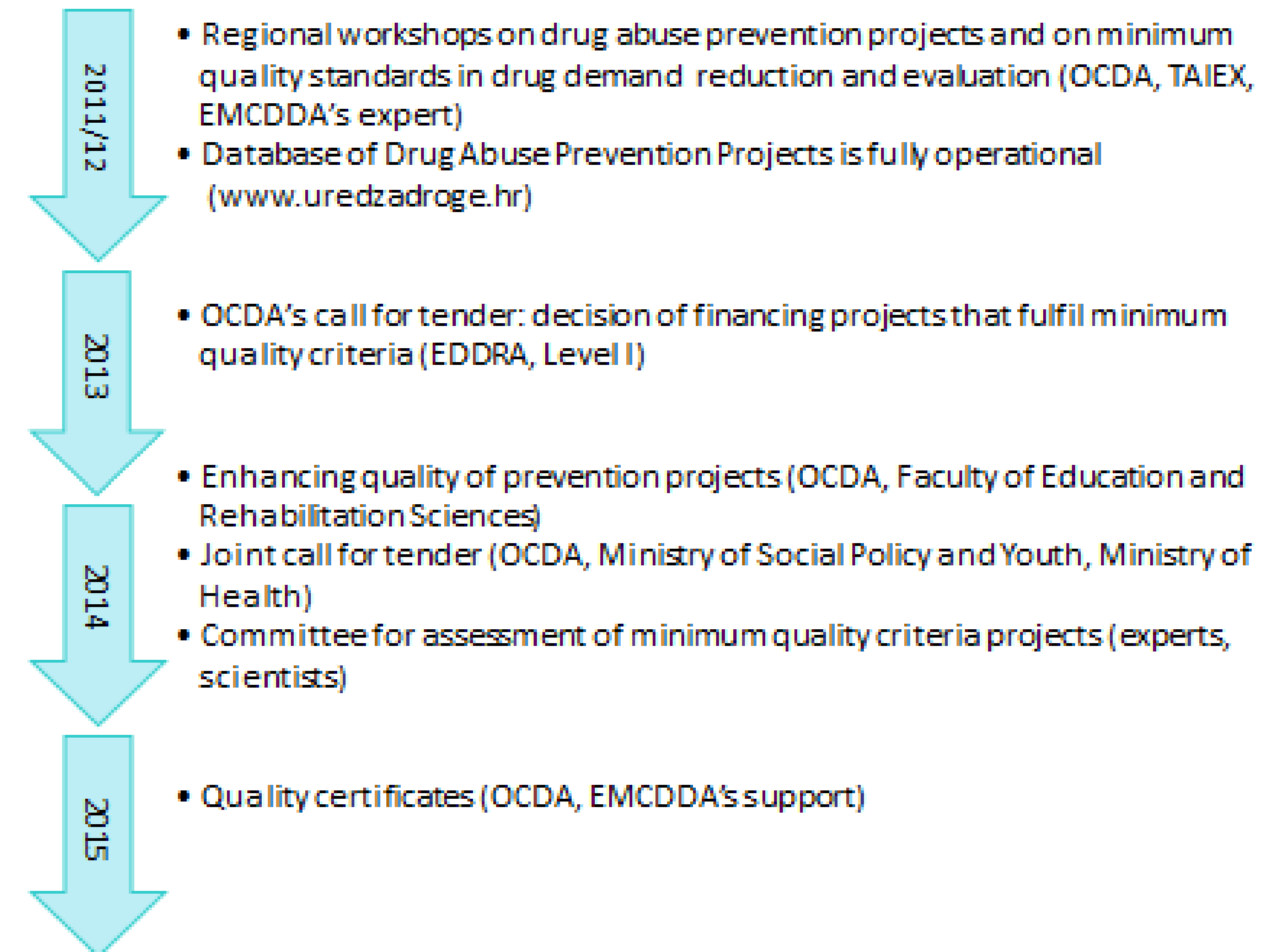
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## INTRODUCTION

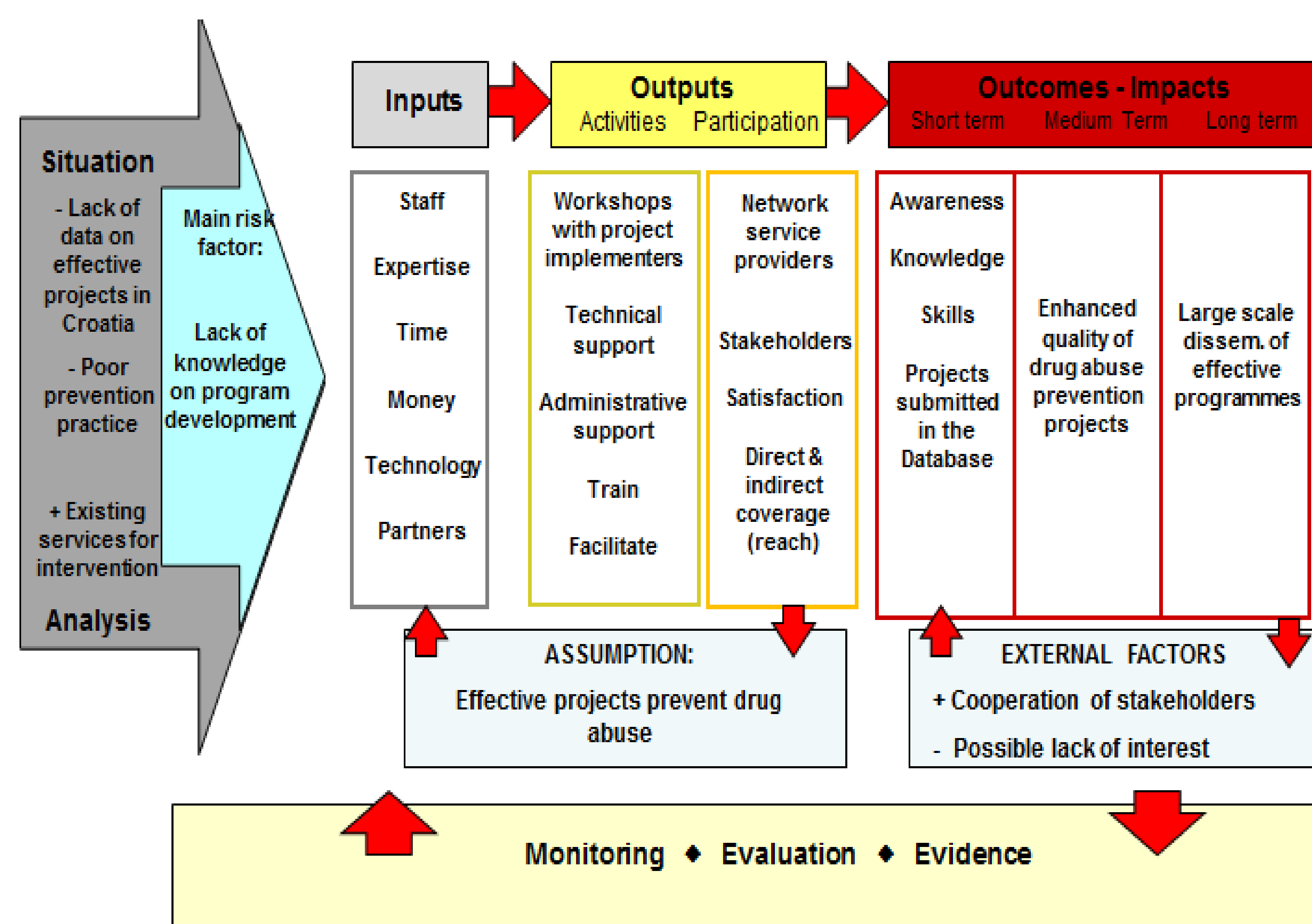
Efforts to enhance the quality of drugs abuse prevention interventions in Croatia were conducted in cooperation of the Office for Combating Drugs Abuse of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (OCDA) and the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences of the University of Zagreb. With the aim of getting insight into conducted prevention activities, in 2011 the OCDA created the Database of Drug Abuse Prevention Projects. As a parallel activities, and with the support of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX), in 2011 and 2012, OCDA conducted regional workshops on drug abuse prevention projects and on minimum quality standards. Further efforts were focused on linking quality criteria with funding, and in 2013, the OCDA decided to finance only projects that fulfil minimum quality criteria. Since only few projects fulfilled these criteria, OCDA and the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences University of Zagreb conducted the project on enhancing the quality of the financed projects, in which the Croatian translation of the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards - Quick guide was used. As a result of these efforts, in 2014, the OCDA, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Policy and Youth for the first time organized a common call for tender, in which one of the priorities was the addiction prevention projects that fulfill EDDRA Level I criteria.

## TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES



## DATABASE OF DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION PROJECTS

### Logic model of the Database



## ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE FINANCED PROJECTS

### Project activities with project providers

- Education and self assessment according to EDPQS
- External financial and program assessment with individual feedback on-site to program providers/implementers
- Analysis of the programs according to quality standards with guidelines for improvement
- Dissemination of the results through one-day event and report with analysis and guidelines for improvement

### Program assessment results

#### Areas of **STRENGTHS**

**Content and methods:** intuitive and theory driven activities planning; variety in program methods, improvements according to process evaluation results are implemented to some extent

**Needs assessment (used data):** most of the programs use relevant and useful data (mostly ESPAD and HBSC) but those are not specific enough (question of local relevance)

**Characteristics of effectiveness:** positive relation, comprehensiveness, relevant population, relevant time and relevant place (not sufficiently described); process evaluation

**Human resources:** enthusiasm, energy, focus on strengths, social, communication and management skills, basic education, informal peer support, interest for volunteering

**Organizational resources:** established collaborations in community, visibility, sustainability, dissemination of information on programs and institution

#### Areas for **IMPROVEMENT**

**Content and methods:** research and evidence based methods and content (risk and protective factors, characteristics of effectiveness, logic framework) according to EMCDDA best practice portal and UNODC International standards

**Needs assessment:** conduct focused specific research with the purpose of needs assessment (e.g. specific characteristics of target population)

**Characteristics of effectiveness:** using theoretical models, defining goals (outcomes vs. outputs), recruiting and retaining participants, written program materials; outcome evaluation, monitoring process (implementation fidelity)

**Human resources:** ensure staff sustainability (employment strategies), staff education in specific knowledge and skills for prevention practice, management of volunteers, external supervision and peer supervision (interview)

**Organizational resources:** financial sustainability, procedures, rules and regulations (written, in form of contracts and organizational documents), networking, institutionalization of the programs

## CONCLUSIONS

- Cooperation of the national coordination body (OCDA) and scientific institution** (Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences) was a building stone for the process
- Use of the **existing standards and materials** (European Drug Prevention Quality Standards –Quick guide) saved time and financial resources
- Linking quality standards and funding** enhanced cooperation with project providers
- In spite of the improvement that has been made in the last few years, the **prevention projects in Croatia still need to be improved**
- Long-term **goal is dissemination of effective prevention projects**