

novičke

Summer 2004

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INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION





PROGRAMME BASIS OF NOVIČKE

Novičke (The News) is an information bulletin with which we wish to inform individuals and organisations abroad with adult education and learning in Slovenia.

We plan to provide the following types of:

- description and presentation of events and activities in adult education;
- development, research and other programmes and projects;
- information on organisations, their needs, plans and activities;
- information on policy and strategies of adult education;
- the latest news in administration and legislation;
- statistical data;
- information on forthcoming events, workshops, seminars and conferences;
- presentations of new books and articles.

Novičke will provide brief, concise, objective and unbiased information.

Novičke will be published three times a year in English language.

Users will receive Novičke free of charge. This is a policy we intend to continue, provided we are able to cover the costs of publishing from the public funds allocated to adult education.

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SIAE EVENTS

Slovenian centres for organised self-directed learning Activity of centres for organised self-directed learning in 2002/2003

Non-formal learning certainly has its advantages. This article presents in brief one such form of non-formal learning in Slovenia: organised self-directed learning. The fact that it has been in existence for nearly ten years shows the high demand for this type of learning. We usually measure the scope of activities by presenting figures on the number of hours of self-directed learning undertaken by participants; the table below shows just such a comparison (between the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 academic years):

	Total no. of learning hours	Average no. of hours at the centre	Total no. of participants	Average no. of participants at centres
2001/2002 academic year	100,188	3,455	7,190	248
2002/2003 academic year	129,144	4,166	6,914	223

As can be seen from the table, the **number of participants** has fallen while the **number of hours** has risen. This means that centres are becoming increasingly successful in retaining people in organised self-directed learning for longer. We can conclude from the figures that the quality of implementation of organised self-directed learning is rising; previous studies of work performed and the observations of employees at these centres have shown that adequate counselling on the use of programmes and other appropriate methods of assisting learning help to ensure that visitors to centres for self-directed learning become permanent participants in organised self-directed learning. Those employed in such centres also state that involvement in organised self-directed learning stimulates the further involvement of those attending centres in other organised forms of learning and education.

In the joint report for the organised self-directed learning centres for the 2002/2003 academic year, we listed the **subjects** most frequently studied by participants:

Subject	Computing	English language	Internet and e-mail use	German language	Other subjects	Other languages	Natural sciences	Slovenian language
%	29	22	22	11	9	2	2	1

The percentages shown above are understandable given that self-directed learning centres mostly offer teaching materials and programmes for the self-directed study of foreign languages and computing, with less teaching material available for the study of other subjects. Learning points are equipped with multimedia computers with Internet access; it is therefore expected that participants in self-directed learning learn how to use the Internet and e-mail, since they provide up-to-date and useful information for the students of today.

Figures on the age structure of participants in organised self-directed learning in the 2002/2003 academic year show that most (38 %) are in the 20–29 age group, followed by the over-40s (23 %) and the 30–39 age group (22 %). Just under a fifth (18 %) are 19 or under. If we compare these figures with figures for the 2001/2002 academic year, we see that the percentage of those aged 19 or under fell by half, from 35 to 18 %; the shares of all other age groups rose by a few percentage points. This figure demonstrates clearly the increase in quality of work with participants, and we can see that it is more difficult to “keep” an older participant in study than a younger one.

A comparison of **structure of participants by status** in the 2002/2003 academic year shows that the share of employed persons rose considerably (from 19 to 31 %); the share of unemployed persons remained the same (around 30 %), as did the share of students (around 17 %). The share of pupils and trainees fell by half (from 27 to 14 %) and the share of retired persons doubled (from 3 to 6 %). The shares of other groups remained roughly the same.

The **reasons why a person opts to undertake organised self-directed learning** are very important. The six most important reasons, as stated by participants in centres for self-directed learning, are as follows.

	Most common reasons for undertaking organised self-directed learning	Response (%)
1.	To supplement knowledge acquired at school, on a course, etc.	22
2.	Free choice of study time	18
3.	Study free of charge	14
4.	Adapting the study rhythm to one’s own needs and abilities	13
5.	Obstacles to involvement in other organised forms of study because of family commitments	9
6.	Obstacles to involvement in other organised forms of study because of work commitments	8

Our study also presents figures on the **distance of participants’ residence from self-directed learning centres**. By and large, participants in organised self-directed learning

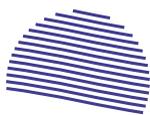
are adults who live relatively close to a centre; 85 % of them indeed live 10 km or less from the centre. When the network of centres is further developed and expanded in Slovenia, provision should be made for the largest number of centres possible, to cover the whole of the country as evenly as possible.

We can say that, in general, the quality of implementation of organised self-directed learning in Slovenia has increased; this is indicated by the regular work undertaken by providers within collaboration with the Co-ordination of the Slovenian Network of Self-Directed Learning Centres (SSU network) and their attendance and active participation at working meetings. Thirty-four self-directed learning centres are currently part of the SSU network; these centres organise and implement self-directed learning according to an agreed national set of methods, which in all its dimensions remains compliant with European guidelines for support of and motivation for adult learning and education, and the strengthening of the field of lifelong learning.

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Raising literacy and education levels among adults Second decade of efforts to raise adult literacy levels in Slovenia

At the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE), efforts are being made, as part of the *'Raising Literacy and Education Levels Among Adults'* programme, to realise the long-term strategy for raising adult literacy levels in Slovenia. Adult literacy, or functional literacy as this field has come to be known in the last decade, has been one of the most important areas of research since the SIAE was founded in 1991. We can identify three key events that have marked our understanding of the issue of adult literacy and guided our work.

Beginnings of development and research work in adult literacy

The **first key event** was the decision of the SIAE's first management board to carry out a **functional literacy project**. This project was fed by warnings given by prominent adult educators in Slovenia that developed countries had recognised the problem of poor literacy levels among large groups of the adult population and were adopting suitable measures to tackle it. They warned that the problem could be worse in Slovenia given the extremely unfavourable educational structure of the population as a whole. Ana Krajnc, a prominent

Slovenian adult education expert, estimated that over 60 % of adults in Slovenia belonged to this risk group. It was around this time that the first studies of literacy levels among young adults in Slovenia were carried out – and they confirmed what the experts had said. In co-operation with the Association of Folk High Schools of Slovenia, the SIAE drafted a development project that resulted in the first adult literacy programme. The aim of the programme was to develop literacy, numeracy, social and communication skills and general knowledge among adults with less than 10 years of schooling. In 1995 the programme was endorsed by the Expert Council for Adult Education as the first general education programme for adults in the country. We trained around 40 teachers in the ‘Basic Teacher Training Programme’ over a number of years; these teachers were responsible for running adult literacy programmes until the end of the decade. The project was fully funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport; implementation of the programmes was also co-funded by the National Employment Service. Around 900 people were involved in the programme over a five-year period; the majority were unemployed, and there were also around 150 students with special needs (the programme was partly adapted for them). We gradually began to phase out the adult literacy programme at the end of the 1990s. The view was prevailing among certain professional circles that adult literacy was no longer the burning issue it once had been.

National research into adult literacy

The **acquisition of applicable and internationally comparable data on adult literacy levels** is the **second key event** to have had an impact on work carried out so far in the field of adult literacy. A nationwide adult literacy study, part of a group of international studies¹, was completed by the SIAE in 2000. The results of the study startled both the profession and the general public: 77 % of adults aged between 16 and 65 did not attain the international average standard in a literacy test. The study confirmed that the deficit in education of which experts in education and training had previously warned was the key reason for the poor literacy test results. The results of the study also showed which population groups performed worse than others in the test. This gave us the opportunity to plan measures aimed specifically at these groups. Shortly after the results were published, a number of activities began; these marked the beginning of more active involvement on the part of the state in resolving the literacy issue. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport appointed a special Literacy Development Commission for the entire school system and for adults. The SIAE developed two new literacy programmes for adults with less than ten years of schooling: the first was aimed at adults involved in furthering their education; the second was a family literacy programme for the parents of children in infant classes at primary school. The data from the adult literacy study was also included in important long-term

¹ Literacy in the information age : final report of the International Adult Literacy Survey. Paris : OECD Publications, 2000.

strategic documents published by the state² and constituted a basis for the implementation of suitable measures to address poor literacy levels among adults. The need was also demonstrated for a planned long-term strategy for raising adult literacy levels nationwide.

Strategy for raising adult literacy levels

In March 2003, and in order to address this deficit in the field of adult literacy, the SIAE drafted a long-term **Strategy for Raising Adult Literacy Levels in Slovenia**; this is the **third key event**. The document covers goals and measures relating to raising literacy levels and contains details on achievements, the legal and financial basis, the duration of the measures, the target groups, those involved in individual tasks and those responsible for their implementation. The strategy has an ambitious long-term task: to reduce the number of adults who do not attain the international average literacy standard by 40 % by 2010, and to involve 200,000 adults (25,000 a year) in appropriate education programmes for raising literacy levels. Programmes that contribute to raising adult literacy levels are varied in type: formal, non-formal, organised in educational or work organisations, associations, general education libraries, voluntary organisations, etc.). The strategy contains 26 recommendations stretching across five interconnected areas: *promotion* (informing the public and distributing information on educational opportunities); *motivation of target groups* (so that they might become involved in education programmes more easily and in greater numbers); *increase in access to suitable programmes and advisory networks*; *formulation and implementation of programmes for target groups* (for teachers and other professionals); *implementation of systemic changes and additional activities* to support the implementation of measures.

The programme of assistance offered through European structural funds presents an opportunity for the 2004–2006 strategy to be realised. Measures for raising literacy levels are included in the action plan, which represents a plan of implementation for the realisation of the strategy. The main emphasis is on the development and implementation of special literacy programmes for selected target groups and of new forms of learning and education, e.g. computer-supported programmes and education supported by television broadcasts. New literacy programmes will be developed for inhabitants of rural areas, adults with special needs and less-educated employed persons, as will special study circles to improve reading and writing skills. Teachers, mentors, volunteers, adult education advisers and other professionals will all be trained to carry out the programmes and measures. Suitable adult literacy material will be developed and a number of institutions and individuals will be invited to co-operate with the SIAE.

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² Adult Education Master Plan, Strategy for the Economic Development of Slovenia to 2006, Single Programming Document of European Assistance to Slovenia 2004–2006, Strategy of Labour Market development to 2006.



SLOVENIAN ADULT EDUCATION SCENE

Quality in adult education

Knowledge management and quality issues at Gorenje

In an era of globalisation, successful operation is dependent above all on the acquisition of new knowledge. The concern we show for the development and education of our employees at Gorenje is one of the cornerstones of our operations and of our success on domestic and foreign markets. Respect for business, environmental and social standards is the key to success. Gorenje is one of the largest companies in Slovenia and one of the leading manufacturers of household appliances in Europe.

At Gorenje we have implemented principles of quality operation according to international criteria that apply to all parts of the business process, as well as to human resource management and to the education and development of employees. Our greatest asset is our employees, which is why we are interested in their planned development and encourage them to be creative through the high-quality acquisition, management and transfer of knowledge within the company.

At Gorenje we decided early on to train our employees at all levels and in all parts of the business process. We have recently been devoting special attention to the quality elements of our education programmes. Gorenje's specific alignment to foreign markets requires that employees continually adapt to new, more complex technologies, respond fully to new procedures and routines at work, display a suitable approach to and knowledge of quality issues, and create the right atmosphere of innovation in the workplace. The development and introduction of a systematic approach and the definition of procedures and criteria lead to higher-quality education and training for employees. The formulation of standards and criteria is certainly a big challenge, not only for the company as a whole but more especially for employees at the Education Centre or in other departments and offices for employee education and training.

Criteria for quality indicators in the knowledge management cycle

Years of practical experience in using the relevant criteria and standards have shown us those types of employee education and training that yield the best results; at the

Gorenje Education Centre we strive to respect and observe these criteria and standards in all phases of the acquisition, use and transfer of knowledge. When drawing up annual plans and educational activities, special attention is paid to all participants involved in the knowledge acquisition process. We involve users and providers of educational activities, as well as specialist departments (which are a source of crucial information for the definition and acquisition of knowledge that is lacking), in our preparations.

The **knowledge acquisition cycle** is divided into **four phases**:

- **Articulation and definition of the knowledge and skills that are lacking and need to be acquired**

A clear strategic company goal, a clear development and investment policy, expert identification and on-time analysis of problems without doubt help the Education Centre to plan and define any lack of knowledge and skills in a particular area.

- **Definition of programmes and programme elements**

In this phase we define suitable contents and decide on the most appropriate providers using a multidisciplinary quality team approach (so-called ‘programme committees’ made up of specialist associates within the company). Approximately 48 % of all education and training in the company is carried out using the company’s own in-house experts. If the providers are from an outside institution, we identify the most suitable with the assistance of references. After the educational activities have been completed, we examine whether they complied with our objectives and whether the proper provider was selected; this is done with the help of a questionnaire completed by those who took part.

- **Implementation of education**

In the education and training implementation phase, we provide advice on the selection of technology and pay special attention to the level of knowledge and the professional profile and reputation of the lecturers.

- **Evaluation phase**

In the last phase we look at the following quality indicators: participant satisfaction, whether expectations have been fulfilled, and the practical benefits or otherwise of the knowledge acquired. For this we use the Methodology for Measuring the Effectiveness of Education and Training. The general instructions for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of education and training in Gorenje lay down the standard we have adopted.

Methodology for measuring the effectiveness of education and training

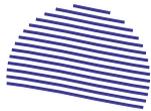
We use the following criteria for measuring the success and suitability of planned programmes:

- **direct measurement of success** of participants (verified by means of tests of knowledge, written work, simulations, etc.)

- **indirect measurement of success** of participants (reaching or exceeding the average product quantities, reaching or exceeding the required level of quality, reduction in delays, reduction in absence from work due to illness, etc.)
- **assessment of teacher or learner** (establishing whether his work capabilities have increased, ability to adapt to new conditions, etc.)
- **education and training where success is not measured** (visits, excursions, meetings, attendance at conferences, etc.).

We have undertaken at Gorenje to responsibly and consciously maintain, improve and meet all standards that help to increase the efficiency and quality of operations. By managing knowledge by means of the above activities, we are able to create the conditions for the acquisition of new, high-quality knowledge, continual learning, and the transfer of what has been learned to everyday practice.

Milena Pirnat Bahun (milena.pirnat@gorenje.si), Gorenje



Slovenian Book Week

Participation of the Slovenian Writers' Association and reading circles

At the beginning of 2003 *Tina Jurkovič*, secretary of the Slovenian Writers' Association (DSP), invited me to take part in the 'Let's Read' study circles with *Manca Košir*. I was asked to moderate three meetings with Slovenian writers whose work had been read by these study circles. These writers in 2003 were *Vinko Moederendorfer* (author of *Predmestje*), *Nina Kokelj* (*Sviloprejka*) and *Milan Vincetič* (*Balta*).

The meetings were a surprise and a delight to me. It is unusual in Slovenia for encounters with writers and poets to take place so directly and within a study context. The readers (who counted only two or three men among their number) immediately shook the room with their reflections, which had been written down beforehand, some of which I read. I soon realised that no one would be lost for words.

Predmestje garnered the largest response this year, with a discussion of events, images, vocabulary and so on lasting late into the night and containing a great many pertinent remarks. This shows that everyone enjoys recounting their reading experiences and that

everyone reads in a different way according to their life experiences, the books they have read and the knowledge they possess. We were all enriched by these different views; *Moederendorfer* himself was delighted and grateful, stating that he had never experienced anything like that before, that he not heard such specific and valuable remarks before, and that the discussion would be of great help to him when he came to direct the film.

Fewer people attended the evening with the poet *Milan Vincetič*, but there was great enthusiasm nevertheless. Each person read out their favourite Vincetič poem. We agreed that we talk about poetry less but that was because we 'felt' it more, and that it was very important that poetry be read aloud, beautifully and with depth. We were lucky to be blessed with the beautiful voice of one of our readers, who worked as an announcer.

The evening with *Nina Kokelj* was magical. She immediately transported us to her gentle, woman's world and caressed us with images and words. We recognised that we were in the company of a magical person full of imagination. Inspirational words on her writing also came from Austrian wordsmith Ludwig Hartinger.

The DSP worked according to similar criteria this year – one “provocative” work (*Aleš Čar, V okvari*, short prose works), one work by a woman (*Lili Potpara, Zgodbe na dušek*) and one “poetic” work (*Iztok Osojnik, Temni junij*).

This year also showed that we read (and this is valuable) in very different ways, while the gentle “feminine” energy of the readers meant that we were able to talk to the author about these different (sometimes radically different) readings without measuring the power of our opinions against one another but, instead, by talking of our experience of the world and of the people within it, and of all types of human relationship. Such discussions, particularly when they involve conflicting views, are extremely welcome, and strengthen our feelings for our fellow human beings. I think it is important to introduce something similar in schools – I know of no other better way of preventing violence than reading – even very “violent” scenes. But no pedagogical interventions are necessary here. The process of habituation, of empathy, required for reading infinitely expands the life experience of every reader. We can say for sure that we are wiser every time we read a book honestly and in depth. Reading must be selective if the reader is to write about reading or about what he or she has read. I would therefore like to say once again that the reason why the campaign so deeply benefited those who took part (and I hope it will continue to do so) was that it was so well organised throughout.

I should also mention the wonderful evening spent in the company of *Lili Potpara*, who was completely bowled over by the event. For an hour and a half they talked warmly, with understanding, wit and empathy, which filled everyone with energy and optimism. We found it easier to discuss mistakes, and discuss them at greater length, than to praise – it is true that the best things are felt and that we have difficulty articulating our feelings about beauty.

I would like to conclude this short report by expressing my wish that this “reading virus” spread as quickly as possible to all areas of social life (I believe that our politicians and officials in particular would benefit greatly from this). I would like to thank *Manca Košir*, who attended every evening and whose energy was a relaxing presence for all who were there. And I would like to recommend these evenings wholeheartedly to every reader; they are certainly one of the worthiest, most valuable and most universal ways to spend one’s free time that I know – and not just that!). I warmly recommend to everyone who can contribute in any way whatsoever to these events to support them in every possible way. Last but not least, it is the best way of preserving and recognising the magnificence of the Slovenian language and Slovenian identity.

Barbara Korun (korunbar@s5.net), poet and professor of Slovene



INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

ALPINE

At the conclusion of the project

The activities of the international project, *Adults Learning and Participating in Education –ALPINE*, which started in 2001 and which will conclude this summer, were co-financed by the European Commission from the programme *Socrates-Grundtvig*.

Thirty-five partners (mostly universities) from twenty European countries were involved in the project. The leading project partner was the Institute for Lifelong Learning from Queen's University of Belfast. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) was involved in the project on the basis of an agreement with the University of Ljubljana. In 2001, the project was led by the Slovenian National Contact Point (NCP), which was located at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana. From 2002 on, according to this agreement, some NCP activities were implemented at the SIAE, including the ALPINE project.

The main aim of the project was to stimulate a larger offer of study programmes/courses for adults at the universities (according to its name, which was *Increasing Adult Education in European Universities* at the beginning of the project). The idea behind the project is that lifelong learning is one of the prerequisites for the European Union to become a knowledge society and that universities should also be involved in this process. In this paper, only some concrete results will be briefly presented – that is, the book and e-manual.

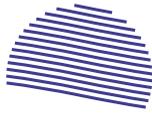
This summer, the book entitled *Adults in Higher Education: Learning from Experience in the Wider Europe* will be published. In the book, thirty-two authors from twenty European countries present the state of the art in the field of adult education in the higher education sector in their country. In the introduction, the open issues concerning the participation of adults in higher education are presented; in the conclusion, potential strategies for solving the problems in this field are proposed. The book was edited by Dr. Rob Mark (Queen's University Belfast), Mireille Pouget (University of Stirling) and Dr. Edward Thomas (University of Bristol).

The E-manual (*The ALPINE Manual of Good Practice*) is available on the web page of the ALPINE project (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/alpine>). It is a useful source of information and knowledge for all those who are dealing with adult education at universities as managers, teaching staff and all those who are striving for increasing the participation of adults in higher education.

Some recommendations for greater participation of adults in higher education from the E-manual:

- Adults who are interested in studying in the higher education sector are usually very motivated, but one must take into consideration the fact that they need extra support in obtaining knowledge in the use of information technology and in how to learn, research, write, undertake group work and prepare projects. Proper advice must be made available to them before they take up study, during their studies and as they finish their studies.
- Teachers who teach adults should be trained in methods of teaching adults.
- Courses should be flexible in terms of time, place and pace of study.
- The teaching approach should be focused on the student. Adults should be given the opportunity to negotiate with the educational institution in order to draft an individually tailored education plan.
- One of the most effective methods of increasing the number of adults involved in college education is to offer programmes supported by the latest information technology. The most popular are programmes that combine the use of the worldwide web with direct forms of teaching. It has been demonstrated that these types of programmes enable greater access to, and a higher quality of, education.
- Universities should increase the provision of foreign language teaching to adults, not in order that they might enrol for a full study programme but so that their knowledge of foreign languages might provide them with mobility on the labour market in the European Union.
- The activities of universities towards the inclusion of socially excluded adults in educational processes is obviously more effective if they form part of the government's strategy in this area.

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SUDMOBIL

Unhindered Access to Mobility in Europe

In the context of European educational programmes, a range of mobility programmes are envisaged which are supposed to enable European citizens to collect valuable work experience in other EU countries and to broaden their competence. A few of these mobility programmes aim especially to foster the mobility of people with disabilities.

Despite this additional support, mobility programmes for people with learning difficulties in the whole of the European Union are not being used.

Many people cannot imagine at all in which way and for what purpose disabled people, and in particular people with learning difficulties or learning disabilities, could possibly participate in transnational mobility programmes.

Against this background, *A'tempo* – an Austrian association for the equal opportunities of people – has developed a European pilot-project, subsidised by the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme. This project, which runs from November 2002 to October 2005, aims to develop proposals for establishing suitable framework conditions, along with a practical model, for European exchange and placement activities of people with learning difficulties. These conditions are meant to facilitate access of this target group to mobility programmes.

The project results will be made available in the following way:

- A handbook: *Unhindered Access to Mobility*
It will contain an analysis of existing barriers to mobility, recommendations for the improvement of mobility and information and contract models for organisations that want to carry out mobility activities for people with disabilities. The handbook will be printed in English, German, Italian and Slovenian language.
- A CD-ROM: *Fit for Europe*
This CD-ROM will contain guidelines regarding the planning of a work or study trip abroad, a checklist for packing and some training materials to actually prepare for a trip abroad. The CD-ROM will also be available in English, German, Italian and Slovenian language.

This pilot project is co-ordinated by *A'tempo*, but will be disseminated by a wide partnership, consisting of partners from Austria, Germany, Finland, Slovenia, Great Britain and Belgium. They include:

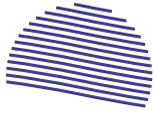
- training and continuing educational facilities for people with disabilities,
- the authorities responsible for training and continuing education, as well as for work integration of people with disabilities,
- self-advocacy groups,
- acceptance organisations and associations for the placement of people with disabilities who work in the area of parliamentary representation or lobbying of interests and concerns of people with disabilities in the European area.

In order to be able to gather the necessary experience and see whether or not the practical model developed during the pilot project is viable for the future, *A'tempo* applied for an additional mobility project within the Leonardo da Vinci programme. This project has been granted, which means that, in May-June 2004, four Austrian people with learning disabilities, who were in the process of vocational training or continuing education in the »socio-political representation of interests and lobbying«, stayed for three weeks in Brussels for work experience in Inclusion Europe, an organisation that lobbies on the European level for the interests of people with disabilities. The experiences gained during the whole process of the work experience (preparation – traineeship in Brussels – evaluation) are now in the process of evaluation, and the partners of the Sudmobil project will research how these experiences can be applied to other institutions, countries and regions.

Andragoški Zavod Maribor – Ljudska Univerza is the main Slovenian partner in the project; however, it closely co-operates with the *Polž Day Care Centre* in Maribor. The representatives of Andragoški Zavod Maribor took part in the meeting of the partners in Rome from November 14 to 18, 2003, and they were also present at the meeting of the partners in Hamburg this June.

At the meeting, the conditions of Slovenian day care centres were presented in detail, but all this could not have been done without extensive help from the employees and clients of the *Polž Day Care Centre*.

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Perspectives on policy and practice for basic skills in Europe with a focus on adult literacy

European Lifelong Learning Professional Training Programme, Seminar 3

The third ELLPROFT seminar on the topic of *'Perspectives on Policy and Practice for Basic Skills in Europe (with a focus on adult literacy)'* was held from 4 to 6 March in Belfast, Northern Ireland. ELLPROFT collaborated with *Rob Mark*, vice-president of the Institute of Lifelong Learning at Queen's University Belfast, in the organisation of the seminar. Thirty-five people from Belgium, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the United Kingdom took part.

The aims of the seminar were: to find out more about the latest developments in tackling basic skills issues; to become familiar with current issues in this field in the European Union, with special emphasis on Ireland, Belgium and Latvia; to exchange experiences and information on national policy in the field of adult literacy, and examples of good practice in the participating countries; to compare views and terminology in the field of adult literacy in the different countries; to establish links; and to get to know the life and culture of Northern Ireland.

We began the seminar with a review of what literacy is understood to cover and of educational developments aimed at raising literacy level in Europe. We found that insufficient attention had been paid to literacy in most European countries until a few years ago. It was only at the end of the 1990s, when the phenomenon of literacy began to be linked to other phenomena such as social inclusion, that literacy began to become an active part of everyday life. The primary reason for this was the poor results achieved in the International Adult Literacy Study¹, which signalled the start of a new era, the blossoming of the field of basic skills, and the start of co-operation with local politicians and the government.

A number of institutions involved in the field of adult literacy were represented at the seminar:

- The leading institution in the development of programmes for raising literacy levels is Queen's University Belfast, which is responsible for adult literacy in Northern Ireland. It has a wealth of experience in study and research. More details can be found at www.qub.ac.uk/.

¹ Literacy for the Twenty-First Century: Research, Policy, Practices, and the National Adult Literacy Survey / ed. by M. Cecil Smith. Westport ; Connecticut ; London : Praeger, 1998 IALS

- The Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA, www.egsa.org.uk) places adults in work and fosters a culture of learning in Northern Ireland. Its efforts are directed towards ensuring that learning is affordable and accessible to everyone. They provide advice to participants, “supervise” them for a minimum period of four weeks, track their progress and success, hold discussions with them and act as advocates. The Basic Skills Unit operates within the EGSA, provides specialist support (advising teachers), is responsible for practical innovations and the provision of high-quality material for teachers, and acts as an advisor to the government.
- The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) in the Republic of Ireland was represented by its directress, Inez Bailey. Its tasks encompass legislation, development, quality, training, promotion, and the raising of awareness of the importance of adult literacy. Its mission is ‘to ensure all adults with reading and writing difficulties to have access to high quality literacy provision’. More details can be found at www.nala.ie.
- The head of the Belgian organisation Collectif Alpha (www.collectif-alpha.be), Anne Loontjens, represented the field of literacy in the French-speaking part of Belgium. Alpha is a response to the many and diverse needs that have arisen in the last 30 years. It devotes a great deal of its time to promoting participation in order to raise literacy levels. It is their experience that an individual that has attended an adult literacy programme will retain his poor literacy level if he does not take an active role in society and therefore does not have a “proper” reason to use the reading skills acquired. Furthermore, if society does not take the need to work with such people seriously, it can mean that we are training people in literacy programmes who, after the programme has ended, simply revert to their previous “desperate” state.

Toms Urzde, member of the European Commission’s Working Group on Basic Skills, outlined the issue of key competence (Deseco)², its categories and the relationships that govern it.

We devoted some time to the presentation of some of the further ongoing European projects in which we are taking part: *Toms Urzde* presented the *Basic Skills On Line for Europe (BSOLE)*³, *Forum for Writing and Reading Difficulties in Adults (ForWord)* and *Research and Information on Social Exclusion (REPRISE)* projects, while I presented the *European Certificate in Basic Skills (EUCEBS)*⁴.

² Defining and selecting key competencies / ed. by Dominique Simone Rychen, Laura Hersh Salganik.

³ More at www.bsole.lv

⁴ The project is presented at www.eucebs.org/index_SL.html

The seminar included **two workshops**:

- The first, *Family Learning – from Policy to Practice*, was led by Maire McAnespie, tutor training development worker at the *Institute of Lifelong Learning, Queen's University Belfast*⁵. She detailed the relationship between learning in the family and family literacy, along with a number of family literacy programmes.
- The second was led by *Anne Loontjens*. We discussed the effects that literacy has on individuals (what it means and what are the key elements required to strengthen it). We drew up four flowcharts showing the advantages of literacy.

We also studied **three examples of good practice**:

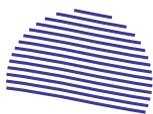
- The *Belfast Foyer* programme, details of which can be found at www.belfastfoyer.co.uk, is aimed at young homeless people between the ages of 17 and 26, offering them accommodation for the duration of their attendance at a programme designed to strengthen their basic skills. The programme helps them to become included in social life and to search for employment, and encourages them to continue with their education.
- *Castlereagh Institute of Further and Higher Education special skills bus* is a bus fitted out with computers that takes basic skills programmes to those taking part. Groups of adults attending weekly and twice-weekly literacy programmes use the facilities. The bus is also used to promote programmes in shopping centres, where passers-by are invited to come and take a look at what is on offer.
- *The Fitz Learndirect Centre* is just one link in the learning chain, with around 2,000 such centres (www.learndirect.co.uk). These are centres that offer a variety of licensed ICT-supported online courses (including literacy courses) that attempt to realise the vision of a learning society. The centres are financially supported by the British government.

The seminar concluded with a plenary session chaired by *Ellinor Haase*, president of EAEA and one of the organizers of this seminar. We agreed that it would be useful to establish a European network of associates working on literacy at different levels. One possible future event is the October meeting in Brussels organised by *Lire et écrire*⁶, the umbrella organisation for raising literacy levels in French-speaking Belgium.

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⁵ Further details from www.qub.ac.uk/ill/webpages/general.htm.

⁶ www.lire-et-ecrire.be/bxl/qui/index.asp.



Lifelong learning and quality of life in a multicultural community

Meeting of members of the EAEA in Ljubljana

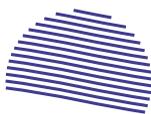
The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is a linking network of civil society organisations that plan, develop and carry out programmes of non-formal learning and education for adults, including a wide range of social contacts at all levels (local, regional, national, European and global). The EAEA has around 100 members from 34 countries and represents the whole of Europe, from the Atlantic coast to the Urals, from Iceland to Israel (that is, not just that part covered by the European Union). Non-governmental, professionally accredited co-operation and connections between institutions is therefore already one step ahead of the institutional, which we can be happy about since it makes it easy to follow the trends in the development of a learning culture. How important it is to be part of this international association is illustrated by the fact that members of the EAEA, through their work, are in contact, directly and indirectly, with over 60 million individuals, professional and other associates, as well as with users of their services.

The EAEA has a 12-member executive committee (EC) in which Slovenia is represented. Ten members of the EC attended the Ljubljana meeting (27–29 March 2004), including the president, *Dr János Sz. Tóth*, and the secretary, *Ellinor Haase*. On Monday, 29 March the EC members were guests of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, where they were presented with details of the basic tasks of the centre and the lifelong learning development strategy in Slovenia by director of the SIAE and EC member, *Dr Vida A. Mohorčič Špolar*. The guests asked questions relating to the funding system for adult education in Slovenia.

The second part of the meeting at the SIAE was led by *Andrej Sotošek*, general secretary of the Association of Folk High Schools of Slovenia (ZLUS). He outlined the basic mission of the ZLUS, which is primarily to bring together, present and represent the interests of its members (37 folk high schools). These are adult education centres that exist and operate in very close contact with their environments, can feel the pulse of those environments, and can recognise needs and respond to them by offering a range of educational and cultural programmes.

During the EC meeting in Ljubljana, we took the opportunity to have a brief talk with *Dr János Sz. Tóth* (see below).

Slavica Borka Kucler (borka.kucler@acs.si), SIAE



The most important task of the EAEA in the years to come will be the implementation of the ‘Lisbon conclusions’

Interview with Dr János Sz. Tóth

SIAE: Mr Tóth, as president of the EAEA, could you tell us a little about the most important tasks carried out by the EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults) in the last few years? What are the association’s most important achievements?

János Tóth: The most important topic, and one which we discussed at the last general meeting, is the advocacy of adult education and the development of this field. We have thus invited those member organisations of ours that have wide practical experience to tell us what they understand by this notion; we can then piece them together into a sort of mosaic of information and understanding. Armed with this new knowledge and supported by experience, we are trying to influence public policy and the development of adult education in the countries concerned. This task is the most crucial one because a similar process, called the *Lisbon Strategy*, has also been started at the Europe-wide level. The document speaks of the wholly concrete strategic alignment of the EU and the development tasks that ensue from it (including an adult education and training system); a number of other objectives are planned for completion by 2010. I am sure that the realisation of the ‘Lisbon conclusions’ will be a central focus of the association’s work in the next few years.

SIAE: How will you begin to tackle the tasks in hand? Have you drafted a special strategy, or are you still waiting for the plan for the future operations of the EAEA to be drawn up?

János Tóth: I began after my election, starting with the drafting of a strategy, a kind of draft development plan, which I called *The Future of the European Association*. We discussed and adopted it at the first session of the newly appointed executive board. It is quite a wide-ranging document and one which we are trying to implement in detail, as well as developing a good action plan for its realisation in different areas. I think one of the important decisions was taken two years ago, when we decided to focus our work in the next three years on three priority areas:

- education for active citizenship
- the development of basic skills and key competencies
- the evaluation of learning

We devoted the first year primarily to *active citizenship*; this year we are looking at *basic skills and key competencies*. The EAEA is establishing contacts and is now co-

ordinating various non-governmental organisations involved in adult education, because we found out that there are many key European organisations operating at a relatively high professional level – for example, the European Vocational Training Association, the European Forum of Vocational Education and training, the Social Platform, the Solidarity Forum, and Corporate Social Responsibility. All these organisations constitute a starting point for further work. The EAEA, which has the support of the European Commission, is co-ordinating this process. The key topic to which we are currently devoting our attention is the issue of those measures we feel we should support or propose as being the most effective in planning the development of the field. Here we are working from the experiences of non-governmental organisations and asking them which measures they propose for the development of basic skills and key competencies. In the middle of May in Brussels we will be holding a seminar to be attended by non-governmental organisations, and we will be making the field of basic skills and key competencies the main topic of this year's general meeting in France.

I am expecting us to be able to devote more time in the next year to the third priority area, *the evaluation of learning*, since it is a very important area, especially when it involves recognition of the value of non-formal learning and of the prior knowledge and skills acquired by learners. It is an important development chapter and one to which the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* gives special emphasis. Although one should not in the meantime forget the development of the formal education system, non-formal paths of learning are gaining greater and greater emphasis; for this reason we must really try to formulate criteria by which we can identify, evaluate and certify knowledge acquired in this way.

SIAE: What prospects do you think the culture of lifelong learning has within the EU? What are the most important skills required for life in the new, multicultural environment of Europe?

János Tóth: You are particularly interested in this area? The EAEA is a partner organisation in the NILE project, which involves the acquisition of international and intercultural knowledge and skills – for multiculturalism as we understand it. I have the impression that Slovenia, as a small country, has always had to have a developed sense of openness, of learning from foreign experience; you have successfully adopted many foreign teaching models and developed them further in accordance with your own vision and the requirements of the Slovenian environment. Of course multiculturalism, in the new European environment, has gained an entirely new dimension, with new challenges for learning. Some 25 countries are now supposed to live together. Each of them can enrich the common European arena with their special cultural and historical experiences and cultural wealth. I hope we will know how to use and expand this to cover the whole EU area.

SIAE: Are you expecting the big countries to have a feeling for the values that the new member states, most of which are small countries, are bringing with them?

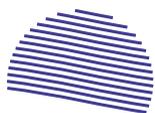
János Tóth: Yes, of course I am assuming they will. From the point of view of economic co-operation between countries, we can already see that an important shift has taken place. Five or ten years ago the emphasis was on bilateral co-operation – between Germany and Hungary, Slovenia and Austria, Austria and Hungary, for example. There is now less and less of this kind of co-operation. Supranational forms of co-operation are on the rise. A similar thing is happening in the field of education and training. More and more programmes – Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig, for example – are working on the premise that at least three partners from different countries, with at least one of those partners being from an EU member state, must be acquired. This has had an important effect on the promotion of international co-operation towards the development of more supranational links and learning. This is also partly conditioned by the policy of funding international projects, but I am sure that it is also about the globalisation of links. We will finally have to accept the fact that Europe is only a small region when compared to the rest of the world, and this will have an effect on the acceleration of links and the process of learning from each other within Europe. We will have to learn to respect common values and to tolerate our differences... I am not thinking here of western Europe but of the wider issue of the position of immigrants. This (and not just that!) will have an impact on both Hungary and Slovenia. We will also have to develop as a matter of urgency an understanding of our own differences so that co-operation between EU member states is more effective. We still have a great deal to learn if we are to properly take account of international and intercultural advantages.

SIAE: Have you in your few days in Slovenia learned anything new, anything that has enriched you or that might help you in your professional work in the future?

János Tóth: I must confess that this is not my first time here, it's my fourth, so I know the Slovenian EAEA representative fairly well. I value your achievements highly and believe that the SIAE and Slovenian adult education are among the most highly developed in South-Eastern Europe. As I have mentioned several times over the last two days, the closest neighbours have the most developed sense of each other. So I am sure that because we have been presented with a great opportunity, we can learn from each other and enrich our own practice with the achievements of others, since we can see how measures and projects work in practice and therefore more easily adapt them to the needs and circumstances in our own country.

Perhaps I should say a few words on the topic that is most current... Let me present it with an example. For many years you have had an exceptional platform for the drafting of the Adult Education Master Plan. You are now faced with the decisive task of thinking the premises through to the end and of formulating a national lifelong learning strategy, which is the latest demand of the European Commission as well as a new challenge connected with the use of funds from structural and other European funds intended for the co-funding of development projects in the new member states. The development of Slovenia and Hungary will therefore be able to find a source of funds here, so it is in our interest to promote the use of these funds. We will thus expand our activities, as well as the concept of the development of adult education as supported by the individual governments. This is for the most part planned very narrowly, focused as a rule merely on training for the labour market, with an emphasis on vocational education. Meanwhile, in Europe, they are already talking of a policy of labour market development from the standpoint of lifelong learning that must become accessible to all. This move has far-reaching consequences, but we must first develop properly focused criteria, tools and practices based on a lifelong learning strategy. This is a seriously large task for you in Slovenia as well as for us in Hungary. I am convinced that we can also learn from each other in this new field.

Dr Tóth was interviewed by Slavica Borka Kucler (borka.kucler@acs.si), SIAE



ADDED

Adult Education Driving Licence

The Adult Education Driving Licence (Teacher training in adult education and vocational education) is an international project led by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education within the *Grundtvig* campaign with co-operation from partners in Norway (VOX, Adult Education Institute, Oslo), Estonia (Faculty of Education, Tallinn) and Greece (Institute of Further Education, Athens). The basic purpose of the project is to improve the knowledge and skills of educators/teachers teaching adults in educational programmes. The objective of the project is therefore to develop a modular programme for adult education teacher training that should provide the framework for a potential European driving licence for adult educators. The primary target group in the project comprises teachers in secondary vocational education and adult training. Other

important objectives of the project are:

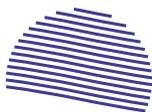
- To exchange examples of good practice in Europe,
- To compare and analyse the contents and forms of adult education training characteristic of the project partner countries,
- To establish deficiencies and define basic skills (competences) that teachers need due to the changed roles in the adult-education process,
- To promote the learning process of adults in formal forms of education.

Why such a project? There are numerous reasons, differing across different countries, but they all share the common feature of rising numbers of adults without basic vocational education who for various reasons are rejoining formal education. Adult educators are mainly trained to educate young people, which in most cases is also their primary professional duty, and so they need additional training for work with adults and to recognise their specific needs. The quality of knowledge depends to a large extent on the quality of teachers and their readiness and ability to take on various roles in the planning and implementation of educational activities.

The project is currently entering the final phase. The project group is making final preparations for teaching materials for an introductory, basic module of the future licence entitled '*Adult Learner*'. On the way to achieving the objective set we used various approaches and methodological techniques. In addition to presenting experience and examples of existing good practice in each partner country, we attempted through the use of focus groups involving teachers, adult learners, experts in the field of adult education and representatives of educational authorities (policy makers) to define the necessary competence for adult educators, and to derive from them educational content to support their further development. A common conclusion of all focus groups was that the training programme must be designed so as to enable the transformation of teachers from knowledge-providers to promoters of adult learning.

Some of the results of the project will be presented at the 8th international Adult Education Colloquium Education and Training of Teachers in Adult Education, 22-23 October 2004 in Ljubljana.

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IntALWinE

Report on the second meeting of the project group in Finland

We reported on the new *International Adult Learners Week in Europe (IntALWinE)* project in the Spring 2004 issue of the *Novičke* bulletin. We stated then that work would proceed in three thematic groups and for the most part via e-mail, and that we would occasionally come together and combine a working meeting with another connected event as the opportunity arose. We therefore met in Finland (21–24 April), appropriately enough during the Finnish Adult Learners Week (19–25 April)¹; the organisers kindly arranged for us to make study visits to a number of events.

Meeting of the IntALWinE working group

The period from December 2003 to April 2004 was mostly taken up with activities connected with the **working group focusing on learners** in which Slovenia is involved. A study was carried out on whether the countries taking part² had a stock of stories of successful learners, or whether and how their achievements were recognised, what could be expected from the International Learners' Forum (4–6 October in Great Britain), who should attend as the representative of each country, and how we could approach the inclusion of these learners in our festival and the implementation of the learners' forum in the future. This review revealed that some partners would have difficulty selecting a suitable representative and would therefore most probably select a replacement; this would be a representative from one of their education providers instead of a learner, which was unsatisfactory in the opinion of most. By making annual SIAE awards for exceptional achievements in adult education³, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education has built up a database of 90 award recipients and their interesting and inspiring stories. We will select an individual to represent the voice of adult learners in Slovenia; he or she will have to be capable of taking part in an international forum conducted in English.

At the meeting the British representative outlined the International Forum's preliminary programme. This proved to be too extensive and demanding for participants and was subsequently redrafted. The purpose of the meeting is to allow learners to exchange experiences and views and to train them to assume a role as advocates of adult learning, since forums should in the long term have an impact on policy as well as on the range of adult education programmes on offer.

The **second working group is dealing with the issue of evaluating learning festivals**. The group does not yet have a set of results to work with, which is why the Austrian participant presented

¹ Aikuisopiskelijan viikko Veckan för vuxenlärande

² The project group consists of national co-ordinators of learning festivals in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Iceland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovenia and Great Britain. Switzerland is a silent partner. The project is co-ordinated by the Unesco Institute for Education in Hamburg.

³ The awards system has been in place since 1997.

their method of evaluating and of drafting annual reports, while the Dutch representative outlined the concept of a five-level evaluation which she had encountered in training for the evaluation of project quality. The group will work more actively in the future and will address the issue of data collection models and different forms of collaboration (with the media and sponsors as well); it will also collect examples of good practice contributed by all project partners.

The **third working group, charged with studying the instrumental significance of learning festivals** as tools for mobilising the public and for advocacy purposes, will begin work at a later stage of the project, dependent as it is on the results of the first two working groups.

Our next working meeting will take place in Maastricht in December 2004 which coincides with the meeting of education ministers. We will try to make full use of the opportunity this presents to promote our project and to lobby at a number of different levels.

Finnish Adult Learners Week

The series of study visits to various events forming part of the Finnish Adult Learners Week began in Helsinki with a one-day presentation of various providers of adult education services organised at the main railway station. Our group then dispersed to attend various events around the country. I was part of the group that visited the small town of Joensuu in the Karelia region of eastern Finland. There we saw a performance given by a family theatre, which is mostly made up of immigrants from Russia and a number of other countries. One of the methods of integration for many immigrants into Finnish society is through non-formal education and learning, which frequently takes place in study circles and other similar groups. We also attended presentations given by non-governmental organisations, as well as exhibitions of items made by various groups from one of the adult education centres in the town.

The impression we gleaned from these events and from the information provided to us by the national co-ordinator of the Finnish Adult Learners Week was that the structure of providers and events was very similar to the structure in Slovenia. They devote greater attention to non-formal learning, which is generously supported by the state both financially and morally. One special feature of the Finnish week is that one or two main themes are chosen for each week (events this year focused on skills and active citizenship); they then select an umbrella organisation to co-ordinate the week's events. Only the national co-ordinator, Mrs Johanna Korhonen, has a permanent position; every year she works under the auspices of a different institution. A national award is granted in relation to the theme of the week to one individual every year.

The energy with which the Finnish co-ordinators and providers approached the learners week enthused us all. We can relate to this, since all of us involved in organising learning festivals recognised that success was founded on the commitment and enthusiasm shown by the individuals involved.

Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik, MSc, (zvonka.pangerc@acs.si), SIAE

God's blessing on all nations,
 Who long and work for a bright day,
 When o'er earth's habitations
 No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
 Who long to see
 That all men free
 No more shall foes, but neighbours be.

F. Prešeren: *The Toast*
 Slovenian national anthem



AREA (sq km): 20.266 • POPULATION: 1.990.600 • POPULATION GROWTH (30): -0.3
 • DENSITY (Inhabs. / sq km): 98.3 • POPULATION OF LJUBLJANA (capitol): 330.000



Andragoški center Republike Slovenije
 Slovenian Institute for Adult Education