

# novičke

## Spring 2006

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## 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

### Educational activity

#### SIAE educational events in 2005

The educational activity of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) is aimed at training and connecting adult educators from all over Slovenia. Our educational programmes are intended for educators involved in teaching or advising adults or organising various types of education for them. At SIAE, we are designing and supplementing our education programmes gradually. In this process, an important role is played by research and evaluation, while we are constantly taking into consideration examples of good practice from other countries.

In preparing the various training programmes for adult educators, we are aware that the latter are an extremely important factor in the context of the learning society. Their task is to prepare adult participants for life and work in rapidly changing conditions. A capacity for continuous learning at work and in interaction with others is of key importance for economic success and social cohesion. The transfer of knowledge from university faculties to classrooms is no longer sufficiently effective, since we know that the skills and knowledge obtained in the educational system quickly become obsolete. For this reason, the success of an individual, a group, an organisation and society as a whole is increasingly dependent on the constant updating of knowledge, where the results are not – or will not be – as good as we might wish unless there is proper motivation, a desire for constant learning and, of course, access to new knowledge.

Last year over 800 people took part in SIAE seminars and workshops of various types (altogether 128 days of learning). It should be pointed out that we prepared several longer programmes which saw participants studying throughout the year, with the result that the total number of participants is lower. The longer courses in 2005 were:

- education within the context of the *Offering Quality Education to Adults* (OQEA) project,
- basic teacher training in the *Adult Literacy Programme* (ALP) programmes: *Bridge to Education* (ALP-BE) and *Read and Write Together* (ALP-RWT),
- training within the context of National Vocational Qualifications,
- basic training for mentors of study circles and *Reading with Manca Košir* reading circles.

We ran workshops for **pedagogical and adult education workers**. These workshops will help them improve their teaching methods and techniques as well as their communication skills; they will be better able to motivate participants in education and through their advice help participants prepare a personal education plan. At the workshops,

**adult educators working in enterprises** learned about new methods of business communication and the rules of business etiquette; they acquainted themselves with techniques of stress management and handling stress situations; they learned skills related to a convincing appearance and effective teaching, and gained some rhetorical skills.

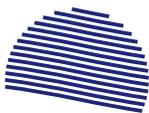
In addition to seminars and workshops we arranged a series of successful **international** and other **meetings** within the context of projects in which we are partners (ADULTE study visit, General Assembly of the ERDI, Comenius Project study visit, meetings as part of the adult education guidance project, ALLEGRO and the before mentioned OQEA project).

During the Lifelong Learning Week 2005 we took part in the organisation of the **SIAE Open Day** and the very successful and well attended **Learning Parade**, an educational and cultural fair event in Zvezda Park. You can read more about these events at: <http://llw.acs.si/events/>.

Last year we organised over twenty **Friday meetings**. These professional, informative and educational meetings, meant for SIAE staff and other participants from various educational institutions and environments involved in the adult education sphere, are an opportunity to exchange opinions, present professional topics, prepare brief training sessions linked to SIAE projects and activities, or present the problems and results of educational practice. Particularly interesting for external participants were the presentations of degree theses and master's theses (Satisfaction of Participants in Adult Education as a Quality Evaluation Indicator in an Adult Education Organisation, Market Communication in the Sphere of Education, Career Shifts of Education Graduates Specialising in Adult Education). The presentation of the Job Seeking project was also successful; one meeting was devoted to resolving conflict situations and another to coaching, an increasingly topical subject. We learned about its application in learning and teaching.

At SIAE, we are constantly striving to ensure that participants enjoy their training and that they leave us feeling satisfied and enriched by new knowledge and experiences.

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## Brief summary of the report **Slovenian adult education provision in 2005/2006**

Analysis of the data collected in the Survey on adult education provision in 2005/2006 (<http://www.acs.si/pregled> - only in Slovenian language) confirmed that the opportu-

nities for adult education in Slovenia have been plentiful this academic year. Namely, the Survey presents 323 educational organisations offering a total of 5,928 different educational programmes. The range of education on offer is particularly rich, with 24 more providers and 563 more programmes than last year. We have been noting a growing trend in the number of providers and programmes since 1996, since the interest of providers in a presentation in the Survey has been growing every year. As a matter of fact, 15% of providers are presented for the first time this year. We are pleased that the majority of providers communicated their data to us by means of the internet-based application, with fewer than 10% using traditional mail or e-mail.

Despite ever-increasing opportunities for education and learning, adults across Slovenia do not all have the same access to education. The distribution of educational programmes across the various regions of Slovenia is very uneven. There are numerous areas where adult education and learning opportunities are scarce, or indeed where adults have no such opportunities at all in their immediate environment. According to the data collected in the Survey, only one third of Slovenia's municipalities – of the total 193 officially registered municipalities – offer adult education locally. The results of the analysis of the programmes offered show that their number has increased in all regions.

Adult education takes place in organisations of various types. Predominant among them are public adult education institutions and private institutions and schools. A significant proportion of adult education also takes place in institutions which are not defined as educational institutions but which provide education as a supplement to their primary activity (for example libraries, museums and galleries, societies and federations of societies, universities of the third age, chambers and associations, funds, foundations and other institutions). In all twelve regions adults can receive education in secondary schools and folk highschoools/adult education centres, while in the majority of regions adult education is also provided by private education providers.

The greater part of the programmes in the Survey are devoted to general non-formal adult education (70%), while just under a third are devoted to the acquisition of formal educational qualifications and vocational/technical training. Among general non-formal education programmes, language courses (34.8%) and computer courses (13.7%) predominate. They also represent the majority in the overall range of courses in the Survey. The largest range of general education programmes are offered by private institutions and private schools, folk highschoools, societies and federations of societies, universities of the third age and others, while some education of this type is also offered by secondary schools and their adult education units. Within the formal education on offer, three-year programmes of secondary vocational education represent the largest share (6.1%), notably the Retailer and Catering programme. On the other hand, programmes of vocational and technical training not leading to a publicly recognised qualification,

which enable the acquisition of basic technical and vocational knowledge and skills important for various jobs, account for a significant percentage (7.4%). Adults can acquire new vocational knowledge at folk highschoools and private institutions or private schools, adult education units at secondary schools, at secondary schools, university faculties, various institutes, educational services in companies and independent educational institutions in companies. Some education of this type is also provided by societies, institutes, special education centres and funds and foundations.

The majority of the programmes (71%) collected in the Survey do not lead to a publicly recognised qualification - the greater part of these programmes are programmes of general non-formal education and programmes of training for work.

Although the range of adult education provision is varied and extends to all areas of human activity and interest, we can conclude that within this range specific contents prevail - for them there is usually the greatest demand -, while the range of other educational contents on offer is more modest. The results of the analysed range of programmes in the Survey, arranged according to the existing local classification of education and according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), have shown that once again this year language courses and computing courses account for the bulk of the programmes on offer. Other fields of education that stand out include communications, education, personal development, mechanical engineering and metal working, economics and business as well as management. The presence of other types of education is significantly smaller.

We will continue to devote considerable attention to monitoring adult education and learning in Slovenia, and to informing the public about education and learning opportunities. This is important also for the monitoring of the achievement of the objectives that Slovenia set itself in the Resolution on the Adult Education Master Plan up to 2010, adopted in June 2004.

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## **Study circles – from ideas to results in the first decade**

Ever since its founding, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education has been involved in publishing. Its publications represent the fruits of research, evaluation and devel-

opment work, and for the most part have appeared as part of the *Nove poti* (New Routes) and *Študije in raziskave* (Studies and Research) series.

We welcome the new (twelfth) issue of *Študije in raziskave*, dedicated to the reflection on the ten years of operation of study circles in Slovenia. The publication is conceived as a collection of papers. It was edited by *Nevenka Bogataj, Msc*, the reviewer was *Dr Janko Muršak*, and the contributors are experienced practitioners (*Irena Rebersak, Štefan Huzjan, Jože Prah, Nadja Rojac, Marina Hrs, Nevenka Bogataj, Tatjana Dolžan Eržen and Marjan Čenar*) as well as prominent adult educators (*Dr Dušana Findeisen, Dr Ana Krajnc, Dr Nena Mijoč, Dr Slavica Černoša, Dr Sabina Jelenc Krašovec and Dr Manca Košir*).

The purpose of the issue is to connect the heterogeneity of domestic expert views with the wealth of experience to date and through a review of the effects of learning in study circles increase the weight of this fragmented but – especially for local environments – fertile and promising form of adult learning. The book is enriched by practical examples of the operation of study circles in various types of institutions, in various local environments, and presents possible paths of development for study circles.

What is it that distinguishes study circles in comparison with other non-formal types of lifelong learning? *Nevenka Bogataj, MSc*, responsible for the development of opportunities for non-formal education and learning at SIAE, sees the advantages of study circles in the following way: *'First and foremost, they are not conceived individualistically. A study circle is a form of group learning, but the group is much more than the sum of individuals that make it up. In a study circle learning is problem-based. In at least a fifth of cases it also represents a stimulus for development. We should be aware that for decades individual critical thought was not desirable in our society, and neither were local initiatives or democratic relations among people. That is why even after fourteen years of independence, our study circles still make sense - they are important from different points of view and at different levels (e.g. the state, civil society and single participant level) and we expect them to remain so for a long time. Moreover, we must admit that modern tools such as distance learning, information/communications technology and media cannot substitute real people, their personal encounters and their local knowledge.'*

All the papers presented in the publication include abstracts in Slovenian and English language.

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## **SLOVENIAN ADULT EDUCATION SCENE**

### **Guidance activities in adult education**

#### **Visitors to adult education guidance centres**

Since March 2005, fourteen adult education guidance centres have been operating in Slovenia. These centres offer adults free, impartial, confidential, comprehensive, quality information and guidance related to their education and learning.

The guidance centres are intended for adults who are thinking about entering education, for those who are already in the education process and for those who have completed it. Particular attention is devoted to groups of adults in the local environment who are in a disadvantaged position, i.e. for whom access to education is more difficult, who have lower educational qualifications and/or who are educationally less active.

Information and guidance takes place:

- before entering education (information on how to choose a suitable educational programme and the organisation that provides this programme, information on entering conditions, educational methods, etc.),
- during the education process (information on how to organise learning, how to surmount learning difficulties, etc.),
- at the completion of education (evaluation of achievements, information on further education opportunities, etc.).

The guidance centres offer adults access to information and guidance in various ways: personal guidance is provided at the centres; in addition, it can be provided by telephone and by mail/e-mail and through informative material. Group guidance is possible by agreement. Most centres also provide outreach guidance. This guarantees access to those adults who have difficulty getting to the guidance centre.

Below, basic characteristic of clients and services of all guidance centres in the 2004/2005 academic year are presented. Notably, the last five guidance centres began work in March 2005 therefore the data on the operation of the individual centres are not mutually comparable; for this reason data on all guidance centres are presented in an aggregated way.

In the 2004/2005 academic year 12,154 services were provided in all fourteen guidance centres: 41% were telephone services, 53% personal information and guidance, 5% information and guidance services via e-mail and 1% other forms.

In terms of content, 67% of services were information and guidance before enrolment in education, 26% during education and 7% after completion of education. In all centres information services accounted for 60% of services and guidance activities for 40%.

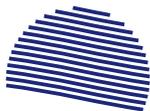
The largest number of adults (35%) inquired about obtaining education at a higher level. Next came information and guidance on non-formal types of education for work or a specific profession and about taking various exams (12%), and inquires about requalification or changing profession at the same level of education (8%). Other categories were present in smaller shares.

In the last academic year the guidance centres dealt with 9,820 clients. This number differs from the total number of services because some clients have contacted the centre more than once. Here are some of the characteristics of clients.

- 41% of guidance centre clients were men and 59% women.
- Of all visitors, the largest number (20%) were aged between 21 and 25, while almost 20% were aged between 31 and 40; these were followed by adults aged between 26 and 30.
- Visitors with completed secondary education predominated: the largest percentage (26%) had a completed four-year technical or general education; these were followed by adults with a completed vocational education (20%) and adults with a completed primary education (18%); other categories were present in smaller shares.
- The largest proportion of clients (42%) were employed or self-employed; 28% were unemployed; almost 9% were students in secondary or higher education; pensioners, farmers, housewives and primary school students are present in smaller shares.

Besides providing information and guidance to individuals, guidance centres also offer their services to groups. In the last academic year there were 228 of these. The unemployed represented the largest share in groups – over 40% – while employees accounted for over a fifth. More than half of the groups were provided with information and guidance in the process of education. Among groups, too, the greatest interest was in obtaining an educational qualification at a higher level and in non-formal education for work or a specific occupation.

It can be concluded that adult education guidance centres are very successful in their work. Their purpose – to provide information and guidance to adults regarding their educational opportunities – has been achieved. Moreover, they are pursuing the objective of ensuring access of information and guidance to the widest possible circle of adults in different environments. Thus, through their activities they actively contribute to the realisation of the objectives of the Resolution on the Adult Education Master Plan up to 2010 and the realisation of the objectives of the Lisbon strategy.



## Partnership and guidance networks in adult education

### Evaluation of adult education guidance networks

The paper will contain a short presentation of the results of the evaluation of effects and the realisation of objectives of the work of adult education guidance networks carried out by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education in 2005 in the first nine guidance centres (the last five centres only began work in March 2005). The evaluation took into consideration opinions of:

- nine directors of guidance centres,
- 59 representatives of the 80 strategic partners<sup>1</sup>,
- 82 representatives of the 116 professional partners<sup>2</sup>,

An SIAE staff member who has to date not been involved in the development and setting-up of guidance centres (thus guaranteeing at least partial objectivity) conducted guided interviews with the directors of the guidance centres on the basis of a uniform questionnaire. For the strategic and professional partners written questionnaires were prepared. These contained some common questions and – in view of the different roles of strategic and professional partners in guidance centres – some specific questions. We formulated the questions in conjunction with the staff of the guidance centres. Questions related to:

- general data about partnership-based cooperation (types of partner organisations in the network, how many years they have been part of the network, general assessment of cooperation with the guidance centre and other organisations in the network, assessment of the network's method of work, and so on);
- opinions or assessments on the achievement of the objectives of the activities of the guidance centres in general, on the achievement of the operational objectives of strategic partners and, in particular, professional partners in the network, on the advantages of including both strategic and professional partners in the network and on the difficulties that occur in partnership-based cooperation;
- proposals to improve cooperation with the guidance centre and with the other partners in the network, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> **Strategic partners** are different administrative, developmental, business and similar institutions at the local area that have a strong impact on the conditions of local development and HRD development policy.

<sup>2</sup> **Professional partners** are institutions that work in the field of guidance or adult education in the local environment.

We shall now present some data indicating the level of realisation of the goals set in the partnership-based cooperation. We would first like to highlight the assessment of the partners as to whether, in their opinion, the setting-up and operation of guidance centres and guidance networks has increased access to lifelong learning. It is clear from the data that the majority of them (88% of strategic partners and 81% of professional partners) believe that accessibility of lifelong learning has increased.

The second piece of data that we present is the assessment of strategic and professional partners on cooperation in the network. The figures show that in general terms both sets of partners rate this collaboration as:

- very good – 46% of strategic partners and 39% of professional partners,
- good – 44% of strategic partners and 44% of professional partners,
- satisfactory – 10% of strategic partners and 15% of professional partners,
- poor – just 2% of professional partners.
- no-one selected the option very poor.

Similarly, the majority of partners (88% of strategic partners and 95% of professional partners) believe that there are advantages in cooperating in the guidance network. This is also reflected in their assessment of the level of realisation of the objectives of cooperation in the network. They scored the realisation of an individual objective on a 5-point scale, where 1 means poor realisation of an objective and 5 means very good realisation of an objective.

**Table 1:** Strategic partners’ assessment of the realisation of individual objectives

Objectives	Average score
1. In the local environment to connect as many providers of educational and guidance services for adults as possible	3.93
2. Good flow of information on adults’ needs for education, information and guidance in the local environment	4.00
3. Access to databases of information on education available	4.16
4. Establishing the interest of employers, employees and other social partners in guidance activities	3.51
5. Consultation on the coordinated and rational development of information and guidance activities and on the use of all resources	3.74
6. Constant exchange of information about the latest events and findings relevant for adult education	3.86
7. Informing the public about the purpose, methods and achievements of information and guidance activities in the local environment	4.00
8. Guaranteeing possibilities for the development of guidance activities for adult education	3.98
9. Representing the interests of the local guidance network in developmental programmes of the local environment	3.96

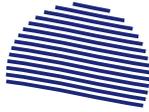
From the data in **Table 1** we can conclude that with the exception of one objective, *Establishing the interest of employers, employees and other social partners in guidance activities* (average score: 3.5), the objectives achieve an average score of around 4 in the opinion of the strategic partners, which we consider an extremely good result.

**Table 2:** Professional partners' assessment of the realisation of individual objectives

Objectives	Average score
1. In the local environment to connect as many providers of educational and guidance services for adults as possible	4,03
2. Constant technical cooperation and exchange of experiences among organisations involved in the local guidance network	3,71
3. Good flow of information on adults' needs for education, information and guidance in the local environment	3,81
4. Access to databases of information on education available	4,03
5. Possibility of presenting own programmes in databases containing information on education available	4,05
6. Implementation of joint promotional activities and preparation of joint promotional material	3,53
7. Constant exchange of information about the latest events and findings relevant for adult education	3,61
8. Establishing connections between users and providers of guidance activities	3,75

It can be seen from the data in **Table 2** that in the case of professional partners too, the majority of objectives have achieved an average score of around 4, with just two exceptions (objectives 6 and 7 scored around 3.5), which we still consider to be a good result. At the same time we believe with regard to the assessments of the achievement of objectives on the part of the two sets of partners that in further development they should be an incentive for closer professional cooperation for the achievement of those objectives that achieved lower scores (below 4), and to keep up the good work for the realisation of all the objectives listed. From the point of view of the cooperation of various organisations in the local guidance network, all the objectives are important for the development of guidance activities in adult education and, more broadly, for the development of adult education. In the future, special attention will be devoted to interconnecting the work of networks in accordance with developmental orientations in local environments.

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## Centres for organized self-directed learning

### **Satisfaction of participants and their assessment of organized self-directed learning**

In this article we would like to present the results of the surveys collected to date<sup>1</sup> for the monitoring of the satisfaction of participants in organized self-directed learning. **The structure of surveyed participants<sup>2</sup>** is the following:

- a total of 877 participants responded to the questionnaire, of whom 59% were women and 41% were men;
- the largest group of respondents (39%) were from the 16 to 26 age group. They were followed by those in the 27 to 39 age group (30%);
- the largest group of respondents (30%) have a four- or five-year vocational, technical or general secondary education qualification; 20% have a basic education qualification; a total of 27% have either a two- or three-year vocational education qualification or fewer than 8 years of primary education;
- the largest group of respondents (34%) were unemployed, closely followed by persons in employment (27%); students in primary, secondary and higher education accounted for 30% of the respondents.

**Average satisfaction ratings** (a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 represents complete dissatisfaction and 7 complete satisfaction):

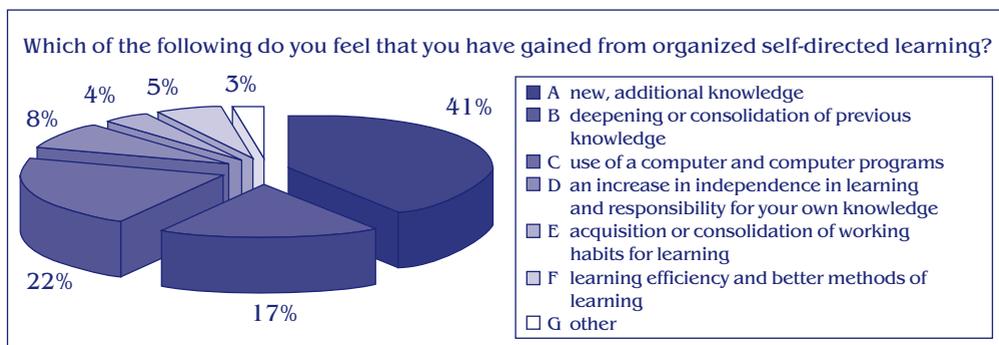
- respondents' satisfaction with the **work of the staff**: 6.38 (the highest rating of 7 was selected by a total of 58% of respondents - 61% of all women and 54% of all men);
- respondents' satisfaction with **learning materials**: 5.86;
- respondents' satisfaction with **learning aids**: 5.77;
- respondents' satisfaction with the **learning environment**: 5.90.

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<sup>1</sup> Participants deliver completed questionnaires to a distinct location in the centre in order to ensure anonymity. The staff at the centre who are responsible for monitoring data enter the completed questionnaires into a computer application. Up to 15 February 2006, 877 questionnaires on interim monitoring of satisfaction of participants at centres for organized self-directed learning had been entered into the database. The participants were surveyed in the period from 1 September 2004 to 15 February 2006.

<sup>2</sup> On his or her tenth visit to the centre, by which time he or she is thoroughly familiar with this form of non-formal learning, the participant responds anonymously to questions about his or her satisfaction with the work of staff, the material, learning aids and the learning environment, questions about current and planned inclusion in organised forms of education and questions about what he or she has obtained from learning at the centre for organized self-directed learning.

These data show that participants give by far the highest rating to the work of the staff responsible for informing them about learning opportunities, advising them and helping them in their self-directed learning at the centres. Their role is important both from the point of view of diagnosing and formulating the learning needs which the participant has on arriving at the centre, and from the point of view of providing advice for the selection of suitable learning materials, resources and aids, advice for choosing appropriate learning strategies, and help in monitoring progress in knowledge. The average ratings of satisfaction with the learning materials, learning aids and the environment are also high, even though they are lower than satisfaction with the work of staff. The reasons for the first rating should perhaps be sought in the diversity and quality of the existing range of available self-study materials, since it is well known that numerous multimedia programmes for various subjects (above all foreign languages and computing) are available on the market, but they don't always have all the characteristics of (good) self-study materials and learning packages.



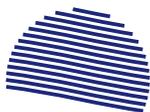
In **assessing the effects of organized self-directed learning** the analysis has shown that a considerable number (41%) of respondents believe that they have acquired new, additional knowledge in the centres. Just over a fifth (22%) consider that they have acquired skills related to the use of a computer and computer programs<sup>3</sup>, while just under a fifth (17%) believe that they have deepened or consolidated previous knowledge; 8% of respondents believe that through self-directed learning at the centre they have increased their autonomy in learning and their responsibility towards their own knowledge.

Through the effects of organized self-directed learning as recognised by the participants at the centres, we can therefore confirm the importance of providing opportunities for self-directed learning in an organised manner, whether **target oriented** (education as a means to achieving clearly defined learning goals), **activity oriented** (participation in

<sup>3</sup> The use of a computer and the knowledge of the basics of operational systems are the preconditions for learning various subjects with the help of personal computers and multimedia programmes for self-study.

educational activities for the purpose of learning in the circumstances in which they take place) or **oriented at learning itself** (learning for the sake of knowledge). We cannot limit learning merely to the passive absorption of fragments of knowledge, and it is therefore participation in education, even non-formally, that is the most important thing. Learning in centres for organized self-directed learning enables participants to learn in an independent, frequently interactive manner. It does not represent the mere reproduction of knowledge but rather it is often a renewal of knowledge, while at the same time it encourages the autonomy of the individual and the individual's capability for self-orientation in the learning process, it enables supervision of learning and adaptation of the learning process to the learner's own needs, wishes and abilities.

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## Types of non-formal learning in Slovenia **14 years of the Learning Exchange in Slovenia**

Learning Exchange - a name, a project, an activity which facilitates learning? All this and even more. In the autumn of 1992, an experimental Learning Exchange began operating at the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. In that period the results of a survey of nearly 400 users showed that Slovenians do accept new methods and approaches to learning, that we want them, especially if they involve an individual approach and informality and are free of charge. The concept is based on the assumption that everyone can teach everyone and that in order to communicate knowledge it is not important whether we have a formal education qualification. Instead, what really matters is the will to communicate and the desire to accept something new.

We can justifiably claim that in practice the Learning Exchange has demonstrated several valuable roles; its advantages undoubtedly lie in the fact that it provides people with personal contact and an individual approach. Moreover, through the collection of feedback on the progress of learning and the exchange of knowledge, it ensures monitoring of the progress of learning in informal encounters. In recent years the latter has received particular praise. Other frequently mentioned distinctive characteristic of the Learning Exchange is the fact that the communication of information and inter-connection of individuals is free of charge - particularly relevant when something as important as the communication of knowledge is involved.

In December last year and March this year the family of seven Exchanges increased in size and now encompasses nine regional and local Learning Exchanges. The last two (located at *Folk highschool Ptuj* and *Folk highschool Celje*) found the necessary resources themselves.

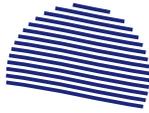
According to the most recent data, more than 11,000 inquisitive Slovenians are enrolled in the Learning Exchange, while it is not uncommon for foreigners who are temporarily or permanently living in Slovenia to enrol, too. The growth in number over the last five years ranges between 1,000 and 1,100 new enrolments each year (this figure does not include permanent members of the Learning Exchange). In cooperation with the staff of the Oton Župančič Library, who look after the coordination of the work of all the Learning Exchanges in Slovenia, we have in the last two years planned new strategies for addressing people's needs and new methods of promotion. In the future we therefore expect a further growth in membership.

Provision and demand at the Learning Exchange can be good starting points for connections with other forms of education and learning, and for building on the education on offer. According to recent data, people are most frequently interested in: languages, computing, science, handicrafts and art. The provision of education is similar: languages predominate, followed by handicrafts, computer skills, art and ideas for tourism-related activities.

The Learning Exchange is a unique model of a 'knowledge agency' and an opportunity to extend the concept beyond the national borders. In recent years we have dedicated ourselves to the analysis of the first decade of operation; we have organised a development workshop and used the SWOT analysis method; we have developed and implemented a new training programme for Learning Exchange staff. Furthermore, a document on the strategy and vision for the further work of the Learning Exchange is in preparation.

And what are our plans for the future? We have given new consideration to promotional approaches, we will foster personal contacts with members and link the Learning Exchange to other lifelong learning opportunities at home, while at the same time seeking new routes for international cooperation and application.

Emma Perme ([info@permeum.net](mailto:info@permeum.net)), external consultant of the SIAE



## Study circles

### **Widening the circle for development**

The Slovenia Forest Service (SFS) which has operated as a public institution since 1994, employs 730 people. On the basis of the Forests Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No 30/1003), it directs forest management and the use of all forests in Slovenia, irrespective of ownership. Its mission is summed up in the slogan *Treat forests with care for the good of nature and human beings*. Direction of the management and use of forests is carried out on the basis of forest management plans, through education of owners of forests, and by informing the public about the importance of forests.

Study circles are one of the the forms of education in this field. In 1999, *Nevenka Bogataj, MSc*, who has devoted particular attention to the forestry profession, invited us to a basic training session for study circle mentors. We trained seventeen mentors, of whom twelve have led study circles to date. The first circles got going in 2000 – to date we have set up a total of nineteen. In most cases they have dealt with tourism in forest areas and elements of cultural and natural heritage. Until 2004 the themes of the circles were not always directly connected with forestry, but recently the number of more specifically technical themes has been growing. The mentors have therefore respected the principle of freedom of choice and allowed participants' independence in the choice of contents of the study circle, where in the case of the heads of regional units of the SFS it has not always been easy to reach an understanding if the circles have not dealt directly with technical forestry matters.

The understanding of the management with regard to this method of work or rather this type of staff training has been and still is very important for the development of study circles at the SFS. This is because this type of work is specific with regard to both working hours and the planning and use of financial resources. We have had the support of the director of the SFS and some of the heads of regional units right from the start. Understanding and support have spread in a few years to other regional unit heads and we are endeavouring to win the support of all of them. In as early as 2000 we managed to formulate a financial quota for the work of the study circles in the annual financial plan of the SFS, although we had to overcome a great number of obstacles in terms of mentality and principles based on regulations on the operation and expenditure of budgetary funds in a public institution. The mentors, who enthusiastically tackled the formation and leading of the first study circles, had to get to

grips with the frequently frustrating details of using the money intended for the study circles in accordance with the principles of public procurement, even though the amounts involved were relatively small. Nevertheless it worked and they even managed to obtain additional funds from other sources. In 2002, 2003 and 2005 we even succeeded in obtaining funds for individual circles from the Ministry of Education and Sport tendering procedures.

Through analysis of the work<sup>1</sup> of the study circles, we identified at the SFS numerous characteristics and advantages:

- The SFS covers the whole of Slovenia and therefore study circles can spread to every part of the country.
- The Public Forestry Service at the SFS connects the economic and environmental aspects of forest management, while the complex knowledge of forestry experts makes it possible to encourage members to choose various contents.
- The SFS study circles are included in the annual programme of work and the financial plan which are approved every year by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.
- The foresters of the SFS know the countryside and its inhabitants and therefore it is for them to forge a first contact with study circle participants and adapt to the characteristics and needs of people in rural areas. Achievements to date have demonstrated the real contribution to rural development, local cooperation and integration of forest owners.
- The study circle mentors are exceptional workers who are also willing to work outside normal working hours. They have a strong sense of belonging and through their example have a positive influence on other employees.
- It is not always easy to achieve the necessary understanding and support of managers at the SFS for the work of the mentors. A great deal of effort is needed to overcome ignorance and prejudice about this form of education.
- The external experts needed by the study circle as qualified sources of knowledge can only be paid on the basis of an authorship contract or a work contract which are subject to a high rate of tax, which means that study circles are soon financially undernourished. The ever-increasing interest in public calls for tenders in the adult education sphere is making the criteria and requirements more difficult, and it is therefore increasingly difficult to obtain funds from public tendering procedures.

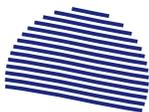
Analysis of the work of the SFS study circles to date shows that it makes sense to continue to develop them since this is useful in the long term both for the development of the countryside and for work with different sections of the public and staff training.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: T. Lesnik, Študijski krožki v Zavodu za gozdove Slovenije (Study Circles at the Slovenia Forest Service); report published in *Prihodnost gospodarjenja z zasebnimi gozdovi v Sloveniji* (The Future of the Management of Private Forests in Slovenia), Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta, 2005

For this reason we have prepared a systematic internal document - *Instructions for the operation of study circles at the SFS* - and a vision of further development which contains the following: *'We shall assert ourselves as the elements responsible for the excellent operation and recognisability of the SFS among the public; we wish to become the leading organisation in the development of study circles in rural areas of Slovenia and through lifelong learning achieve sustainable, close-to-nature, universal development.'* We have summarised this vision in the slogan *Widening the circle for development*. Through publications in the internal newsletter List and various brochures, we have promoted the six-year development of study circles at the SFS. To this end a *Study Circles Caravan* event took place in Logarska Dolina in October 2005 where the study circles of the following mentors presented themselves: *Jože Prah, Boštjan Škrlep, Janez Logar, Jerneja Čoderl, Lojz Lipnik, Branka Gasparič* and *Borut Debevc*.

Tone Lesnik ([tone.lesnik@zqs.gov.si](mailto:tone.lesnik@zqs.gov.si)), Slovenia Forest Service



## Lifelong learning

### **Laying the foundations of a lifelong learning centre in the Posočje area**

The Soča Valley Development Centre last year obtained funds for the project *Model of lifelong learning in the NW Goriška region* (the area covered by the municipalities of Bovec, Kobarid, Tolmin, Cerklno and Idrija) from a call for applications from the Ministry of Education and Sport (National Programme Phare 2003 - Lifelong Learning)<sup>1</sup>. We designed it together with the Development Agency of Idrija and Cerklno with the aim of further strengthening partnership in the region. Also included in the project are the enterprises Hidria (including the companies AET Tolmin, Hidria IP, the Development and Technology Centre for Ignition Systems and Electronics, IMP Klima and Rotomatika), Kolektor Group, Kolektor Pro, ETA Cerklno and TKK Srprenica, the professional training organisation ENFAP Friuli-Venezia Giulia from Italy, the Nova Gorica Adult Education Centre/folk highschool, the grammar schools in Tolmin and Idrija, the agricultural college in Šempeter pri Gorici, the Nova Gorica Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry, the Tolmin Agricultural Advisory Service, KOPO of Nova Gorica, and external consultants from various fields.

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<sup>1</sup> The project is co-financed by the European Union. The Soča Valley Development Centre (Posoški razvojni center) has sole responsibility for the contents and in no case does it reflect the position of the European Union.

In designing the project we proceeded from the fact that the rate of inclusion in lifelong learning of the population aged between 25 and 64 in the area in question is very modest. Posočje and Idrijsko-Cerkljansko are distant from major centres with a wide range of educational opportunities. This reduces the opportunities of inclusion in various forms of lifelong learning. The population lags behind the regional average, which is also lower than the national average in terms of educational structure. Consequently, the lower level of knowledge and lower educational structure of the population are obstacles to employability.

We included three **target groups** in the project:

- employees in the commercial sector with an educational qualification below level V; This is a category which in Slovenia (and in particular in this region) has a poor rate of inclusion in the various forms of lifelong learning, particularly those based on information and communication technology. For this target group, the plan is to achieve a positive attitude to work, encourage personal development and motivate people for further training and education. This leads in the long term to an increase in employability and in the level of education. It also means an increase in the number of innovations in an enterprise and an increase in the competitiveness of the economy on the world market.
- professional staff of key importance for the further development of enterprises; By taking part in the project, human resources staff will obtain the bases for formulating a human resources development strategy in enterprises. They have defined in detail the representatives of the first target group and collaborate on the planning and design of training programmes, and later on implementation. The project also includes a second professional who can have a decisive influence on the development of enterprises and the strengthening of their competitive capacity.
- the rural population; This target group consists of people who work on farms and mainly live from farming or complementary activities and those who live in villages and are unemployed or for whom farming activities do not provide a sufficient income. Through inclusion in various forms of lifelong learning their level of know-how, general knowledge, recognition of development opportunities, self-confidence and self-image and thus also their employability will be raised. Consequently, the project will contribute to the creation of new jobs in rural areas, linked above all to the use of information and communication technology, and at the same time provide opportunities for personal development and thus full inclusion in the wider social environment.

## Activities and targets

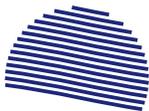
At the start of the project we further strengthened the partnership for human resources development by linking up various institutions. Cooperation among the partners involved in the project is nothing new, since we have been linking up in vari-

ous projects and programmes for a number of years now. This was followed by an analysis of the lifelong learning needs of the individual target groups, on the basis of which education and training programmes are devised. Some of these will be carried out on a pilot basis in the spring (as part of the project we have fitted out two classrooms with laptop computers).

We wish to establish a model of connection and operation in the sphere of lifelong learning which will enable the constant monitoring of needs and adaptation and implementation of programmes. Thus they will become the foundations of a sub-regional centre for lifelong learning. We will gradually be able to realise our long-term objectives, which are:

- raising the level of lifelong learning culture in this region and increasing the rate of inclusion of various categories of the population in various forms of lifelong learning;
- raising the level of knowledge and education;
- increasing employability, the employment rate, mobility and activities of the population;
- further economic development of the region.

Mateja Kutin ([mateja.kutin@pososki-rc.si](mailto:mateja.kutin@pososki-rc.si)),  
Soča Valley Development Centre



## From the reports of the providers of LLW 2005 **Presentation of some LLW 2005 events**

While the Lifelong Learning Week (LLW) working group at the SIAE is already planning this year's festival of learning, we are still receiving accounts of the events that took place as part of LLW 2005. Below we are publishing some of these accounts in order to provide examples of lifelong learning from the earliest years right up to venerable old age. Through these contributions, we would also like to encourage all those who are interested to try and involve their own activities in this year's LLW (which runs from 16 to 22 October 2006) and thus give them an additional festive touch.

### **The children of St Angela's Nursery took part in the Learning Parade**

In the morning we and twenty-five children joined the Learning Parade headed by the brass band. We were expecting a mass of schoolchildren, children from nursery schools and others, and we couldn't believe that we were on our own. It was raining,

but that didn't stop us. The opportunity to learn is something very valuable and an infinite gift for every human being. One of the teachers was amazed: *'If people only knew that we have around 10 billion brain cells in our heads, which means that we contain enormous potential, but we only use a small percentage of it...'* We shall remember the parade with umbrellas for a long time. Together with the children we look forward to our everyday moments of acquiring wisdom, which includes self-development, love for oneself and then love for one's neighbour.

Metka Capuder, St Angela's Nursery (*'Angelin vrtec'*),  
Ursuline Institute for Education and Culture

## LLW 2005 events at Dragotin Kette Primary School from Ilirska Bistrica

Pupils and teachers from our school were among the participants in this nationwide festival of learning. Through our choice of activities we wanted to emphasise the importance of active citizenship in the process of lifelong learning. We gave our LLW activities the title *'This is my home, this is where I live'*. In terms of content they were connected to the *Network II* and *European Village* projects in which we are taking part. Our basic message was that the identity of a citizen is formed in the first place at home.

The group leading the LLW project chose, in conjunction with the pupils, several activities which they then carried out in the week from 17 to 21 October. Preparations for them began well in advance.

- The pupils researched facts of interest about the villages they come from and prepared leaflets and posters on them. They presented these on a special stall in the square on market day. The event was livened up by music and dancing and attracted many passers-by. We were able to admire the originality, creativity and cooperation of pupils from each of the villages that make up our school district.
- On Tuesday 18 October a formal session of the pupils' community was called, with two representatives from each class. We elected the members of the school parliament, the ministerial candidates for specific areas and formulated proposals for this year's plan of work for the pupils' community. We exchanged views on common issues related to life and work at the school.
- On Wednesday we voted on the selection of a new school logo. Pupils from year 4 to year 9 took part, while pupils from the first three years voted at home with the help of their parents. The voting was conducted by a special commission made up of pupils, teachers and members of the municipal electoral commission. In this way we gave pupils the chance to learn about the principle of democratic decision-making and the importance of their own participation in this process - before they reach adulthood.

- We organised a meeting of representatives of class communities with one of our former teachers, now a member of parliament at the National Assembly, Mr Vojko Čeligoj. He raised the pupils' interest with an informative presentation of the National Assembly. They were pleased with the materials about our country which are usually given to foreign visitors to Slovenia's parliament.
- We concluded the LLW on Friday with an exhibition of everything the pupils and their mentors had prepared on the main theme *'This is my home, this is where I live'*.

During the LLW our school was united by creative energy. We all learnt from each other: pupils from teachers and teachers from pupils. We believe that the results of our work were also an interesting source of learning for others.

Alenka Frank and Tanja Vičič,  
Dragotin Kette Primary School, Ilirska Bistrica

## Tenth anniversary of Lifelong Learning Week at DOBA

DOBA<sup>1</sup> took part in the LLW for the tenth time. Once again participants, students and random visitors of DOBA had the opportunity to choose an interesting workshop, lecture or event to learn something new. The events took place at DOBA and in cooperation with external speakers.

It is never too early for learning – nor is it too late. In the spirit of lifelong learning, nursery school children, together with their parents and grandparents, discovered the secrets of the language of our neighbours. This was one of the most successful events. It was fun to see children, parents and grandparents getting involved in learning German through games, singing and dancing. Tired but enthusiastic, they assured us they had spent an unforgettable hour together learning a foreign language.

Lifelong Learning Week passed in a friendly atmosphere of informal learning and socialisation for all generations. Participants left DOBA with happy faces; for many of them a new idea had been born, or an answer, or even a question. For many visitors it was their first chance to discover the enjoyable side of learning. Some decided on the spot and chose courses for themselves; others assured us that they would be back. All agreed that they would like to take part in similar activities in the future. That, of course, is already our task for the forthcoming year.

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Polona Baloh, DOBA VIR ZNANJA, d.o.o.

<sup>1</sup> DOBA is one of the largest private education and training providers for youth and adults in Slovenia.

## LLW events attract many residents from the Koroška Old People's Home

We at the Koroška Old People's Home look forward to the Lifelong Learning Week every year because it is an occasion that offers more events than usual. Every year we try to make sure that there is something of interest for every resident:

- We began this year's LLW with a visit by primary school children from Dravograd. For many of them this was their first visit to an old people's home and the first time they had encountered organised care for old people. We gave a picturesque presentation of the home and they were able to have a friendly chat with the residents. Through this visit we wanted to emphasise the importance of intergenerational connections.
- In conjunction with officers from Dravograd Police Station we held a lecture on Road Safety Precautions and Protection of Personal Property which was attended by many of the residents of the home, particularly the more mobile among them, and by drivers, and people interested in the protection of personal property.
- Ms Andreja Rustja gave a talk on Cambodia, where she had spent almost a month as a teacher in primary school. Her interesting lectures, with slides and a tasting of characteristic dishes of the presented country, is always very popular with our residents.
- Two lectures (A Healthy Lifestyle and Foot Reflex Massage) were aimed at improving the quality of health of our residents and also of relatives and staff.
- In cooperation with Koroški Jeklarji Primary School, the Ravne na Koroškem *folk highschool* organised a clay-modelling workshop where pupils from the school combined their knowledge with mentor Irena Černovšek and our residents worked with occupational therapist Ivica Peruš. We exhibited the products at an event which brought together all the workshop participants. The director of the *folk highschool*, Franc Juričan, and the head teacher of Koroški Jeklarji Primary School, Tatjana Krpač, honoured us with their presence. The cultural programme was looked after by pupils from the above school and the Mežiški Knapi male voice choir.
- We ended the LLW with a performance by the Mixed Choir made up of members of our staff at the review of choirs from social institutions which this year took place in Prevalje.

Marjana Kamnik, Koroška Old People's Home



## INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

### Presentation of a new project

#### **The Value of Work project**

November saw the start of the first activities in connection with the *Value of Work* project which is being run by the *Education and Training Service Centre* from Reykjavik, Iceland. Other partners besides the SIAE are the NIACE from the United Kingdom, *the Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational teachers*, *the Centre for Validation in the City of Malmö* from Sweden and *Synthesis Centre for Research and Education* from Cyprus.

The guiding principle of the project is that in a world of rapid changes and lightning-fast development of the profession we need to exploit all opportunities within whose context learning takes place. Of particular value is learning which takes place 'in parallel' – alongside other activities, since we are constantly forgetting about this type of learning and often fail to acknowledge its true value. This can be non-formal and informal learning.

The *Value of Work* project focuses on the important learning environment in the work process. It proceeds from the assumption that the working environment is at the same time a valuable learning environment where learning takes place at several different layers. We acquire knowledge through non-formal education and training in the organisation in which we work and through the working process itself: we acquire technical professional knowledge and skills and technological know-how, we learn computer programs, foreign languages and acquire 'social skills' such as knowledge on teamwork, management, working in groups, how to reach agreements, and so on. Furthermore, we establish connections at the global level.

In this project we wish to develop methods and tools for assessing and certifying competences acquired at the workplace and thus indirectly open the gateway to education and training to all those who in formal terms have a lower level of education. In this way they will develop their competences and secure their position in the labour market.

The target group consists of employees with lower educational qualifications: in Iceland, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom, these will be workers in the banking sector; in Slovenia and Cyprus we will prepare a transfer of methods and tools to

other sectors. At the same time we will also establish contacts with the banking sector in order to identify their needs. Iceland has a large number of employees in the banking sector who have no formal educational qualifications (unemployment is negligible in Iceland) but who have been performing their work successfully for years thanks to workplace learning. In Slovenia bank employees have relatively high educational qualifications and therefore we do not anticipate needs of this type. Given that we have sufficient time available (the project will run for two years) to choose a sector in which to introduce these methods and tools, we are presently in the process of taking the final decision regarding our target group.

In the initial phase of the project we are in fact looking at the banking sector, but the knowledge and skills that we wish to identify and confirm in employees are mainly more general knowledge of the type needed by every business institution. They include, for example, accounting and administrative activities and all 'social skills' such as communication skills, knowledge of foreign languages and computer skills, development of self-discipline, accuracy in work, and so on.

As the project coordinator, Iceland has assumed the responsibility of dealing with finances and agreements among partners, while we shall pool our resources to prepare catalogues of standards of knowledge and skills for the profiles we wish to check, and the methods and tools for the assessment of this type of knowledge and skills (non-formal, informal). We will carry out testing and a transfer to other sectors. We will also prepare guidance to help advisers when informing candidates and to help advisers and assessors in the implementation of the assessment and validation procedure. We are evaluating our work on an ongoing basis and will also carry out an evaluation at the end of the project. We shall publish the results in all partner countries.

Numerous products will be created within the framework of the project. These include:

- a catalogue of standards of knowledge and skills for less qualified employees in the banking sector (this will be in English at first with subsequent translations into Danish and Icelandic);
- a handbook containing a description and instructions for use of the methods and tools for assessing and validating competences acquired at work in the banking sector. This handbook, which will be published in English, will be translated into the languages of all the partner countries. It will also contain instructions for the transfer of methods and tools to other sectors. It will be aimed at all actors involved in the process of verifying knowledge and skills and will be particularly useful for advisers and assessors.
- a training programme for assessors in all partner countries, with the help of which they will familiarise themselves with the use of the above handbook;
- instructions with information for institutions on how to organise the verification

and validation of competences and suitable training within the institutions themselves;

- instructions with a description of the role of the advisory process and guidance in the verification and validation procedure;
- instructions for trade unions.

All instructions will be available in both printed and electronic form in all five languages.

The project will end with an international conference in Iceland in August 2007.

Nataša Elvira Jelenc ([natasa.elvira.jelenc@acs.si](mailto:natasa.elvira.jelenc@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

