

# novičke

## Spring 2008

*PLYA* – a champion among European social policy programmes \* Golden Apple of Quality for SIAE project \* Analysis of collected data on the range of adult education on offer in Slovenia in the 2007/2008 academic year \* Employee's Basic Skills Development – Guidelines for the Strategy \* Operation of the Guidance Corner in 2006 and 2007 \* Developmental activities in the field of quality of adult education \* Video promotion of learning adults \* Learning is an adventure that can significantly change anyone's life

3-21 SIAE EVENTS

The challenges of adult education guidance work with vulnerable adult target groups \* Introduction of an integrated counselling approach at Doba College of Business Maribor \* Presentation of the employment corner within the Novo mesto Guidance Centre

22-28 SLOVENIAN ADULT EDUCATION SCENE

*Mathematics in Action* – international project concluded in November \* *LLinE* – two opportunities to promote adult education in Slovenia \* Expert discussions on adult literacy in English?! No problem! \* CEDEFOP study visit in Slovenia

29-39 INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION





## PROGRAMME BASIS OF NOVIČKE

Novičke (The News) is an information bulletin with wish to provide individuals and institutions abroad with latest information on adult education and learning in Slovenia. We publish:

- descriptions and presentations of events and activities in adult education;
- reports on development, research and other programmes and projects; information on organisations, their needs,
- plans and activities;
- information on policies and strategies of adult education;
- latest news concerning the administration and legislation of AE;
- data on education programmes;
- opinions, standpoints and suggestions;
- announcements of forthcoming events, workshops, publications, seminars and conferences;
- presentations of new books, articles, learning aids and other novelties on the book market etc.

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

Novičke will be published two times a year in English language and six times a year in Slovenian 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.

Novičke is edited and published by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

In charge of the publication are: Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik MSc, assistant manager for information and promotional work, and Nevenka Kocijančič, editor.

Translation: AMIDAS, inc.

DTP and printed by: Tiskarna Pleško.

The publisher's address: Andragoški center Slovenije, Šmartinska 134a, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia. Phone: +386 1 5842 560, fax: + 386 1 5842 550,

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ISSN 1408-6492 (English edition - printed)

ISSN 1581-3789 (English edition - online)

Edition: 900

The preparation and dissemination of the bulletin Novičke is financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.



## SIAE EVENTS

### **PLYA - a champion among European social policy programmes**

On Tuesday 27 November 2007, the programme of *Project Learning for Young Adults - PLYA* received an award at the European Regional Champions Awards 2007<sup>1</sup>. These awards were given for the first time, and were made by the Committee of the Regions in cooperation with the magazine *The Parliament Regional Review - Shortlist Brochure*, in order to highlight and celebrate the best ideas, innovations and cases of good practices of social policy in the European Union regions.

The celebrations in Brussels therefore featured a presentation of the champions among programmes and projects in the fields of social policy, energy, environmental protection, transport, communications, culture, employment, equal opportunities, innovations and maritime transport, which were thus set up as examples for all regions. The successful proposer of the Slovenian *PLYA programme* for recognition in the field of social policy was *Gorazd Jenko*, then secretary at the Slovenian Government Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy. The award was received by the co-author of the programme and head of training for mentors in the *PLYA programme*, *Natalija Žalec*.

*»This programme is successful owing to the original approaches based on accommodating the actual interests and capacities of the participants. In this programme everyone is directly involved in planning tasks and responsibilities which they take on ... Work in the PLYA programme is founded on project learning, which requires active participation, and this helps young people to recognise their interests and vocational inclinations, which are later reflected for the most part in the participants' inclusion in formal education or through employment.«*

(Quotation from the published passage of the citation for the awarding of the first prizes by the Committee of the Regions and the magazine *The Parliament Regional Review*, *PLYA programme* in the area of social policy for 2007, *Shortlist Brochure*, p. 12)

### **Definition of the PLYA programme and brief history of its development**

*Project Learning for Young Adults - PLYA* is a publicly recognised programme<sup>2</sup> of non-formal education confirmed by the Expert Council for Adult Education, and was formally implemented by order of the Minister for Education and Sport in 1999. It is aimed at young unemployed persons aged 15 to 25 years. It is one of the first develop-

<sup>1</sup> More on the awards at <http://www.regionalreview.eu/>.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://programoteka.acs.si/PDF/PUM.pdf>.

ment projects to be developed by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE). The basic concept of the programme – the concept of project learning conducted in close cooperation with the local environment – was produced back in 1993 (*Natalija Žalec*). After trial runs and an evaluation, the programme was supplemented in 1998/99, especially with regard to the organisation of study and the group dynamic (*Dr Albert Mrgole, Natalija Žalec*).

Now work in the *PLYA programme* is linked to production project learning, and this should help young people in developing the competences they need in employment, to make up their achievement folders (portfolio or e-portfolio) and their personal education plan, which makes it easier for young people to plan their studies, the recording and demonstrating of learning achievements and learning experiences. The mentors must be specially trained for work in the *PLYA programme*. Training (200 hours) is provided by the SIAE, which has also planned the programme.

### **Primary purpose of programme and objectives**

The programme was planned out with the aim of helping young persons without an education, vocation or employment to overcome their social isolation and encourage them to continue with their education, and where this is not possible, to encourage them to acquire skills that ease the path to employment. With the help of mentors, young people also tackle the difficulties that contributed to them dropping out of education (family relations, poor self-image, dependency, social pressures etc.). The primary objectives of the programme are: to encourage personal growth, overcome social exclusion, facilitate general education and the formation of a vocational, social and cultural identity. Inclusion in the programme usually lasts one year. During this time young persons become familiar with various occupations and education courses, while at the same time they discover their own interests through project work. The young people also present the fruits of their project work to the public – many of them for the first time in a positive light, and in this way they strengthen the feeling of their own worth, capacity and self-image as a whole.

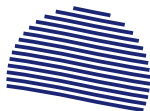
The programme is free. Participants enrol after consultation with a *PLYA* mentor or after an interview with experts from other institutions (advisers from the Employment Service, school counsellors, social workers from the social work centres). Many also come on the recommendation of their peers or are steered to the programme by their parents. Participation in the programme is voluntary. Inclusion in the programme can last from three months to one year. The length of the individual involvement depends on the needs of the participant or on how the participant achieves the set goals. Unemployed persons also have rights in line with the contract they sign with the Employment Service. In any event, 75% of the funds necessary for providing the programme are provided by the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES). In the 2006/2007 academic year a total of 1.03 million euros were allocated for education under this programme, and in addition to this four *PLYA* groups were financed from the European Social Funds, although upon expiry

of their contracts (they lost funding) they had to leave the programme. *In 2007 the PLYA programme was provided by eight organisations.* For the unimpeded functioning of the programme, the local communities ought to contribute their share, and apart from this the programme should be given an equal balance of representation in all regions.

## Programme results

After the evaluation study entitled *Evaluation of the socially integrative role of the Project Learning for Young Adults programme*<sup>3</sup>, which was performed for the MES in 2000–2002 by the Faculty of Arts, it was shown that two thirds of participants fulfilled the set objectives of the programme: 40.4% of them within one year or a little later continued their education, and 23.7% found fixed-term or permanent employment. Approximately 21% remain unemployed, and for 7% of participants no further data could be obtained. The study showed that the effects of the programme are long-lasting. It covered 80% of all young people involved in the programme since 1998. As many as two thirds of those surveyed expressed the desire or intention to continue education (33% full-time, 33% alongside work).

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## Golden Apple of Quality for SIAE project

On 28 November 2007 this year's awards were given for quality in mobility projects carried out in 2005. Awards are given in three categories: pupils, students and young workers, and mentors and language mentors. The criteria of quality for mobility projects are: justification of the project, results of the project, management and permanence of the project. Apples of Quality were awarded by *Majda Širok MA*, director of the Centre for Mobility and European Programmes of Education and Training in Slovenia – CMEPIUS, and *Dr Alenka Šverc*, state secretary at the Ministry of Education and Sport.

In the **pupils** category awards were received by:

- pupils of the **Srečko Kosovel Secondary School in Sežana**, with their coordinator *Suzana Skočir*, for the project *Together we're on horseback* (Golden Apple of Quality);
- pupils of the **Celje Secondary Professional and Vocational School**, with their coordinator *Marija Pristovnik*, for the project *Relationship between client and hair-dresser or beautician* (Silver Apple of Quality);

<sup>3</sup> Andreja Dobrovojc et al.: *Evalvacija socialnointegracijske vloge programa Projektno učenje za mlajše odrasle*. Ljubljana: Scientific Institute of the Faculty of Arts, 2003

- pupils of the **Secondary Technical Professions School in Šiška**, with their coordinator *Darinka Martinčič Zalokar*, for the project *Alternative energy sources* (Bronze Apple of Quality).

In the category of **students/young workers** awards were given to:

- students and young graduates of the **University of Maribor**, with their coordinator *Anita Kodba*, for the projects *Euroskills 3* and *Euroskills 3 for students 2* (Golden Apple of Quality);
- students of the **Faculty of Social Work at the University of Ljubljana**, with their coordinator *Dr Darja Zaviršek*, for the project *Adapting to the European system of education – international doctoral studies in social work* (Silver Apple of Quality);
- students of the **Professional Catering and Tourism College in Maribor**, with their coordinator *Tanja Lešnik Štuhec MA*, for the project *Hand in hand* (Bronze prize).

In the category **mentor/mentor of language**, apples of quality were received by:

- **The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE)** for the project *Self-evaluation and quality in vocational and professional adult education* (Golden Apple of Quality);

The project was coordinated by *Tanja Možina MA*, and involved the collaboration of 20 members of groups for quality from secondary schools, folk high schools and private education organisations, who underwent training in Finland. The citation reads »*the project met the basic criteria of quality in mobility programmes, moreover mobility was very well included in the strategy of organisation, while organisation was effectively linked to background support on the local and regional level. Good provision had been made for promotion of the project, while tools had also been made for measuring quality, which ensure the permanence and development of the project.*«

- students of the **Professional Catering and Tourism College in Maribor**, with their coordinator *Tanja Lešnik Štuhec MA*, for the project *Beer thinkers* (Silver Apple of Quality);
- teachers of the **Secondary Vocational and Professional School of Bežigrad**, with their coordinator *Nikolaj Lipič*, for the project *Training teachers in the car mechanic programme* (Bronze).

At the same ceremony European charters of quality were awarded for the first time for the best decentralised projects in the *Comenius*, *Grundtvig* and *Erasmus programmes*. The charters were presented by the state secretary at the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, *Dr Dušan Lesjak*.

### **The SIAE project that earned gold**

The project *Self-evaluation and quality in vocational and professional adult education* involved Slovenia and Finland as part of the *Leonardo da Vinci Mobility programme*. The

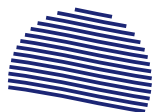
project manager was the SIAE, and the Finnish partner and host was Salpaus Further Education. Participants came from Slovenian educational organisations providing programmes for adults and were (in 2003-2004) involved in the project *Offering Quality Education to Adults - OQE*. This project also generated the objectives of the study visit. The primary goal was for the group of 20 participants, who perform self-evaluation in their own organisations, to be able to study the Finnish approach to ensuring quality and to obtain international experience to implement self-evaluation procedures.

The set exchange targets were successfully achieved:

- participants were familiarised with the concepts, approaches and priority areas of assessing and developing the quality of vocational and professional adult education in Finland;
- they learned about the allocation of responsibility held by various institutions on the national and local level in assessing and developing quality, and about established self-evaluation models;
- they were familiarised with the content and methods of training professional workers who perform self-evaluation, as well as with the concept of national evaluations of the education system and motivational approaches used to promote investment in quality.

They were able to determine that in Finland, too, education organisations encounter difficulties in the internal and external assessment of quality, and learned how these difficulties are overcome. All of this now enables them to operate with greater quality and self-confidence in their home bases. They have also been encouraged to seek further intercultural contacts and to exchange experiences with related organisations abroad.

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## **Analysis of collected data on the range of adult education on offer in Slovenia in the 2007/2008 academic year**

The project *Review of adult education on offer for the academic year 2007/2008 (Review)* has been successfully concluded. The response of providers for a presentation of educational services on offer in the *Review* (<http://pregled.acs.si/> – only in Slovenian) was again large, which points to the interest of providers in joint promotion of their educational services and thereby in better provision of information to the general public and professional circles regarding adult education. At the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) we strive each year to draw in as many different providers as possible,

with the aim of presenting in one place the fullest possible overview of adult education and learning services on the national level. The diverse range of providers and education programmes presented in the *Review* draws together different target groups who require different types of education. Some wish to obtain a higher level of formal education, others wish to pursue education for work needs, while many are just happy to learn, desiring perhaps company with their peers, or by learning they can meet indirectly through visits to libraries, galleries etc. And the more there are various forms of learning organised, the more people this draws. The Review is one of the rare sources of condensed information on adult education and learning on offer at the national level, and we are even one of the rare European countries to have such a source.

This academic year the online *Review* presents 319 adult education providers from across Slovenia. The diverse providers are dominated by private organisations, private schools, folk high schools and secondary schools, while other providers also present their education services - institutes, universities of the third age, education centres and education departments in companies, societies and federations, museums and galleries, libraries and others. Information is available on 6,046 programmes of the most diverse type and content. The courses on offer, which cover both publicly valid courses and courses with no public recognition (representing more than two thirds of courses), are dominated by courses of general non-formal education (70.3%). This kind of education frequently overlaps with professional training and enhancement, while in terms of content it is widely spread and extends into the most diverse fields of human endeavour and interest (learning foreign languages, computing, art and culture, communication, hand crafting, health, environmental protection, farming and so forth). A third of the education courses on offer are formal education courses (16.5%) and programmes of training and enhancement for work (13%).

The extensive range of courses cover diverse educational content in numerous fields. Although almost half the entire range on offer covers content in the areas of learning foreign languages and computing (there is greatest demand for these courses), the *Review* also presents the rich content on offer in different fields, mainly in personal development, mechanical engineering and metal working, management and administration, economics and transport services.

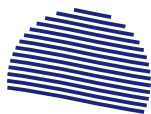
Unfortunately every year we learn once again that the education on offer to adults is highly centralised, and that the possibilities for adult education outside the central part of the country are much more meagre. In comparing individual regions we should not forget of course that the supply and demand for adult education are influenced by the size and development of the individual region. This improves through investment in the people who live there, and of course adult learning and education contribute to this. For this very reason, the promotion of lifelong learning and the provision of adult education are so important.



Greater involvement of adults in education is also spurred significantly by the possibility of education and learning in the local environment. According to the data collected in the *Review*, providers operate in 58 municipalities across Slovenia, which is just under a quarter of all the municipalities in Slovenia.

In the future, too, we will strive to present an even fuller range of adult education and learning services on offer throughout Slovenia. In preparing the *Review* in the new year we are planning a number of new features that will encourage providers to publish more information and at the same time draw in the widest circle of people and professionals to seek appropriate information for education and learning. We will modernise the entire process of registration for providers via the internet, which will take place this year in April and May, so data will be published earlier than in previous years – the first publication of the *Review* for the new academic year is being planned for June, and we will also pay special attention to promotion. To this end we will issue small promotional materials and will ensure more effective media promotion.

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## **Employee's Basic Skills Development – Guidelines for the Strategy**

In December last year the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education compiled and issued a new publication entitled *Employee's Basic Skills Development – Guidelines for the Strategy (the Guidelines)*, with which we are seeking to provide an expert basis and to present systemic and other possibilities for increasing access to education and training for the most educationally underprivileged employees. It is a known fact that Slovenia ranks among those countries where people encounter the problem of access to the development of basic skills, including literacy at work. This is indicated by results and analyses of data on trends in the labour market, on the structural characteristics of the active population, especially of employees, and data on individual achievements of literacy and opportunities to maintain and improve individual achievements in literacy at the workplace. The problem is realised not just by educators and researchers, but also by the social partners, since the invitation met a friendly response from the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MLFSA), the unions and the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs *Marjeta Cotman* refers to labour market analyses in stressing that »in the Slovenian labour market segments of employees are

*created with characteristics that do not offer sufficient potential for further development, maintenance and enhancement of basic skills. These characteristics relate also to the area of workplace literacy. In order to move beyond the current practice – investment primarily in skills and abilities of the most educated ones in companies – it is very important to have the coordinated functioning of the government and social partners in creating an environment where low-qualified and otherwise underprivileged employees can also develop their basic skills. For this reason the recurring theme in the Guidelines is the principle that economic growth can be achieved only if investment in the development of knowledge is fairly distributed among all employee groups.«*

*»Education and training of all employees are critical factors for maintaining the social model of development in Slovenia. This is especially true of employees who have not undergone any education or training in a long time and who generally work in jobs that afford them neither learning nor promotion to more challenging positions. Frequently their employment is also under threat, owing to the closing or changing of production and the organisation of work ... « says Dušan Semolič, president of the Federation of Free Unions of Slovenia, in his foreword to the publication, and he adds that the Guidelines emphasise the role of the unions, which now have the opportunity to translate these declarative commitments into actions. »By making the rights and duties of workers and employers clearly tangible and including them in collective agreements for the individual branch and individual worker, the unions have the possibility of exercising these rights in practice. Yet an even more important task which the unions have with the implementation of the Guidelines is to create among union members and all employees an appropriate atmosphere for education and training, to build a mentality that permanent education, enhancement and training is an essential condition for professional and personal development and each individual's career, and that the individual must also contribute to this himself,« concludes Dušan Semolič.*

The draft Guidelines were prepared on the basis of the findings of a research project *The workplace as a factor of development for basic skills* (Ivančič, 2004<sup>1</sup>), which was cofinanced by the MLFSA and the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES). The project made a special analysis of data on employees, their achievements in the area of literacy, the opportunities they have in jobs to maintain and develop literacy and the impact on their competitiveness in the labour market from international research on adult literacy<sup>2</sup>. In 2007 the SIAE supplemented the Guidelines and prepared them for publication.

The Guidelines comprise two sections:

- The **Principles** present the reasons and substantiation for preparing the Guidelines (the importance of investing in raising basic employee skills, the meas-

<sup>1</sup> Angela Ivančič: Pismenost na delovnem mestu (Literacy in the workplace). In: Andragoška spoznanja, 10 : 3 (2004) 6-18.

<sup>2</sup> Human Development Report: Slovenia 2000-2001. Ljubljana : Office for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development ; (New York) : United Nations Development Programme, 2001.

ures of certain countries in this area) and define the terms used for basic skills. Quantitative and qualitative indicators are used to demonstrate the educational structure of the economically active population and the needs of employers for workers, the issue of employee literacy in Slovenia, their achievements in literacy, their opportunities for the use of reading, writing and arithmetic at the workplace and investment in continuing education and training. There is a special presentation of measures to date in the development of literacy in Slovenia.

- The **Proposed Guidelines** comprise the goals, the formal legal basis, target groups, institutions, procedures and competences. The following are defined as priority target groups: unqualified and semi-qualified workers in primary activities, construction and manufacturing and employees in qualified agricultural, industrial and craft occupations. Employees over 40 are given priority treatment. Measures to develop literacy are categorised into five fields: promotion, strategies and approaches for recognising shortfalls, improving access, development and implementation of programmes and activities to eliminate shortfalls, incentives for investment in the development of basic skills and literacy at the workplace for individuals and companies. The Proposed *Guidelines* also gives recommendations for financing the development of basic employee skills and determines the indicators for monitoring and evaluating achievement of the *Guidelines* goals. The indicators are categorised into two groups: indicators of the participation of employees in programmes to raise the level of literacy and measures/incentives from employers and the government to develop employee literacy.

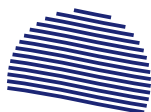
Through *the Guidelines* the Slovenian adult education profession is contributing to the fulfilment of European recommendations for the development of key competences, for ensuring fairness and increasing access to education for educationally and otherwise underprivileged groups of adults.

We might conclude with the words of Samo Hribar Milič, director-general of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce: *»Accelerated investment in knowledge and new competences for people is essential, since Slovenia is still generating the major portion of its gross domestic product through products and services with low added value,«* while he goes on to add that *»we must also pay attention to the results of measurements indicating that in terms of literacy achievements Slovenia is one of the worst of the developed countries. We must take these results as a final warning that we need not just a new strategy, but also a concrete and fastest possible action plan which we will want and know how to implement. Here the guidelines are a good basis, and the proposed measures, orientated towards individual groups, the proposed incentives and sources of funding can enable rapid fulfilment. Especially important are access to programmes and their promotion – both among employees and employers. Here there is a very important part played by the social partners, the unions and employers, who must assume responsibili-*

ty for programmes in Slovenia being developed and formulated in line with market needs and with Slovenia's development ambitions.«

Preparation and publishing of *the Guidelines* was made financially possible by the MES and the European Social Fund.

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## **Operation of the Guidance Corner in 2006 and 2007**

The Guidance Corner on the website of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) has been operating since 1999 as one of the methods of getting the largest possible circle of people to access information on learning and education. With the growing use of the internet, each year there is also a growing number of questions in the Guidance Corner, with the exception being 2007, when for the first time the number of questions was lower than the previous year. Below we give the data for 2006 and 2007.

The Guidance Corner ([http://www.acs.si/svetovalni\\_koticek](http://www.acs.si/svetovalni_koticek) – only in Slovenian) has two sections, each with three possibilities. In the section *Individuals* the options are: *How to get an education or a certificate or degree*, *Various possibilities for learning* and *Other*. The other section, *Institutions*, comprises the options: *System and organisation of adult education*, *Preparation and implementation of adult education* and *Other*.

In 2006 there was a total of 319 questions posed, the highest number to date. In 2007 there were 41 questions less than in 2006, although this is still many more than in 2005, when 152 questions were posed.

In 2007 the majority of questions were posed in the section *Individuals*, with a total of 273, which is a full 98% of all questions. This proportion is the same as in 2006, when there were 314 questions. Most questions from clients relate to the first possibility – *How to get an education or How to get a certificate or degree*. In 2007 clients asked 169 and in 2006 218 questions. In the option *Other*, a total of 79 questions were asked in 2006 and 61 in 2007. In the option *Various possibilities for learning*, clients asked 17 questions in 2006 and 22 questions a year later.

No information of any kind is requested from clients. Characteristics such as region, gender, age, education level and status are determined only if they are evident from

the question, so these data are incomplete. For this reason the lowest proportion in the category *Unknown* relates to gender, which is easiest to determine. In 2006 most questions were asked by women, 237 questions or 74%, and in 2007 they asked 219 questions, which was an increase of 5% in the proportion. By age clients were dominated by young persons under 30 in 2006, with a total of 84. The same was true of last year, when there were 74, which in percentage terms is an identical proportion in both years, at just over a quarter of all clients.

The highest number of clients in 2007 who gave their completed level of education had finished secondary professional or technical school - there were 37 of them in 2007 (13%). A year earlier the proportion was also 13% with completed secondary professional or technical education (42 out of 319 clients), while there was a slightly higher proportion of clients who had completed primary school, 49 persons or 15%.

By content the Guidance Corner is dominated by questions in the area of psychology, education and adult education - there were 93 such questions, or 33%, in 2007, and 90 or 28% in 2006. These are followed by questions on general education - representing around a fifth of all questions (2006 - 20%, 2007 - 21%), and in both years questions relating to healthcare activities are third. There were almost twice as many such questions in 2007 than in 2006 (2006 - 6%, 2007 - 11%).

Field	2006		2007	
	No.	%	No.	%
Psychology, education, adult education	90	28.21	93	33.45
General education	64	20.06	59	21.22
Healthcare activities	19	5.96	31	11.15
Languages	14	4.39	10	3.6
Other	132	41.38	85	30.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>100</b>

*Table: Most frequent fields of questions in the Guidance Corner, 2006 and 2007*

Clients are most frequently interested in information on higher education and university courses (2006 - 90 questions, 2007 - 56 questions), the possibilities for retraining (2006 - 19, 2007 - 29), information on passing the school-leaving exam (2006 - 17, 2007 - 23) and on the possibilities for professional enhancement in education, i.e. pedagogical and adult education, supplementary qualifications in defectology etc. (2006 - 10 questions, 2007 - 17 questions).

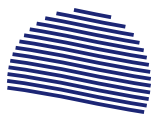
The above indicates that questions are generally tied in content to education and learning, with fewer questions in other areas. Moreover analysis shows that certain questi-

ons are more frequently repeated, so in 2007 we took a step forward and started preparing a draft of the most frequently asked questions and answers. Although we strive to respond in the shortest possible time, with FAQs clients will not need to wait for an answer, but can find one among the previously prepared responses.

We should point out something observed for several years now, that information is being sought less and less at the Guidance Corner by institutions or professionals on behalf of individual institutions. Experience indicates that they prefer to call by telephone or write e-mails, or to come personally for an interview with professional staff at the SIAE. For the further operation of the Guidance Corner we are therefore planning a change to the organisation by thematic groups. Moreover the SIAE website already offers to any interested party the section *Ask us*, in which questions can be asked by individuals or professionals on behalf of their organisations.

We may therefore conclude that the number of questions in the Guidance Corner indicates the popularity of this method of seeking information, since the number of questions is growing each year (2007 is the exception). In any event the Guidance Corner on the SIAE website is effectively supplementing the existing options for guidance, where adults and young persons can obtain information and advice on various possibilities for learning and education (adult education guidance centres, Vocational Information and Guidance Centres and so forth). Apart from providing requested information to Corner visitors, in more complex cases, or where the question is not related to education and learning, we also refer visitors to the relevant institution or to additional sources of information, which in the last two years has been offered with increasing fullness and quality by various websites and web portals.

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## **Developmental activities in the field of quality of adult education**

This article presents some of the activities of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education in the field of quality of adult education. In the last few years, we have placed the greatest emphasis on building approaches which could be of assistance when, by using the method of self-evaluation in educational organisations, we address the assessment process and develop the quality of our work. These activities were performed in cooperation with members from groups concerned with the quality of educational organisations offering adult education. Within the framework of the project *Of-*

fering Quality Education to Adults - OQEA (<http://poki.acs.si/en/>), we have developed a self-evaluation model for adult education. Although the project has not been officially active at the national level this year, we are thrilled to hear that the activities promoted by the project are nevertheless active in practice. Moreover, with the help of dedicated individuals and groups, such activities have found a permanent position in many educational organisations. Therefore, we estimate that in 2009, with financial support from the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia, as well as the European Social Fund, new educational organisations will be included in the project.

As one of external incentives for a more substantial investment in the quality of education for adults, in 2006 we developed an instrument called *Awards of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education for outstanding efforts in the development of quality in adult education*.

These awards are aimed at organisations which offer adult education, as well as individuals, for their outstanding achievements and dedication to the development of quality adult education (<http://poki.acs.si/en/awards/>). The first awards were given in 2007, and we are organising another tender for this year, thus inviting educational organisations to apply and compete for recognition of their work. In Slovenia, there are a number of educational organisations and individuals known for their efforts in this area. We would very much like to encourage these organisations and individuals to apply. We believe it would be appropriate for their activities to become more widely prominent. In doing so, they would represent models of good practice to others, who would ideally then strive to follow in their footsteps.

We would also like to point out one of the more extensive activities which the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education carried out in 2007. We performed extensive empirical research within the framework of a developmental task called *Professional Basis for Determining National Standards and Quality Indicators in Adult Education*. With this, we addressed the complicated question of the needs and appropriate methods of external quality evaluations of educational organisations, which would then be used for upgrading the already successfully approaches based on methods of self-evaluation. These are important questions to ask, i.e. about whether we actually need such external quality evaluations at all. And if we do, who is going to perform them? For what purposes would the results of such external quality evaluations be used? What quality indicators should be the subject of external quality evaluations? Opinions concerning the above questions were collected in a sample of 62 educational organisations currently offering secondary school professional education programmes, as well as professional adult education which follows publicly validated educational programs. The survey included headmasters/directors, leaders of adult education, teachers and participants.



So far, we have analysed the data obtained. In addition, we have been preparing a publication through which we wish to inform the general public of the viewpoints included in the research. In January 2008, we added to the viewpoints of practitioners in educational organisations the opinions of members from a number of other interest groups (professionals from the quality sector and other sciences, employers, associations from the adult education sector, etc.) We formed four focus groups for this purpose. The discussions showed that the problematic of external evaluation in the field of adult education is very lively and topical, but above all that this field contains many open questions, different viewpoints and interests. The rich collection of opinions will be included in our report, to be published on our Internet site at <http://poki.acs.si/koticek/dokumenti/>. You can also find various documents in Slovene and English on the site.

The last of the new developmental activities connected to the external evaluation of quality and in which the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education started participating this year is related to using the Peer Review methodology for evaluation and development of quality. In April 2008, we participated in our first partners' meeting within the project *Spreading the Use of the Peer Review Method II*, held by the Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung (OIBF) from Austria. The basic goal of the project is to promote Peer Review in Member States of the European Union as an effective method for quality assessment in all types of education.

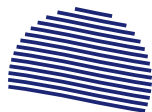
With this method, persons 'coming from the outside' (i.e. not employed in an educational institution but performing an equal or similar professional role in an educational organisation) assess the quality of certain operational aspects of an educational organisation on the basis of a mutually agreed procedure, a selected procedure or a teacher, all with the purpose of improving the quality of work through feedback with a sort of 'external eye'.

The project includes the following partner countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey and the United Kingdom/Scotland. In Slovenia, the method is relatively well known in the higher education sector, whereas in other types of education implementation is only just beginning. So far, we have not found a suitable Slovenian term for this method. We have come across several possible translations, which would then mean 'colleague evaluation', 'colleague overview', 'cooperation evaluation', etc. It is certain that one of the most important roles for all of us is to work in specific professional fields, but we also have to strive to find suitable terminology in the Slovene language, else we risk using foreign words excessively, which is not beneficial from the perspective of preserving and nurturing our own language. Therefore, one of the challenges in implementing this method in the Slovene environment is also finding suitable professional terminology.



We agreed at the meeting that we would use the peer review method as a pilot method in the process of assessment and quality development in the guidance centres for adults. We will use it as an external element which will, however, always be included in the self-evaluation process performed by professionals in guidance centres.

Tanja Možina MA ([tanja.mozina@acs.si](mailto:tanja.mozina@acs.si)), SIAE



## **Video promotion of learning adults**

This year we do not yet have any new recipients of SIAE awards for exceptional learning and professional achievements in adult learning in Slovenia, nor do we have any new video portraits made as presentations of good practices. Nevertheless we have set our sights on a very broad video promotion. For domestic and international promotion we have selected 12 video portraits featuring examples of good practices among learning adults. We have entitled the collection *Learning – the door to a world of new opportunities*. We have translated the text, put English subtitles on the video portraits and furnished them with the standard corporate image of the Lifelong Learning Week – LLW. Five video portraits of young adults from this collection will be presented at the international conference *Jobs for Youth – Prosperity for All*, which the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs has organised as part of the programme of Slovenia's Presidency of the European Union, taking place on 24 and 25 April 2008.

## **Campaign *Role models attract***

This campaign has been planned as a video promotion of selected content in the area of the lifelong learning culture. The thematic video publications are supplemented promotionally and in adult education terms by video compilations based on the archive of video portraits of recipients of awards from previous years. The concept was formulated last year, and this year we have made up the production plan and screenplay. We will supplement the content of the video publications, and will also print up didactic and promotional folders which will accompany the video publications, and we will be arranging presentations in selected target groups.

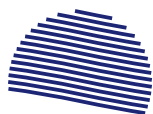
Last year the first video publication was issued in the collection *Role models attract, By learning to equal opportunities for all*, and this was arranged to coincide with the *European Year of Equal Opportunities*. The video presents examples of good practices among learning persons with disability, the chronically ill, persons with learning

difficulties, older adults, foster families and others who through learning have trodden the path to a better quality life.

A special cycle of three videos entitled *Towards our goals*, which is presented in more detail in the next article, has been planned as a didactic aid for adult counselors, mentors, educators and others who can help adults in any point of planning their vocational or career path (subheadings: *Early period of career, Middle period of career, Mature period of career*).

The video *Riches in diversity* is coordinated with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Through three substantive points of emphasis (subheadings: *Learning – the path to oneself and door to the world, People from the East and Self-image of the Slovenians and willingness for dialogue*) we wish to promote certain key competences that are essential for quality intercultural communication, as well as openness, respect of difference and a positive self-image as the cornerstones of quality coexistence in the modern, multicultural world.

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## **Learning is an adventure that can significantly change anyone's life**

This year we will be supplementing the professional collection of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) with a comprehensive cycle of three educational video productions entitled *Towards our goals*, which were produced as part of the promotional campaign *Role models attract*. We have used this title to name a new SIAE project which is being financially supported by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The purpose of the campaign is to use the examples of successful individuals to inspire towards lifelong learning those people who feel less successful or excluded or hindered.

With the help of convincing personal stories, in these videos we focus on certain fundamental features of developing individual careers. In each educational production we present the personal stories of successful individuals who through their will, constant learning and original solutions have developed their careers despite numerous unfavourable circumstances. These videos, which have an animational and educational character, seek to inform and address as well as to encourage people to action through role models. They are presented, linked together and commented on by an expert in career development.

The set of videos can be an effective aid for teachers and adult educators, especially when they wish to advise adults who have run up against major obstacles in their career paths. The educational videos are part of a didactic set comprising a booklet with the main summaries and certain basic guidelines for use, both for learners and for educators. The booklet is designed so that it can also serve as handy didactic material suitable for various users. The DVDs are technically produced so that users can choose various options – they can view just an individual personal story, or they can select a professionally guided tour through an individual career period.

The videos are set out in three parts, although in context they form a whole and present the entire span of the career, from entry to retirement. They are also useful both for self-education and for work in groups, for instance for school pupils, young adults thinking about their future career, and also individuals in their middle or mature years who are analysing the career paths they have already taken, planning changes and thinking about new, different challenges.

In the first educational video, *Early period of career*, we present in some detail what can be done with the help of lifelong learning, when young people encounter obstacles in the early period of their careers, that is, the time spanning approximately the first five years of their working experience. In the second educational video, *Middle period of career*, we also show how it is possible through lifelong learning and appropriate activity to master unexpected requirements or obstacles in the middle, most dynamic period of one's career, when people already have around five to twenty years of working experience. The third educational video, *Mature period of career*, concludes our consideration of the challenging possibilities for career development, which are relevant even when one's working powers appear to be sagging. We present good examples of individuals and groups who have spent the mature or late periods of their careers – we place this at between 20 and 40 years of working experience – dynamically and fully, and we also show how the period of retirement can be seen as a time of new quality in life.

For ten years now the SIAE has been making awards to individuals and groups and institutions for exceptional success in learning. In the videos we have selected and presented several examples of the personal stories of award winners, which reveal instructively what can actually be done to change direction and achieve satisfaction in one's career path. The life stories of some award winners that are presented, are good examples of learning associated with major changes in career. We showcase personal experiences that speak directly in a universal language. Taking account of the characteristics of the individual period of career is essential for effective career development.

## **Content of the videos**

Being noticed, being successful in your career – these are the desires of every novice entering the world of work. The early period, the first of three main career periods,

covers approximately the first five years of working experience. This period is marked by the struggle for existence and the testing of various possibilities, learning the unwritten rules in interpersonal relationships within an organisation and the increasingly clear awareness of which job the individual would prefer to do.

In the middle period of career, that is in the most dynamic period of the career path, it is very important how individuals find themselves in between the expectations of others and their own plans. This is the period when people achieve higher and more demanding personal career goals. After the initial search for an appropriate position and the acquisition of professional skills comes the development of a period of lively experimentation and a diverse range of activities. The individual gradually becomes a master at the work or profession he performs. Yet this can also be a period of many dilemmas, unexpected challenges and the concentration of demands which can simply overwhelm the individual. Experts have determined that in this period it is extremely important to have a feeling of success, which is closely connected to individual satisfaction regarding career development. Individuals with a solid and positive image of themselves have a significantly greater chance of keeping their jobs or securing a new one. The conditions for a successful career are adequate prospects for development and satisfaction with one's own position. In the middle period of one's career this is very important for employability, since this is the period when workers try out different employments in line with their goals, and in this way build their own careers.

Even in the mature period of one's career it makes sense to plan changes and at the same time, while the career is winding down, to think about the challenges of active ageing after retirement. The examples of individuals and groups who have lived this period in their careers dynamically and to the full, indicate that that the need to learn new roles, the setting of different goals and facing up to changes never stop. The mature period can be a favourable time for an entirely new career development, when by all appearances one's working powers are in decline, but rich experiences can be an effective substitute for reduced capacity. This requires concerted effort to overcome with quality the gradual and increasingly clear concern of the mature career period: how to maintain one's identity and self-respect later, after retirement, without having the role of a fully employed person. This aspect of further career development is one of the hardest, and requires consideration of the plans and picture of one's own role after retirement. This is closely connected to the major changes in conceptualising the third age, and especially the importance of active ageing in the past decade. The individual needs to prepare for this period earlier, before retirement.

### **Special attention to those who need new stimulus**

Through the educational videos *Towards our goals* we are seeking to promote life-long learning, which knows no rules or boundaries. This is needed especially when individuals run up against very difficult and unexpected obstacles.

We should close with the thoughts of *Olga Oserban*, who presents her life story in the second video: *»I always wanted to be a shopkeeper, but I wasn't able. First of all I had to go straight into a job, because there were a lot of children at home. Later I got married ... I wanted to get more education, but something else always came up.«* Her daughter describes the change that was brought about by learning and education: *»I was very proud of my mother for enrolling at school. Because I believe this is really a huge achievement to enrol again in secondary school after so many years of being away from full-time education. I saw how her self-confidence was growing, and how she was responding differently to her life situation. I hope that she keeps going on this path, and that she achieves things that make her proud.«*

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external associate of SIAE



## SLOVENIAN ADULT EDUCATION SCENE

### **The challenges of adult education guidance work with vulnerable adult target groups**

In 2007 under the leadership of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, intensive preparation work was pursued on the *model of assessing and developing quality in guidance centres*. Advisers from the adult education guidance centres devoted considerable attention to the quality project at working meetings and other educational sessions organised by the SIAE with the financial support of the Ministry of Education and Sport and the European Social Fund.

Ever since their founding, we have been evaluating the guidance centres and self-evaluating the work done, and in this way we have been continuously identifying the most important target groups of adults who in individual local environments are seeking guidance support in the centres. We were afforded an even more accurate insight into the description of target groups at the beginning of the 2003/2004 academic year by the computer application for monitoring the work of guidance centres and the even more painstaking collection of the personal data of guidance recipients, which is in compliance with the Personal Data Protection Act. With the preparation of a special quality model for guidance centres, in relation to the indicator *“results”* we could no longer avoid a *redefining* of target groups, to which we must devote special attention. A simplified response to this question would be that this is of course those groups of adults who have harder access to education and learning or require greater support and assistance in education and learning. Here, however, each guidance centre would have to answer the fundamental question of which target groups of adults in the local environment are those that most need such guidance help.

#### **Diversity and extent of vulnerable target groups**

With the common establishing of criteria and indicators of quality in guidance centres, an interesting debate has flared up over the share that should be held by more vulnerable clients, among whom we rank immigrants, refugees, Roma, special needs adults and also less educated older employees, young adults without vocational qualifications and so forth. Indeed up until this moment, *through the principle of accessibility* as one of the six fundamental principles of operation, we have promoted the provision of information and guidance activities for *all* adults, in other words regardless of age, gender, education, employment status and so forth. By establishing norms for work with the more vulnerable we face the very challenging task of how to attract and

motivate them, how to help them opt for education or learning and consequently for a correspondingly more active involvement in society.

The Maribor Adult Education Institute – Folk High School has already encountered education and guidance for more vulnerable persons in the broadest sense of the word, through the projects *Maribor Guidance Centre*, *Primary School for Adults*, *Project Learning for Young Adults – PLYA*, two variants of the programmes *Training for Life Success* (Beremo in pišemo skupaj and *Moj korak* – family literacy and literacy for special needs adults) and international projects. In this we established previous contacts with the social work centre, employment service, youth centre, the deaf society, the prison, various mental health associations, two Roma societies, the institute for rehabilitation and also with primary schools which educate children from immigrant families, foreigners, Roma and so forth. As part of the rich international cooperation we established contacts with distinguished organisations that are also dealing with individual vulnerable target groups. We cooperated with the Marburg Office for Integration, the Vienna association of Turkish parents VTEO and the British multicultural foundation EMF, in the project *VIP-School*, in which we helped immigrant families with small children to integrate into the local environment. We have been collaborating for several years with Atempo of Graz in projects that enable easier employment for people with special needs.

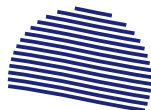
In the model of quality assessment and development in guidance centres we recorded that each guidance centre should include at least a 20% proportion of *more vulnerable clients* in their treatment. Before establishing this indicator, each guidance centre performed a descriptive analysis of the last three academic years, and this derived from descriptions of guidance services in the computer application for monitoring work. Data for the Maribor guidance centre showed that the proportion of more vulnerable people had risen from year to year from around 15% up to 19%. More concerted work with more vulnerable people and targeted promotion will significantly increase this proportion, since in the future we will encounter groups that have not yet been reached by the activities of the guidance centres (such as illicit drug addicts; persons with mental health problems; persons in post-penal treatment; persons underprivileged owing to poor literacy and so forth).

## **The way forward**

The development of guidance centres in Slovenia and the career development of advisers as the key providers of adult education guidance work will in future bring differences in the special qualifications and specific knowledge required for work with individual (sub)groups of more vulnerable target groups. This brings to the fore once again the urgent need and importance of enhanced partner cooperation, since guidance work with more vulnerable persons increasingly involves, alongside the settling of the

individual's status issues, seeking financial sources for education and learning and formulating specific assistance for a more comprehensive solution to the client's 'problem'.

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## **Introduction of an integrated counselling approach at Doba College of Business Maribor**

The Doba College of Business Maribor operates a counselling Centre within which we have already been offering students counselling for successful studies, career counselling and financial advice. In January 2008 we expanded our services to include psychological counselling for students.

We provide part-time studies and distance learning. In terms of organisation and scope, courses are adjusted to students who are employed. Our students are therefore primarily adults who have to a large extent already formed their personal and professional identity. They encounter the challenges brought by renewed involvement in the education process, and the associated changes in their private lives. The decision to study indeed brings into their lives changes in family life and relations with partners, and also signals changes in the working environment and in the financial area.

At Doba College of Business Maribor we have adapted successful models of guidance from acclaimed European academies for our students, who are part-time students studying for the most part by distance learning. We realise, in fact, that the personal satisfaction of our students is a precondition for successful and creative studies. By offering a variety of counselling services we wish to create for our students the optimal conditions for effective study, and to contribute to their professional and personal growth and to the development of their careers.

We verified the needs of our students for various counselling services in a survey that asked what kind of guidance services they wanted. The results of the survey show that students want the chance to have counselling sessions that might ease their burden in the event of personal stress, offer support in resolving difficulties, and promote the development of self-respect and personal growth. They also expressed the need for counselling towards effective studying and career and financial advice. At the same time 87 per cent of students report that they will take advantage of counselling services within the Counselling Centre when they need to.



## **Psychological counselling**

We have introduced the possibility of psychological counselling as a new feature at Doba College of Business Maribor. Experience from abroad shows that a frequent cause of failure among students is their personal pressures. By consciously addressing difficulties and possible solutions, psychological counselling contributes significantly to the quality of life and success of students. It helps the recipient of counselling to see his problems more clearly, to be able to recognise the links and possible causes, to try out new strategies for solving problems and to achieve change.

Psychological counselling for students is provided by myself, a psychological counsellor under the supervision of an experienced counsellor. I am available to students regarding difficulties with stress, in personal relationships, in their studies, regarding traumatic events and other life challenges. Counselling is also intended for students seeking more in-depth self-awareness and personal growth. We provide psychological counselling in the form of counselling sessions, and later also in the form of group workshops. For distance learning students we enable distance counselling, meeting with them in a chat room. This form of counselling is an already established means of offering help abroad, but in Slovenia this method of psychological counselling has thus far not been provided.

## **Counselling for effective study**

Counselling for effective study is now being provided for the third generation of students at Doba College of Business Maribor. For students of traditional courses we provide mentorship, which we introduced in our school on the basis of good practices in Finland. The mentors are university-level teachers and expert staff who are in charge of groups of students. The mentor helps students through guidance interviews, individual study planning, monitoring progress, motivation and provision of information. Distance learning students are given counselling by a distance learning adviser. The school also facilitates online student to student counselling, which is provided by students of senior years to new students, and also graduate to student counselling.

The school provides workshops that enable students to enrol more easily in courses, to learn more effectively and to surmount learning problems, to acquire competences for independent professional work, to master modern information technology and to become successfully involved in the business and working environment.

## **Career counselling**

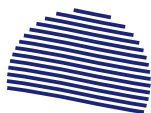
We organise for our students and graduates various events and workshops for career development. We offer them the possibility of personal career counselling, which helps them in proactive career design.

## **Financial counselling**

We offer students financial advice in cases of financial issues related to their studies. We try to ease the burden of financing courses with advice regarding the possibilities for obtaining sources of funding.

We therefore provide our students with counselling and guidance in all the more important areas of life, which they encounter when they rejoin the education process. All forms of counselling are offered for free. Through our counselling activities we wish to contribute to the satisfaction of students, to increase indirectly their academic success and to shorten the time they spend studying. And in this way we strengthen the dialogue with our students, which also enables us to develop as well as to maintain and improve the quality of services offered to students.

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Doba College of Buseiness Maribor



## **Presentation of the employment corner within the Novo mesto Guidance Centre**

Job seeking is frequently difficult, since it can take considerable time and energy to bring positive results. It also requires the correct selection of methods and search resources. Frequently questions arise regarding whether the application is well written, should it be done on a computer, where can job vacancy advertisements be found and so forth. In addition to this, unemployed persons have a lot of other difficulties that additionally hinder effective job seeking. Nowadays there are various sources of free help available, and often we are not aware of them.

Imagine that you find yourself in a situation where you are without a job; you might be a single mother, aged 45, with two children in primary school. With the low level of social security assistance you barely make it from one month to the next. It is hard when you cannot buy school accessories for your children in the shops. Hopelessly you send in applications to every job on offer that at least slightly matches your work experience and skills. Despite the fact that you have a university degree, you have no functional skills such as computer knowledge or foreign languages. Each subsequent negative response further undermines your will or hope that at some stage you will get the job you want. You feel isolated. You want more contact with people. On the other hand, owing to long-term

unemployment you do not even have the confidence to go out of your house, since you are thinking solely about what others think of you. You deny that you need support and help in seeking a job, and you do not look for help. The Employment Service refers you to various education courses which you think are pointless.

This describes a typical situation in which unemployed and especially disadvantaged persons find themselves: long-term unemployed, first-time job seekers without experience, those over 40 and women.

A work evaluation yielded similar difficulties for unemployed persons at the Novo mesto Guidance Centre, where in cooperation with the Employment Service an employment corner is provided. The employment corner operates in the premises of the Developmental Education Centre at the Novo mesto Guidance Centre and at remote units as part of the Dolenjska Lifelong Learning Centre, which is cofinanced by the European Social Fund. In this way unemployed persons are offered greater access to help. We help unemployed persons in those areas where they most need help in order to be as competitive as possible in the jobs market. In the employment corner an adviser helps unemployed persons overcome imagined obstacles which they encounter in seeking employment, and familiarises them with the skills for modern job seeking (writing applications and offers for employment, preparation for interviews, the 'europass' CV, help in sending e-mails, in filling out various forms, familiarisation with sources for job seeking, employment portals, the possibilities of employment in the European Union and so forth). Access is available to a computer, newspapers, telephone, directories and other sources and materials that help in job seeking. Employment applications can also be printed out. All the difficulties experienced by unemployed persons are closely interwoven with education. Often there is a need with unemployed persons to uncover employment and also associated educational goals. Here there are various guidance aids to help us: individual education plans, *Job tutor*, LCI-instrument and so forth. Unemployed persons can also acquire the basic skills in a more interesting way, by means of e-materials on job seeking. The website of the Dolenjska Lifelong Learning Centre (<http://www.cvzu-dolenjska.si/> - only in Slovenian) offers a freely accessible variety of material, including *How do I plan a career?* and *Effective job seeking*.

Alongside individual guidance, we also provide group workshops (*Career planning*, *Job interview*, *Help in job seeking*), although we have noticed poor attendance in this. Unemployed persons require a confidential environment, which we cannot provide in group work. They need high-quality guidance, but such services are usually long (mostly more than 30 minutes). Clients come back regularly to the guidance centre. Only through long-term help can we instil in unemployed persons a will to learn and to acquire functional knowledge, and can we provide them with the basic skills necessary to find employment. In the majority of cases participants at the employment corners have performed several activities in one meeting: writing applications, preparation for interview, checking employment portals, writing a CV, checking job vacancies, help in self-directed learning of

computing and so forth. During the time when the client is in the employment corner, the activities of guidance from the adviser in the corner and the client's independent work are usually interwoven. These activities also require a longer period of guidance.

Through the evaluation of guidance work with unemployed persons we wished to obtain feedback on the satisfaction of clients with information provided, and with the method of progress of the interview, since only in this way can the work of the advisers be high-quality and in line with client needs. Furthermore we wished to obtain certain other data regarding the method of seeking employment and regarding material and information that are important to them in the employment corner, which will help us to ensure the greater quality of our work.

Our evaluation findings are that adults require mostly the individual help of an adviser (79% of respondents), followed by daily newspapers and current needs for workers and useful information on preparation for interviews. It is also very important for them to have internet access and material to help them find employment (books, directories etc.). Information and guidance regarding education was also very important for respondents (for around 50% of respondents). Unemployed persons would also like to find out more details about certain aspects of working abroad, with the hidden market – demand for workers – and networking, finding employment through acquaintances.

Also useful here is information we obtained through the question *In what way do adults seek employment?* The most frequent answers are: daily papers, seeking employment with the help of friends and acquaintances and searching on the internet. Half of the respondents are also seeking employment by looking for information on the Employment Service notice board and by making offers to employers. A smaller percentage seek employment via teletext, employment portals and employment agencies.

The majority are satisfied with our provision of information, guidance and method of interviewing. The proportion of those who were only partly satisfied is small. This is partly because occasionally several clients come to the employment corner at the same time, and we cannot devote as much time to each one as they would need. We deal with this problem by making appointments with clients for subsequent visits. Sometimes they expect us also to provide them with all the information which we believe they are capable of finding or arranging by themselves (such as finding certain information on the internet and writing job applications). No one is dissatisfied with our services, which gives renewed confirmation to the need for our work. The findings of the evaluation are positive feedback for us that we are working well, so we will continue in this direction.

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Dolenjska Lifelong Learning Centre



## INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

### *Mathematics in Action* – international project concluded in November

From December 2004 to November 2007 educational organisations from Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and Spain cooperated in the project *Mathematics in Action – MiA*<sup>1</sup>. The development project was coordinated by *Dr Lena Lindeskov*, expert in the methods of teaching mathematics from the Education Faculty in Copenhagen, and the project also enjoyed the cooperation of *Dr Mieke Groenestjin*, researcher and teacher trainer from the Education Institute at Utrecht in the Netherlands. *The MiA project* was made financially possible by Grundtvig in the *Socrates programme*, which is provided by the European Commission.

The general **aim of the project** is to raise the quality and effectiveness of learning and teaching mathematics in adult education in the European Union countries and to support the participation and success of adult participants. Economic and technological development shifts demand the accelerated development of literacy and mathematical literacy for adults in European countries. Literacy and mathematical literacy are inseparably linked. The **target groups** are teachers in adult education programmes and trainers in teacher training programmes.

The **purpose** of the project was to provide teachers and adult students with models and examples of operating in different situations in real life, in which they can further develop competences that include mathematics, for instance in the workplace, at home and in public life, and through more attractive and useful teaching the motivation of adult participants can be increased. Each participating country included in the project two teachers of mathematics to adults who had been active participants of international meetings as part of the project and who cooperated in trying out the models in practice. Cooperating in the project from Slovenia were *Andreja Jelen Mernik MA* and *Saša Silovšek*, mathematics teachers at the Celje Education Centre, Secondary School for Service Activities and Logistics. Both participants in the project are active in various adult education programmes and in teacher training programmes. Their work has included preparing and implementing a pilot workshop for Slovenian teachers, which we describe below.

The **result** of the project is a teachers' manual entitled *Mathematics in Action* which has also been translated into Slovenian. The manual shows examples of good practices and theoretical ideas on the application and teaching of mathematics in real life.

<sup>1</sup> Project website: <http://www.statvoks.no/mia/>.

## **Pilot workshop with teachers in Slovenia**

The pilot workshop, which was created as part of the project, was implemented in a group of teachers from the private educational company Invel of Velenje, who are qualified to provide various programmes to develop literacy (adult literacy programmes). All of them are experienced in teaching adults in non-formal and formal adult education. The pilot workshop was presented to participants as an innovative workshop that was organised with the aim of developing the skills and competences of teachers for effective and high-quality teaching of mathematics in programmes for adults. The participants were motivated upon their arrival for the workshop, and they also had high criteria and expectations regarding familiarisation with good practices in teaching adults in other countries and regarding familiarisation with new teaching methods and approaches to teaching. The two leaders of the workshop were teachers who had participated in the project from the start as representatives of Slovenia.

The aim of the pilot workshop was primarily to create an opportunity during the course of the workshop for teachers to try out and observe their own learning processes, so that they could later recognise individual learning practices among adult participants. The starting point for organisation of the workshop was the desire to enable teachers to try out effective learning situations similar to those they would create in programmes with adult participants. For this reason the workshop leaders tried to create the simulation of an everyday life experience.

It is interesting that in solving the problem they were given, the participants of the workshop identified five successive steps. They left out the 6<sup>th</sup> step, reflection on the resolution process, what did the participant learn? In conversation with them it turned out that the learning process most commonly ends at the 5<sup>th</sup> step, when the results that the adult participants have are determined. In cases where participants have correct results, the final step is never implemented. The teachers also said that they can recognise these steps in their work when they are teaching adults. The problem is that they are usually unaware of it. They use the steps intuitively, as logical steps in problem solving. It is important that they recognised how these can also be steps that their participants use in solving problems in real life.

## **Main findings the Slovenian teachers gained in the project and workshop**

Teachers in the literacy development programmes in Slovenia are trained to teach in what are called learning projects, in which the unit of learning is a 'complex everyday situation' that adults encounter in real life. If they wish in such situations to act appropriately and resolve the situation, adults must apply a variety of

knowledge and skills. The teachers are trained to teach several fields at the same time within one learning unit or project (capacity to make agreements, ICT, calculation, learning strategies etc.). These are areas that in more formal teaching environments they teach within individual disciplines, separate from each other. Teachers in the literacy development programmes are experienced and reflective adult educators, who are critical and selective regarding new approaches and handles in adult education. Nevertheless we may claim that all together we arrived at some important discoveries:

- the methodology of solving problems or the approach with six steps was adopted as a systematic and logical tool which the teacher can use consciously in planning and implementing the teaching process;
- it is very important for the teacher to recognise the strategy for solving problems that adult participants use in real life;
- these strategies frequently deviate from school and academic practices for solving mathematical problems. When both participants in the learning process, teacher and student, recognise and are aware of this practice and strategy, they gain what is for the adult an important affirmation and encouragement that what the person already knows, is important. The teacher gains the opportunity to help the participant generalise this individual practice, so that it can be used in new circumstances.

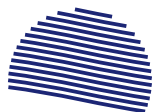
The Slovenian teachers have identified this very thing as one of the most important findings during the project. Adults with lower levels of education and basic skills are frequently labelled as illiterate. This underestimates all their potential and developmental possibilities, as well as the other important knowledge and competence they have. When adults gain insight and become aware of their methods of learning and solving problems in everyday situations, and thereby are able to get by and perform a wide variety of tasks, this learning potential, which is a property of every human being, then becomes visible and important. Adults gain affirmation and encouragement for further learning.

For the Slovenian teachers it is equally important that the leader of the workshop is able to lead and act in the way he expects the teachers to act during training. He must base his actions on his own practices and offer examples that are tried and tested as well as effective, and of course supported by theoretical knowledge. When the workshop leader is able to create circumstances in which teachers can try out certain approaches and methods, or prepare specific teaching materials, then the chances increase that the teachers will accept the new idea. During the pilot workshop the leaders were able to create such a situation, and the participants labelled the teaching methods used as *'excellen'* and at the same time stressed the *'relevance of the presented topics and usefulness in their practices'*. Of course

once the workshop is over there would be a need to check how far the participants use the new findings and approaches in their own practices.

And ultimately, the Slovenian teachers who participated in the project grasped that good practices and effective methods of teaching cannot simply be transferred from one environment to another. They had the opportunity to reflect on their practices of teaching in adult education. Something similar is true of the microlevel: on the level of the teacher-participant relationship, the teacher cannot transfer knowledge to the participant. New learning in the process of adult education merges with previous knowledge and experience that the adult participants have gained in a wide variety of ways. In adult education the teacher is at the same time a mentor and promoter of learning, and at the same time a learner himself.

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## **LLinE - two opportunities to promote adult education in Slovenia**

The Kansanvalistusseura Foundation (KVS Foundation) of Helsinki, founded in 1874, is regarded as the oldest adult education institution in Finland. Its ideological roots date back to a time of national and cultural awakening, which led in 1917 to the independence of that country. Nowadays the KVS Foundation is known primarily for its publications, which since 1996 have included the outstanding magazine *LLinE - Lifelong Learning in Europe*. Four times a year the magazine presents research, projects, examples of good practices and new features in the area of adult education in Europe, and boasts an international editorial board comprising renowned experts and representatives of umbrella organisations in this field. The editor of *LLinE*, *Eeva Siirala*, rounded off her many years of work at the end of 2007 with the introduction of a new section aimed at presenting adult education in the country holding the Presidency of the European Union. To this end she invited the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) to be the first to fill this section, and in the *LLinE* issue 4/2007 to present the state of affairs and achievements in Slovenia. We responded to the invitation with five articles highlighting:

- adult education in Slovenia in the context of lifelong learning (article co-authored by *Dr Slavica Černoša*, SIAE, and *Elido Bandelj*, Ministry of Education and Sport, Adult Education Department),
- non-formal learning in the example of study circles (written by *Dr Nevenka Bogataj*),



- concern for quality in adult education (authors *Sonja Klemenčič* and *Tanja Možina MA*),
- efforts of the SIAE in the area of literacy (author *Ana Ileršič*),
- 12 years of organising the Lifelong Learning Week (written by *Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik MSc*).

We believe that the issue of LLinE with its Slovenian flavour is an excellent opportunity to promote our country and profession in a year when we are holding the EU Presidency, so the magazine will be available to the participants of certain international events as part of the Presidency, and it will be accessible to readers in the SIAE library. You can learn more about the publication, whose content is also harmonised with the European Year of Multicultural Dialogue, with an emphasis on the challenges presented to adult education by religious diversity in Europe, on the website <http://www.lline.fi>.

The other opportunity to present our efforts was the special anniversary 10<sup>th</sup> conference of LLinE, which was held from 17 to 19 January 2008 in Helsinki and bore the title *New Partnerships and Lifelong Learning*. The author of this article participated on the proposal of the organiser, the KVS Foundation, to present our experiences and achievements within the *Lifelong Learning Week* project.

The conference was divided into three sections: *The world is changing*, *Creating sustainable networks* and *Opportunity for discovering new possibilities*. Each section began with the presentation of a plenary paper, and this was followed by the presentation of an example of good practices. I spoke in the third section, which was moderated by *Prof. Peter Jarvis* from the University of Surrey, and the plenary paper was given by *Prof. Kai Hakkarainen* of the University of Helsinki, on the topic of what is called *triological learning* (creating knowledge as a result of the interaction of the individual, the learning/work collective and technology; more on this in the articles by Prof. Hakkarainen on the website of his laboratory *Knowledge-Practices Laboratory* - <http://www.kp-lab.org/>). The presentation of LLW (historical development, its international position, LLW distinctions compared to other festivals of learning, indicators of success, LLW as an example of partnership on various levels, photographs from the scenes of LLW 1996-2007) generated considerable interest.

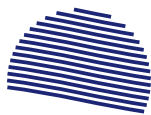
Group work was also organised, on four topics: Work, learning and family, Education and entrepreneurship, Intercultural society and the learning community, Partners in learning regions. The introductory papers were followed by discussions and exchanges of experience, with the aim of each working group presenting in the concluding part their definition of a new and/or innovative partnership, while at the same time considering: with which partners could individual target groups

be reached, how could partners be drawn into cooperation, how can they be shown the benefits brought by cooperation, how can the vivacity and liveliness of networks be maintained and what can be learned from examples of innovative, new partnerships? The results of this work were diverse: when they are finally compiled they will be presented on the aforementioned website <http://www.lline.fi>.

The conference events were enhanced by a study visit to a developmental partnership of business and non-governmental organisations and universities (*Well Life Centre*), which through joint efforts are developing high-quality, technologically supported services 'for the good of mankind'. We toured the developmental project of a television network which links experts and students from the *Well Life Centre* and a group of elderly people (aged between 65 and 90) who live alone in their homes. Two to three times a day, via the TV network these people received hints on safe and healthy living, and they also socialise and learn amongst themselves.

The conference was a welcome opportunity not just to present our achievements, but also to mingle with various experts and to be familiarised with innovative ways of thinking, learning and functioning – and this was all linked together by the theme of lifelong learning. Apparently every single one of the LLinE conferences to date has been excellent (the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary featured a brief retrospective of them), and the topic of the 11<sup>th</sup> conference sounds promising, too – *Lifelong learning and human rights* (29 to 31 January 2009).

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## **Expert discussions on adult literacy in English?! No problem!**

Last year the staff of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education working on *Adult Literacy* sought ways to show teachers of the adult literacy programmes<sup>1</sup>, that we noticed and appreciated their innovativeness and unstinting approach in working in these programmes. For the target groups involved in these programmes it is especially important that they conclude the programme with a positive learning experience, and it is the teachers through their methods of work and relationship with the participants who ensure this experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Adult literacy programmes are targeted at less educated adults with poor literacy skills. The common goal of all programmes is to improve participants' literacy skills; to develop social skills, basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic as well as work with ICT and to develop the concept of lifelong learning and active citizenship.

An opportunity presented itself through the call for proposals for the *Lifelong Learning programme (Leonardo da Vinci: mobility projects)*. We applied with a project we have called *Intercultural bridge for adult literacy teachers - INTERLIT*. We took the project participants to England, specifically to Leicester, which is the headquarters of the National Institute for Continuing Adult Education (NIACE), which cooperated in the project as a partner. NIACE is the leading institution in adult education in the UK. Its activities include researching, developing new programmes, participating with adult education policy makers and bringing together adult education programme providers and advising them.

The main **aim of the project** was for participants to become familiar with the adult literacy programmes developed in Britain, to learn about their development and to exchange and build upon their own experiences and knowledge through discussions (both with the hosts and within the group).

Project preparation (seeking partner organisations, defining goals, determining criteria for selecting participants etc.) ran very smoothly; the agreements with NIACE and project participants (planning the visit programme, logistics, fulfilment of obligations etc.) were honoured. The visit lasted five working days.

- The first day was spent at the NIACE head office, where we were given a presentation of their work, the adult education system in the UK and the development of literacy programmes. In the afternoon we had the opportunity to express our expectations regarding the visit, and we also took part in three 'knowledge café' groups on the following topics: *Community Learning*, *Special needs programmes* and *Programmes for immigrants*.
- The second day was devoted to family literacy. In the morning two members of NIACE staff presented their work, and they were followed by a local council employee who heads one of the family literacy projects. After lunch we visited an adult education organisation, where their work on family literacy projects was presented.
- On the third day we visited the organisation B2B, which cooperates with NIACE in developing and implementing workplace literacy programmes. We also visited one of the companies with which B2B cooperates. At both locations we had the chance to talk with project developers and managers as well as with employers and participants. In the afternoon a staff member of one of the local communities in Leicester presented her work.
- The fourth day was devoted to familiarisation with the concept of community learning. In the morning we visited an educational organisation for young adults (Regent College), which provides both formal and non-formal programmes. We took part in an unforgettable discussion with the principal of the institution (Eddie Playfair), and attended two courses for immigrants. In both of these we took the opportunity to talk with teachers and participants. In the afternoon we went off to a different lo-

cation of the organisation where we observed courses in English for foreigners as guest students.

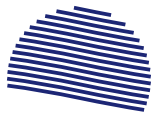
- The final day was devoted to evaluation. We split up into groups, reviewed the expectations we wrote down on the first day of the visit, and assessed whether they had been fulfilled. This was followed by a group discussion about the entire visit – we discussed each speaker, visit and activity and discussed what information we had obtained and found most interesting, what new findings and thinking had been generated in us ... We compared the new information with the situation in Slovenia and determined how and where the new knowledge could be implemented.

Everyone was extremely pleased with the project. We had the chance to discuss adult literacy (development, programmes, issues) with experts who are researching and developing this field of adult education, with local council staff who support the programmes financially and logistically, with the directors of educational organisations who provide the programmes, with teachers who work in them, and last but not least with the participants who are enrolled in the programmes. In this way we obtained a comprehensive insight into the system; we had the opportunity to exchange and build upon our own knowledge and experience. Certain speakers, discussions and visits were especially memorable:

- *Alan Tuckett*, director of NIACE, presented the cooperation with policy makers (ministries, agencies, councils etc.), and NIACE's main goal – how to become their critical friend;
- the entire second day devoted to family literacy – we gained lots of ideas for working with participants and became familiar with new methods of developing family literacy;
- the visit to the B2B organisation (workplace literacy programmes), where we learned about the principle of successful cooperation with the community;
- the conversation with *Eddie Playfair*, principal of Regent College – to say that his outlook on life and strategy for heading an educational organisation were truly inspirational, would definitely be an understatement;
- *Jan Eldred*, head of Literacy Language and Numeracy at NIACE – with her friendliness, professionalism and knowledge she helped us throughout our visit towards a better understanding and comprehensive insight into this field of adult education.

Our thanks for a truly unforgettable British experience go to all participants in the project for their openness, flexibility and cooperation, to NIACE for the professional approach of their staff (a special thank you to Narzny for all the support) and to all the speakers, teachers and programme participants who took the time to talk to us. And of course the project would not have been possible without the patience and help of CMEPIUS (Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes) staff. Thanks to all of you!

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## CEDEFOP study visit in Slovenia

In 2007 the Association of Folk High Schools of Slovenia applied via CMEPIUS for a project at the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training regarding a CEDEFOP study visit entitled *Lifelong guidance and counselling in Slovenia*.

In the preparation and implementation of the week-long programme we had help from **partners** the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE), the Maribor Adult Education Institute – Folk High School (MAEI), the Novo mesto Developmental Education Centre (Novo mesto DEC) and UPI – Žalec Folk High School.

The fundamental **aim of the project** was to present the system of information and guidance for adults in the strategy of lifelong learning in Slovenia, its implementation in practice and the exchange of examples of good practices and experiences. We set up the programme as a combination of a presentation of the national system in the area of guidance and information for adults and practical presentations of the operation of local and regional guidance centres. The programme was interesting for experts from European Union countries. There were seven participants in the study visit, comprising counsellors in the area of education and employment from France, Lithuania, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

We held the study visit in the week between 16 and 21 March 2008. The introduction to the programme was given in the form of an informal meeting of all participants and the organisers. In a relaxed discussion we introduced ourselves and reviewed the programme of the visit and its operational details.

On Monday 17 March we visited the SIAE, the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES) and the Association of Slovenian adult Education Centers (ASEC). In this way we devoted the day primarily to a presentation of the national system of lifelong learning and adult learning, as well as the national project of providing information and guidance to adults in the local environment:

- SIAE experts presented the mission and role of the SIAE in the national and international sphere, with an emphasis on fundamental areas of work: development, education, guidance and promotion. In line with the theme of the visit, special emphasis was placed on the national ISIO project;
- at the MES the head of the Adult Education Department presented the development of the lifelong learning strategy and the involvement and position of

- adult education in that system, with all its advantages and drawbacks;
- at the ASEC we presented the mission of the Association, its key tasks and projects. Considerable time was also devoted to a presentation of all the participants, their areas of work and the basic characteristics of the education system and lifelong learning strategy in their countries.

After this introductory day we moved on to the second, more extensive part of the programme. This was devoted to a presentation of examples of good practices in various local environments at member organisations of the ASEC. In this way experts employed in host organisations gained the chance not just to present good practices, but also to exchange experiences and compare different systems of providing information and guidance with colleagues from various European countries.

- On Tuesday the group visited the Novo mesto DEC. Colleagues presented the local and regional guidance centre, with an emphasis on the activities of providing information and guidance to Roma.
- On Wednesday we visited UPI - Žalec Folk High School and the local guidance centre in Žalec. Alongside all its other features and tasks, the presentation of the guidance centre activities was focused primarily on the provision of information and guidance to women aged over 40.
- On Thursday the group was received by the MAEI and by the Maribor local and regional guidance centre, which operates under the aegis of the MAEI. In addition to a presentation of the centre, their work and partnership networks, the emphasis was on a presentation and discussion of the activities of information and guidance for young drop-outs.

Friday, the last day of the visit, was devoted to a presentation of other organisations and institutes for adult education on the local and national level. We visited Glotta Novo, a private educational organisation in Ljubljana. We were familiarised with its status, the programmes it offers and the activities of the Lifelong Learning Centre, and chiefly with its guidance activities. To conclude the visit we went for a brief talk and presentation at CMEPIUS, where the director and professional staff acquainted us with the role, mission and working areas of the centre.

In view of the satisfaction expressed by the participants, their responses and statements, we may take the view that they were all very satisfied with both the organisation of the programme and the professional preparation and implementation of the study visit, and they are willing to pursue further cooperation. Here I would like to highlight in particular the importance of such study visits for the host organisations and their employees. Apart from providing an excellent opportunity to present and promote the successful practices of Slovenian adult education orga-

nisations, visits by foreign experts are also an exceptional opportunity for an international exchange of opinions, knowledge, experience and information. Local organisations and experts can also take advantage of such visits to establish contacts with future partners in various international projects.

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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

