



## **COUNTRY REPORT ON THE ACTION PLAN ON ADULT LEARNING: SLOVENIA**

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This report - as well as the reports from 30 other countries that were represented in the working group on the Adult Learning Action Plan - has been carried out, on behalf of the European Commission, by GHK in cooperation with Research voor Beleid.

This product has been more specifically drawn up on the basis of country-experts' analysis of existing national literature and the Confintea IV-report. In finalising the report, comments and feedback from the National Authority have been taken into account as much as possible; however, the report does not necessarily reflect an official position of the Member State.



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# COUNTRY REPORT ON THE ACTION PLAN ON ADULT LEARNING: SLOVENIA

## 1 CONTEXT

### 1.1 Economic context

Slovenia is a fairly young country and has only recently emerged from a period of transition. The country gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and from that point engaged in the restructuring of the communistic system into the capitalistic system and market economy. There have been many social, political and economic shifts, and the state has been subject to changing relationships and power structures among different social groups. The change in the political system is reflected in the growth of democratic awareness and democratic citizenship, which has grown out of political pluralism, the strengthening of civil society, the establishment of new universities and an increase in media usage and participation. An important role is also played by the rise of civil society and various NGOs.

Slovenia is a small country with a population of a little over two million inhabitants. Almost half of the population lives in rural areas. The landscape is very diverse and more than 60 per cent of the land is covered by forests.

Average GDP per capita was slowly growing until 2008, but has stalled and begun to decline in 2010, GDP declined which means a lack of stimulation for the job market and declining sales.

In addition, inequalities in society are growing (as the gap between those who do not have economic problems and those whose living standard is decreasing to the point of bare survival is getting bigger). The number of people living below the poverty line is increasing, while single parents, older women, the young unemployed with children and older people living alone are the groups finding it particularly difficult to achieve the average standard of living.

### 1.2 Social context

The age composition of the Slovenian population is similar to the average age composition for Europe. The population is ageing and it is predicted to continue to do so in the future. Among older people the employment rate is low (32.8 per cent in 2008) compared to the EU average (45.6 per cent), and has recently been decreasing. There is also an increasing rate of unemployment among young adults and those in more remote areas, especially in the eastern part of the country. The small size and inflexibility of the labour market has made it very sensitive to the recent economic crisis, and there have been large job losses in the industrial sector (namely the manufacturing, textile and building industries). New upcoming markets are developing more or less sporadically, as a result of private initiative, while state and EU support is still not sufficient. In this constantly changing economic and political environment, adult education does not play as important role as it potentially could. Adult education has never been considered to be a priority at the Ministry of Schools and Sports, which is mostly responsible for the development of the field of Adult Education.

Unemployment in Slovenia has risen in the last year due to the economic crisis. The level of registered unemployment reached 9,1 per cent in 2009 and it continues to rise. The unemployment is especially high in specific regions where the industrial activity is located (the textile industries, construction etc.). The unemployment rate continues to grow: in recent years the number of unemployed people has risen by approximately 25 per cent annually.

Slovenia was not prepared for these unfavourable economic circumstances, and the growing number of unemployed people, and as a result the development of creative adult education activity is on standby. The number of part-time students in formal tertiary education decreased in the last five years by more than 30 per cent.

### **1.3 Historical-ideological context**

Slovenia became a member of the EU in 2004. It gained its independence in 1991 and is now a democratic republic. The President of the Republic plays a predominantly representative role, and has mainly representative authority. The parliament consists of the National Assembly as the highest legislative authority and the National Council, which acts mainly as an advisory body.

Over the past few years, adult education in Slovenia has mostly adapted to the needs which were analysed and agreed upon at the European level and in European policies. It has moved from disseminating culture to focusing on competencies and promoting employability. Under this influence, education of other socially marginalised groups (other than older citizens) has been introduced. There has been less attention in current educational policies paid to the local societal needs and to the personal needs of adults for self development.

When Slovenia separated from Yugoslavia and gained its independence in 1991, it was felt that this aided an important revival in the field of adult education. With the establishment of the National Institute of Adult Education, new formats stimulating participative, mutual and reciprocal learning have been established (such as exchange links, study circles, project work for young people, centres for autonomous learning and other forms of liberal education). The state withdrew from all forms of adult education and no longer used it as a means of political education. The focus of adult education moved from education for work towards education for life, or at least it strived for some better balance.

Slovenia wanted to raise the average level of formal educational level and a lot of energy was invested in achieving this goal. But the gap between the lower-educated and the higher-educated inhabitants has thus become wider and deeper, so the participants in adult education are often the ones who already have solid formal education.

One of Slovenia's basic issues, the problem of functional illiteracy, has not been appropriately dealt with and a high level of structural unemployment is one of its results.

Roots of the lifelong learning concept in Slovenia can be traced back to the ideas of Oswald Karel, who published *Cultural Pedagogy* in 1927. Adult education became an academic discipline at the University of Ljubljana in 1970. Andragogy was introduced as an independent discipline in 1992 and can be studied at the University of Ljubljana at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level. Adult education can be studied as a full-time or part-time course.

Second chance adult education used to be well developed before the separation of Slovenia from Yugoslavia, but it has been decreasing considerably over the last two decades. Second chance adult education is still too closely connected to traditional regular schools and universities and is as such perceived by the decision makers

The education of older people has a longstanding tradition in Slovenia, with the University of the Third Age being the country's most important organisation. Study circles are also a traditional and successful method of adult education. Adult education also has a long tradition in the field of language education.

## **2 POLITICAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Policies and strategies**

Slovenia gained independence in 1991 and it became a multi-party system and parliamentary democracy. Social and political structures were established in which citizens can actively participate in the management of public affairs. Civil society has become more autonomous. But in democracy there is also a loss of employment security and a reduction in the social rights provided by the State.

In 1992 the National Institute of Adult Education was established. In 1996 the White Paper on Education in Slovenia paved the way to recognition and assessment of non-formal and informal learning and the Adult Education Act (1996) expanded the field of adult education with guidance from the concept of lifelong learning. The field of adult education is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Sport and The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Along with European policies for lifelong learning and The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, the Ministry of Education and Sport is currently developing legislative changes by which every person would have an opportunity to obtain his/her first occupational qualifications under the same conditions, regardless of their age (up to the age of 64), and will not have to pay fees to access this vocational education and training.

A lifelong learning strategy was prepared in 2007. Lifelong learning in Slovenia has to be understood in the frame of the theory of pedagogy and later of andragogy, where the notion of continuous education or education from cradle to grave has been the dominant concept, recognised from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century did this idea become widely accepted and promoted in central and Eastern Europe. Objectives stated in the lifelong learning strategy are many but we can summarise them into four main objectives:

- Raising consciousness about learning from cradle to grave as a right and obligation of every member of society in all environments;
- Education for personal development, promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality also for the disadvantaged groups.

The main focus of the lifelong learning strategy concerning adult education is promoting the understanding that people naturally learn from cradle to grave. Learning has always been a stimulus for economic and social improvement. Adult education as one of the stimuli for adult learning should be an equally regarded and also publicly funded part of the education system.

There has been a replacement of the concept that learning means school education with the concept of learning as a lifelong endeavour important to all aspects of life. School education and training is only one method of supporting learning.

Learning is defined in the strategy of LLL as a broader term than education, referring to changing people, through changing their skills, habits and competencies. These are acquired through different experiences such as everyday life, cultural

involvement, work, play or study in different settings, whether it is on an individual basis, with the help of different tools or ICT, or in communication and cooperation with other people.

The lifelong learning strategy was developed in Slovenia from 2006 to 2007 and was endorsed by the European Action Plan.

The strategy of LLL is incorporated in the 2007 - 2013 Development Strategy for Slovenia, which also considers human resources and the Active Employment policy. It will also be incorporated in the national Strategy for Active Ageing, which is currently being prepared.

## **2.2 Legal framework**

The Adult Education legislation of Slovenia follows the European guidelines and discourses set by documents such as the Memorandum of Lifelong Learning, the Copenhagen Declaration and the Lisbon Treaty, which promotes lifelong learning in a knowledge-based society, recognition of non-formal and informal learning, active citizenship and sustainable development.

The White Paper on Education in Slovenia (published 1996 - the next paper is due to be issued in 2012) paved the way to recognition and assessment of non-formal and informal learning, which was further elaborated in the central document that regulates the field of adult education, the Adult Education Act (1996). The law delineates the basic principles of adult education (lifelong learning, methodological and participation principles, professional and ethical responsibility of the educational providers, the non-confessional nature of programmes, standardisation and entitlement to national vocational qualifications). It defines the potential participants (all adults who want to continue education and do not have full-time student status) and describes the elements of programmes (the bodies of knowledge, competences and standards) and the recognition and certification of knowledge. It also regulates the conditions of implementation, priorities in organisation, professional councils and bodies, financing, documentation and contractual obligations.

The Adult Education Act serves as a framework for other important legal acts in the field of adult education. The Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia until 2010 (2004) delimits the goals of adult education and describes main target groups, important activities and funding. It serves as an implementation plan of the Adult Education Act. The goals of the National Resolution of the Master Plan points to the general level of adult education in Slovenia, (12 years of successfully accomplished schooling as educational standard), and supports an increase in the educational level of adults as a means to improving chances for employment. An important but legally non-binding document is the Slovenian Adult Education Strategy (2007), which emphasises individualised learning, competencies and social cohesion.

The National Professional Qualifications Act (2000, amended in 2006) frames the system of organisation and supervision of vocational and learning programmes and tackles questions of procedures, financing, rights to appeal, the evidence of vocational standards, certification and vocational qualification catalogues.

The Organisation and Financing Education Act (2007, last revised in 2009) regulates pre-primary, primary, post-secondary, higher education and adult education, and considers which organisations are entitled to its provision (adult education institutions, schools and private sector), giving basic organisational guidelines. The Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Adult Education decides about the proposals of programmes aiming to achieve concordance in the field of educational programmes and educational standards. It also denotes the catalogues of knowledge

and exam catalogues, and confirms learning aids. The Organisation and Financing Education Act also delimits the function of the National Education Institute, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education as core organisations which are responsible for the provision and maintenance of the Adult Education Sector. The latter supervises and maintains the innovation and implementation of the adult education programmes.

An important part of adult education is regulated by labour legislation and includes the Employment Relationship Act and the Employment and Insurance against Unemployment Act. The Employment Relationship Act asserts the right of each employee to continuing education and training linked to the needs of their working processes. Each employee has a right to increase their skills, in order to remain employed or to create opportunities for promotion and employability across various working sectors. The Employment and Insurance against Unemployment Act defines the right of unemployed people to all forms of education and training. Unemployed people gain this right only if the Employment Service of Slovenia sends them to training in order to improve their employment opportunities. The unemployed are then entitled to the repayment of the costs of education, and if they decline the training, they lose the status of an unemployed person.

In 2007 the Government accepted the national programme of Active Employment Politics, in which it determined the measures for raising employment and employability of workers, and lowering structural and long-term unemployment. There were four different measures: employment and work orientation counselling, training and education (qualifications acquisition and raising skills), raising employment and self-employment and raising social participation. This scheme also includes the programme 10, 000 Plus. This programme has been in existence since 1997 and is primarily targeting school drop-outs, those with no vocational qualifications or with vocational qualifications not in demand in the labour market who have been unemployed for more than six months. In addition, it aims to use project work to provide different courses and counselling in order to raise employment among different groups.

There are also two collective agreements: The General Collective Agreement for the Industrial Sector, with respective collective agreements for each industrial branch, and the Collective Agreement for the Service Sector. These agreements define the rights and responsibilities around education provision for workers, employers and institutions, and fix the conditions of remuneration of salary and repayment of expenses. Similar conditions for instruction, training and assessment about safety at work are defined by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Act on Pension and Disability Insurance, the Act on the Disabled by War and the Act on Training and Employment of the Disabled Persons.

Apart from educational and labour legislation, education and training of adults is mentioned in other legal and strategic documents within various sectors of economic activity. This includes constitutional regulation, public administration activities, defence, protection against natural disasters, local self-management, exterior affairs, denationalisation, judicial affairs, interior affairs, civil and penal act, public finances, economic activities and banking, service field, and spatial planning and environmental protection.

On the basis of these main laws many decrees and regulations have been accepted, which regulate the organisation, implementation, financing, establishment and organisation of different adult educational provisions and programmes.

## **3 STRUCTURAL AND FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Structural framework**

The field of LLL is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Sport and The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Development and counselling for pre-primary, basic and general secondary education is carried out in the National Education Institute. The Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training is responsible for vocational education, and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education is responsible for Adult Education. Higher education is not provided within the institution for development and research. Instead, they provide expertise for decisions by the National Councils, monitor pilot projects, offer consulting services and provide in-service training for teachers. The National Examination Centre is responsible for the state-wide assessment of students and adult learners. An important role in respect of education for the unemployed is played by the employment service. Besides this there are three councils of experts (for general education, for vocational and technical education and for adult education), which are appointed by the government and assist in preparing legislation. Institutions providing adult learning and education are:

- Folk high schools, called people's and workers' universities,
- Adult education centres within companies;
- Private educational institutions;
- Driving schools;
- Third age universities (as societies for 50+ education);
- Elementary and secondary schools also offering some courses for adult learners;
- Higher education colleges and universities;
- Schools of management;
- The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education;
- CMEPIUS – institute for mobility, European cooperation and education;
- Other organisations, whose main activity is not adult education, but who provide all kinds of non-formal education; libraries, museums, theatres, centres of culture, political organizations and unions, organisations of local community, various professional organisations, societies and associations among them Andragogical association of Slovenia.

The aforementioned Ministries are responsible for policies affecting the adult learning sector. However, the adult education department at the Ministry of Education and Sport does not have a position equal with other departments, nor does it have appropriate staffing for executing necessary changes towards LLL strategy. This is an issue, that LLL strategy and tasks connected to LLL are usually perceived primarily as the responsibilities of the adult education sector itself as opposed to the responsibility of the whole educational sector and the responsible Ministry..

### **3.2 Financial framework**

The funds under the authority of the Ministry of Education are still directed exclusively to the supply side, either to the providers of training programmes or research and development institutions.

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs has been strengthening its position regarding the financing of adult learning and education. ESS is in charge of selecting



who participates in training for the unemployed, and the providers of education and training. Local funding of non-formal adult education seems to be lacking from the financing scheme. Most of the time it is very poor, especially in bigger cities. European and national funding has been quite important, and private funding has also been available, but to a lesser degree.

The type of funding is dependent on the type of education the provider supplies. Formal education institutes receive government funding (directly from national government or via specific agencies or municipalities) and participants usually do not have to pay any fees. In situations of financial constraint, public funding is normally used to support priority target groups to participate in formal adult education on a full-time or part-time basis. In Slovenia, formal adult education is more or less free of charge to all participants who seek primary, and lower secondary education qualifications.

New programmes of adult education or new courses are also financed from the Education Ministry. Most of the funding for continuing education and non-formal education is dependent on annual Ministry of Education plans. Even the projects which have proven the positive contribution and quality of continuing education for more than a decade are still financed only as projects, rather than as something more permanent. After many years it is possible to co-finance them through EF, but every year this is a question of the redistribution of funds through the annual adult education plan.

It is desirable that an educational project achieving more than a decade of proven success be able to gain financial stability and regular support. For instance, there are specific literacy programmes that have been very successful in helping target groups, but despite this have insufficient funding. At current levels, funds are only available for less than 25 per cent of those whom these programmes were intended to benefit.

## **4 PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN ADULT LEARNING**

The general feeling is that the most of adult education goes to those who are already well educated. On the other hand there are marginalised groups that are difficult to reach like unemployed adults, older adults, those in rural and suburban areas, adults with physical and sensory disabilities, adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, members of ethnic minorities, prisoners and ex-offenders, recent immigrants, and adults generally experiencing economic and /or social disadvantage.

The biggest barriers may be seen to be institutional and dispositional. Instead of following the needs and desires of adults, educational opportunities are mostly imposed by national public calls for tenders, etc. Calls are often at short notice and do not, most of the time, stimulate the innovative projects, owing to the fact that areas and methods and even topics may be determined in advance. Moreover functionally illiterate people are extremely difficult to reach since they are a dispersed group who may not appear in public.

On the other hand, there are opportunities, such as programmes with no entry qualifications, fees or other requirements. One of these opportunities is learning in different learning and study circles. However the number of these opportunities has not widened in the past few years and many adults are not acquainted with the project. There are also opportunities for learning during Lifelong Learning Week, which is a well known and visible event every year, prepared by Slovenian Institute of Adult Education.

However, to reiterate, a recurring problem is that in non-formal adult education, even when a provider has been extremely successful and has proven to address a need, he gets public support only by making project proposals which at best will provide only temporary support. This does not properly recognise activities that have become permanently valuable.

## 5 CLUSTERS OF MEASURES

Since Slovenia has a long tradition in the theory of adult education, it is natural that in preparing adult education courses it has been acknowledged that adults have the right to be educated in a non-formal way, where the specific target groups have the right to influence the objectives, the content and the methods and techniques of learning and education. Open-ended curricula, self-directed learning, project-based learning, study circles and other methods are, along with educational counselling and mentoring, being experienced and thought about in most courses adult educators. Acknowledgement of experiential learning is also recognised by some providers of non-formal education.

It seems the provision of information and counselling has been particularly effective, as has the development of measures for the quality of adult education. Financial support, including grants, has also been an important incentive.

In short, a number of measures have been taken to stimulate adults participating in learning. These measures include both the provision of information, quality management and literacy programmes. Some outreach strategies are listed here below:

1. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education presented the awards for enriching one's own knowledge as well as one's knowledge of others, for the first time in 1997. This award aims to increase the number of people for whom the principles of lifelong learning become a way of life.
2. SIAE awards for outstanding efforts in the development of quality in adult education were developed to encourage organisations and individuals to make an effort towards planned and comprehensive development of quality. Through these awards exceptional contribution to quality in adult education is recognised.
3. Study circles are a non-formal way of learning, building social networks and contributing to environment. They have spread all over the country, motivating a part of the population who rarely get engaged in standard forms of education.
4. Since 1996 the Slovenian Lifelong Learning Week has been coordinated by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, involving up to 500 institutions attracting public attention by inspiring educational promotional events.
5. The literacy programme (UŽU) A Bridge to Education is a programme intended for adults with 10 years of education or less who are already enrolled in upper secondary education, or wish to return to education. It enables these adults to acquire or renew the basic skills needed for contemporary life. Frequent reforms of the education system have been a significant issue, impacting on the development of lifelong learning policy as it attempts to mobilise learners and increase the participation rate. The development of lifelong learning policy was very much connected with the reform policy and campaign that was launched over ten years ago (1996). There are six programmes designed for the most vulnerable target groups of poorly educated adults, using their real life contexts as a basic motivational tool (for example family literacy - parents with school age children are interested in helping children at school, so this motivational moment is crucial for them). Target groups are:

- Families with literacy problems;
- Those needing a bridge back into education;
- Those people living in rural areas, who have poor access to teaching;
- People with special needs;
- Workplaces needing improved literacy;
- Older adults.

6. Counselling activity is another important source for participation of adults in education and learning. It stimulates the participation in educational programmes, especially of unemployed and inactive people.

7. Local guidance centres for adult education acquire knowledge, such as how to use the possibilities available in adult education, various forms of help, and a rich choice of educational programmes. Fourteen local centres have been established in folk high schools, which act as independent units.

8. Centres for lifelong learning are contributing to increased participation of learners and represent a new organisational form consisting of a partnership of educational providers. The main goal is to make learning more available, by spreading and upgrading it.

## **6 THE FIVE PRIORITIES OF THE ACTION PLAN ON ADULT LEARNING**

### **6.1 Analyse effects of reforms in other educational sectors on adult learning**

There has been no specific research done recently on the effect of educational reform on the adult learning sector.

However some reform, such as that demanded by the Vocational and Technical Education Act (2006), will change the position of the learners entering Vocational and/or Technical Education (VET).

This document determined a new methodology for modularly constructed and competence-based framework curricula at national level, and the development of school curricula. The VET programmes are formulated in terms of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences), and about 20 per cent of the contents are tailor-made to local and regional needs. Every school which delivers a programme has to prepare a school curriculum in cooperation with employers at the local level. New programmes emphasise the acquisition and development of professional competencies (involving the integration of theory and practice, and obligatory training within the workplace for at least 24 weeks in vocational education) and the upgrading of key competencies (communication skills, problem solving, social skills). New curricula are broad (prepared on the basis of more than one occupational standard) and are structured in modules. At the same time, vertical and horizontal structure of the new programmes by branches is a good foundation for life-long learning, where one can enter and leave the school system "without loss". This enables an individual to more easily upgrade basic education in light of lifelong learning.

An important innovation is the obligatory preparation of the school curriculum that is done by every school, in accordance with an analysis based on the framework national curriculum. The independent development of school curricula is an entirely new process for schools, which has led to overall changes in the paradigm and style of work at the school, and for each teacher.

The new programmes bring added value in a number of ways: the team approach strengthens integration of knowledge and peer learning, shaping the curriculum in the process. They promote inter-subject integration, and the planning and implementation of teaching and learning, and they help the school to open up to the environment and reinforce connections with the local community.

Another effect is due to the change of the higher education system to the Bologna system. Students are now obliged to graduate after three years and only after this they are able to enrol into a Master's programme. Previously, they studied for four or five years until graduation. As a result of these changes, many do not fulfil the requirements for graduation after three years and they are treated as drop-outs. As a result, in order to obtain students benefits they enrol as adults to another higher education subject or institution, but they do not really intend to study there. This is then a problem for students who would like to study part-time but do not have access, since the places are already filled with students who enrolled only on paper to obtain the status of student.

## **6.2 Improve the quality of provision and staffing**

The quality of provision is relatively high, but however high the standards are, the fixed plans of the distribution of finances do not allow for the redistribution of the budget during the year. However, there is no research in progress to help facilitate the matching of training and education to the employment sector. Training does not currently adjust to the changing educational needs of the labour market.

Adult education is provided by teachers (adult educators) with different educational backgrounds. Some have no teaching qualifications because they are experts only in their own field. The Adult Education Act stipulates that teachers of adults must have a higher education qualification in the appropriate field and the teaching qualifications, and must pass the professional examination.

Pedagogical-andragogical education/Teacher Education is a special postgraduate non-degree course for teaching in secondary schools.

The candidates get acquainted within the programme with varying content from the area of adult education (andragogics). This content is granted 45 hours, constituting 11.5 per cent of the whole programme.

The aim of the subject is to train the teachers for direct work in adult education. The following topics are being treated:

- An overview of the history of adult education in Europe and Slovenia;
- The social and economic basis for development of adult education;
- Andragogy as education science;
- Basic processes of non-formal and formal education of adults;
- Factors of success in adults learning;
- Target groups in adult education;
- Educational guidance work;
- Analysis of selected case studies;
- Observation of 'life' andragogical practice.

The Organisation and Financing of Education Act determines the right and obligation for in-service training (INSET). INSET is a right and obligation for teachers at all levels of education.

Teachers can receive at least five days of training per year or 15 days every three years. These training days are counted as working days and are paid as such. The criteria for programmes' selection are set up by the Ministry, which also defines the priority areas. Training of the teachers of adults is in one of 23 areas in the catalogue (pre-primary education, teaching of foreign languages, programmes of tutors' training in student residences, computer literacy of teachers etc.) and so far has not been defined as a priority area. The evaluation of the programme quality also depends on the part of the state co-financing a specific training programme (from 20 per cent to 100 per cent). The difference from the full price of the programme is covered by the teachers themselves or by their schools. The main financial provider for in-service training is the Ministry of Education and Sport.

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education provides in-service teacher training programmes for adult education. SIAE is the central national institution for adult education training of:

- Tutors and mentors of study circles;
- Basic and continuing training of mentors in the Project Learning for Young Adults programme;
- Continuing training for teachers, organisers and counsellors in education programmes for the unemployed;
- Counselling in adult education;
- Training for the assessment and accreditation of non-formal prior knowledge and skills, development of an individual and his/her skills for efficient communication in learning and counselling;
- Teachers in literacy programmes for adults etc.;
- Quality counsellors and members of quality groups for implementing and caring out quality internal quality assurance and quality development activities at the provider level.

Some alternative programmes and organisational projects for several target groups of adult learners have been developed in the past fifteen years. Within the frame of these programmes and projects the training programmes for the project leaders have also been developed.

### **6.3 Increase the possibilities to achieve a qualification at least one level higher**

Slovenian regional guidance centres for adult education are very important services for supporting adults to take second chance education. In past years the fourteen guidance centres have been established in folk high schools, but they act as independent and autonomous units.

Issues such as how to acquire knowledge, how to use the possibilities available in adult education and learning, and various forms of help that make learning successful and effective in today's world of information, and how to provide a rich choice of educational programmes and educational organisations are becoming more and more important in adult education. Access to knowledge, the chance to learn how to learn, and how to plan lifelong learning, can all be made easier with the support of organised and comprehensive information-guidance activities for adult education and learning. From January to October 2008 more than 14,000 adults called or visited guidance centres. Most of them need the support to get a formal level of education.

Widely spread educational guidance possibilities have had a positive effect on individual choice and options for further study by adults. However, study at secondary and tertiary level is usually paid by the adult students themselves.

There are newly unemployed groups, who cannot afford the study and are not stimulated to continue, unless they belong to the illiterate category.

However there are also new disadvantaged groups of adults, who because they lost a job, or do not get one after graduation, are left to themselves in isolation and poverty. They are considered not prosperous enough to be educationally invested in. Among them are: low paid ex-workers with low education and literacy skills (textile, trade, economics, builders etc.) young, educated women, and older workers over 45 years of age who have been made redundant.

#### **6.4 Speed up the process of assessing and recognising non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups**

In the White Paper on Education in Slovenia of 1996 the issue of assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which was subsequently included in the Adult Education Act of 1996, had already been considered. To support lifelong learning is considered as an important measure and - after long discussion - it was introduced at the end of the 1990s in the form of the so-called certification system, which was finally implemented at the national level in 2000, with the passing of the National Professional Qualifications Act. The certification system enables the assessment and certification of knowledge, skills and competencies obtained either in different types of education and learning, or as the result of practical work experience. Through the certification system an important step towards opening up of the formal education system has been made. The process of assessment of prior and informal learning has started and is applied in other areas of non-formal training as well, e.g. in foreign language teaching. With the modernisation of the Vocational Education Act (2006) there were made some linkages between formal and non-formal approaches. The act actually defines that providers of vocational and technical education should adapt education to each learner on the basis of achieved credits or achievements of non-formal prior learning. Learners can prove non-formal achievements through exams or in any other way.

The linkage between formal and non-formal approaches is made in the assessment section. The law defines that in the process of the assessment there should also be an evaluation of the knowledge and skills obtained in a non-formal way. The knowledge and skills obtained in a non-formal way should also be considered in the process of advancing in higher levels of education.

A very recent case of a link between formal and non-formal education and learning may be found in the field of adult literacy programmes. For example, the formal recognition of equivalency of standards of the knowledge in non-formal literacy programme directed to low skilled workers (workplace literacy programme) and parts of formal programmes on primary and secondary levels have been linked together. Adult learners who will complete workplace literacy programme and acquire the standards of knowledge and skills will have the option of having those standards recognised while entering formal education on primary or secondary level. It is believed that this novel approach will open access to formal education and contribute to raising educational levels of adult population in Slovenia and it has been judged as a precedent case in the field of education.

An example of a national assessment system to measure ICT skills is ECDL (the European Computer Driving Licence), which confirms that the candidate has passed seven exams in the area of information technology (IT). In Slovenia candidates have to demonstrate knowledge of the use of the Windows operating system, the Word, Excel, Power Point and Access programmes, the Internet and electronic mail. The obtained certificate proves a special level of computer knowledge in addition to any

certificates of completed education, giving a major competitive advantage in finding (better) employment. The certificate is recognised by employers.

For the time being the methodological and technical capacities for effective integration of formal, non-formal and informal systems are still not developed. Other systemic changes that would have to be introduced for this to happen (such as in governance, financing, modularisation and the decentralisation of curriculum responsibilities) have been recognised but also need practical implementation. The Ministry of Education and Sport (MES) has already declared that the recognition of prior learning should be one of the more important adjustments in formal vocational education and training of adults, which must be supported by adequate adjustments in the Vocational Education Act. There is no evidence of such practices as yet, but there are some actions in progress to facilitate implementation. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) has been developing training programmes intended for adult educators in vocational education in order to train them for practical implementation of legislation demands. This will include training to enable them to evaluate and assess non-formal learning.

However, the lack of financial and human resources has significantly hindered further development of this area. Apart from the limited technical and professional support capacities, it should be remembered that in the Slovene VET system a large share of responsibilities for the realisation of the system is assigned to the employers (and their Chambers of Commerce) who claim that they are not capable of taking these on board. However, without their intensive co-operation the system cannot function effectively.

It is planned that methodological tools and instruments will be developed with the support of the European Social Fund (ESF) to open the opportunity for adults to get their non-formal and informal learning assessed and validated in the newly established regional lifelong learning centres. A modernisation of the Adult Education Act is underway and one of the rights suggested in regards to adult learning established by the Act is the right to assessment and validation of non-formal and informal education and learning.

## **6.5 Improve the monitoring of the adult learning sector**

Slovenian regional guidance centres for adult education are very important services for supporting adults in taking a second chance education. In past years the 14 guidance centres have been established in folk high schools, though they act as independent and autonomous units. The main base for developing guidance centres for adult education is in the Resolution of the National Programme for Adult Education, until 2010. Information and guidance activities for adult education are defined as one of the important support activity for reaching the national goals for adult education.

Despite many important measures and projects the cooperation of the Adult Education stakeholders is still not sufficiently high. Some economic trends, such as crises and raising number of unemployed, found the adult learning sector unprepared.