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Lifelong Learning Policies in Slovenia

LLL2010 SP1 Country Report

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LLL2010 Working Paper No 13
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Table of Contents | 4 |
| Introduction: Historical background to LLL | 5 |
| 1. Theoretical Perspectives | 7 |
| 1. Influence of Conceptualizations & Drivers on LLL Policy & Practice | 9 |
| 2. Understandings & Operationalisations of LLL | 11 |
| 3. The importance of key concepts of LLL policy | 13 |
| Learning citizens | 13 |
| Knowledge society | 13 |
| Learning cities/regions | 13 |
| Learning organisations | 14 |
| 4. Legislation and a policy in the field of adult education | 15 |
| 5. Main Patterns of LLL Provision and participation | 18 |
| 6. Broader Social Policy & LLL | 20 |
| Gender | 20 |
| Social disadvantage | 20 |
| Ethnicity | 20 |
| Religion | 21 |
| Age | 21 |
| 7. Effectiveness of LLL Policies | 23 |
| 8. Policy Recommendations | 27 |
| References | 29 |
| General Context of the LLL 2010 Research Project | 31 |

INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO LLL

The system of education in Russia has undergone considerable changes through last 20 years, mostly due to perestroika and following dramatic changes of political regime, state borders, the system of government, the directions of the economy development etc.

The development of the lifelong learning concept and practice in Slovenia has to be considered as closely associated with the social, political, economic, cultural and technological changes that have taken place in the country, over the last decade or more.

Considering the most significant political changes that have happened, one can primarily emphasize the attainment of the country's independence, the conversion into the multi-party system, the entire process of democratization of social processes, the larger space of autonomy of individuals and the civil liberties, the partial centralisation of the political power parallel with the decentralisation of the civic as well as the interest sphere. By the Constitution, institutions and forms of strong decentralisation of political power, typical for the earlier socialist and what was called- self-management system, have been abolished. Political and decision-making power had to some extent- been centralized; while interest, cultural and educational activities have been less centralised and politicized. Consumers of educational, health protection, cultural, academic and other service activities have begun to organise themselves on interest and massive basis in local communities, schools and universities, commercial and professional chambers.

The main changes in Slovenian economy influencing the development of LLL were a result of the transition from socialist and planned economy to privatized and market economy; from large-scale to small- and medium-scale units of economy and from production to mainly service sector of economy (Mencinger, 1996). The modern standards of economic development led Slovenia to restructuring the composition of GDP as well as to recomposition of the labour force. The share of farmers' population prevailing until the rise of industrialism, fell down, the share of those employed in industry decreased as well, while the percentage of employees in what is called tertiary sector intensively rose, parallel with the size of knowledge and new skills they needed for performing their jobs.

The economic and social transformations have also had considerable impact on increase of the rate of unemployment. The unfavourable trends on the labour market reached their peak in the year 1991 when the rate of unemployment was as high as 14%; it then began to drop, so that in the year 1999 it accounted for 8% while in the year 2004 it dropped down to 6%¹ (Statistical Yearbook of RS, 2005). Unemployment affected mainly the younger generations for which the door was closed even before entering the labour market; not less affected were aged unemployed who due to obsolete knowledge, lack of flexibility and weakening of their psycho-physical abilities were more likely to loose their jobs. Particularly bothering is the predominant form of unemployment, which is mainly a result of the disparity between the education/qualification of the labour force and the requirements of the offer of vacant jobs.

¹ Unemployment rate is shown as the registered unemployment rate and as the LFS unemployment rate. The source for the first one are data from the questionnaire ZAP/M and the Unemployment Register kept by the Employment service of Slovenia, while the source for the second one is the LFS.

The changes have also been preconditioned by the adjustment and integrative processes towards the EU. As a consequence these developments increased the labour mobility and competition on the labour market, required more extensive cultural cooperation, higher levels of flexibility of the labour force as well as more efforts to standardize the system with European norms and practices.

This considerably contributed to the expansion of educational organisation network and to the transformation of the property of the educational providers which has largely diversified following the transition to the market economy. The percentage of private educational providers has increased visibly. Private and public education organisations are nowadays the most important education and training institutions for adults. An important role in adult education is also played by a variety of organisations offering training and education, parallel with their main activity to educate younger people.

The decrease in the fertility rate of the Slovenian population and the extension of the life expectancy that have occurred in the last two or three decades in the country have caused aging of the population. The percent of the population over 65 has increased, while the percent of the population from 0 to 14 years in the same period has decreased. The percent of the population over 65 in comparison with the active labour population has increased as well² (see). Because of that development there are quite a lot of new programmes and educational opportunities for older people.

In the development of the educational system in the country we can not neglect the issue of immigration/emigration and minorities' position as well. At the end of the Second World War, Slovenia joined the other five republics and nations creating the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. The political and economic circumstances in Yugoslavia have caused emigration of segments of the Italian population, which had inhabited a small region in the western part of the country. The emigration of the Hungarian minority, on the North-East part of the country was rather low. During the time of the former Yugoslav federation, immigration from other Yugoslav republics increased considerably, especially from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. When Yugoslavia had disintegrated and Slovenia became independent, a process of re-emigration of the Yugoslav immigrants began (Janko, Jelenc, Mirčeva, 1997). Slovenia aims to preserve the cultural identity of its ethnic minorities and other ethnic groups striving at the same time to integrate them into the social, economic, political and cultural life of the country. Minorities are by the Constitution-represented in the parliament, enjoy all their rights laid down by the UN and European acts. Educational and cultural programmes to make easier the exercise of minority rights are listed by the Law. Educational programmes and practices are financed from public funds in accordance with annual plans and programs.

² http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/socialprotection/docs/2005/si_sl.pdf

1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In conceptualization of the theoretical perspectives of LLL in Slovenia, much is owed to the treasure of world-known authorities (Husen, Edwards, Woot, Dohmen, Lengrand) but not less the Slovenian own traditions. Karel Ozvald, one of the founders of that concept in Slovenia, has emphasized at the beginning of the last century that education and training of children and youth of school age should not have been anything else but preparation for self-education and autonomous learning that begins only after completion of the school and normally lasts until the end of life. It is possible that “an individual and a group educate themselves; it is equally possible that the individual educates himself, that a group educates itself, that a group educates its own member, that a member of the group educates another member as well as the entire group” (Ozvald, 1927).

The development of the modern concept of lifelong learning is very much connected to the development of the concept of the learning society. In recent times, a notion formulated by Jelenc who was inspired by the Conference of the European Lifelong Learning Initiative ELLI (Rome, 1995) relating to the concept of the learning society is frequently quoted. He considers the learning society as a society which has in all features, properties and dimensions of its functioning installed learning as a generating power of development. It consists of learning individuals, groups, organizations and communities (Jelenc, 2000). In such a context, the objective of the policy is to change the attitudes of the people in a sense to adopt the lifelong learning as well as the active, flexible and creative utilization of possibilities open by the learning society. The initiative for learning comes from an individual implementing his own learning projects as well as from the society (community, city, organization, group...) that is organized so to make it possible to learn and acquire knowledge, by its basic operation. It is nothing but a promotion of learning as a way of living throughout the entire life.

To operationalize that understanding, education policy of the state should correspond to and indeed adopt the principle of permanence of learning. The central point of the permanence of knowledge and learning relies upon the needs of adults for constant change of knowledge, upon the needs for continuous penetration into the world of culture, upon the needs for having insight and control over the social environment as well as social processes. These objectives are unfortunately still opposed by some “rather traditional factions” of society, that favour the education of children and youth mainly as well as formal education.

In understanding, developing and implementing the concept of lifelong learning nowadays in the country, the principles of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) have been largely utilized. According to the Memorandum, there are two equally important goals of lifelong learning concept: to promote active citizenship and employability. Active citizenship focuses on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life, on chances and risks they face in trying to do so and on the extent to which they feel to belong to and have an impact on the society. In addition, employability is the capacity to secure and keep employment.

However the evidence, provided so far in Slovenia, indicated that these elements of the concept are not equally and sufficiently distributed. Job oriented education and learning

are considered to be overvalued in the theory and in practices- in relation to values, attitudes, moral and cultural competencies, tolerance etc. (Consultation Process of Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2001; Ivančič A., Drofenik, 2006).

1. INFLUENCE OF CONCEPTUALIZATIONS & DRIVERS ON LLL POLICY & PRACTICE

There is no doubt that citizens nowadays require higher levels of education as well as more knowledge and competence to be able to take part normally in the societal processes. Deficits in these capacities reduce the effectiveness of their economic, social and individual potentials. This trend is equally visible in the case of Slovenian society and legislation. The Constitution itself ensures to all citizens the right of being informed and the right to education as well as taking part in all other social, political, economic and cultural affairs and development. This is considerably manifested and utilized in increasing labour competitiveness, higher requirements for human resource development, labour restructuring and more efficient utilisation of modern technology etc. Slovenia has witnessed a profound structural transformation since the time of acquisition of independence as well as since the beginning of the transition from a socialist planned economy into a market oriented one.

The above mentioned economic and market trends decrease the stability of employment while also creating new job opportunities. The trends at the labour market have an impact on trends in education. This is why it is not by chance that, particularly over the last decade, the system of adult education and the system of child and youth education are being separated, and this relates also to deformatisation of the educational process equally as to the introduction of educational systems more accessible to adults.

The Memorandum on lifelong learning and several other EU documents emphasise not only the role of education and training in accomplishing the economic objectives but also their part in achieving personal development, active citizenship and social cohesion. The truth is that in contemporary society the active population is supposed to be more autonomous in accomplishing everyday working activities and to manage more easily the unexpected situations at work. At the same time, both contingents of economically active and inactive population are expected to involve more in other processes in society and to undertake greater responsibilities and initiatives in the community (Valdivielso, 1997). These aspects are less implemented in the lifelong learning process in the country.

Both in building the system and in its practices, it seems that less attention has been paid to individual education which is not directly related to employment. This means that education conducted in organisations in which it is only an additional function is to some extent neglected, and similar is the relation to general education for meeting personal needs. Consideration of some essential social, cultural and psychological elements of knowledge has also been lacking.

Evidence has also been provided that not all groups of citizens are equally involved in the lifelong learning process. The most active are those having higher level of formal education, then adults of active working age, single, and employees having higher working status. The least active in educational activities are those that are already in underprivileged position in the society e.g. people with lower education level (2-6 years primary school, primary school, 2-3 years vocational school) adults over 49, unemployed and adults with low working status (employees without subordinates) (Mohorčič, Mirčeva 2005). Despite the increase in the educational attainment of the entire population this

problem is still relevant since the differences in the educational attainment among the population are not shrinking; instead, they reveal deeper patterns of social inequality. The reason for that is part of a broader social, political, cultural and economic context.

2. UNDERSTANDINGS & OPERATIONALISATIONS OF LLL

According to the stances of the European parliament (Memorandum on Lifelong Learning 2000) a key component in improvement of the social cohesion is implementation of the concept of “lifelong learning”. Policy documents in Slovenia interpret lifelong learning as learning for everyone in different forms and settings and with contents enriching individual’s intellectual, emotional, spiritual, aesthetic and physical abilities.

In determining national policies in the field of lifelong learning, Slovenia’s authorities and professional bodies take as a starting point the EU and other documents, directives and recommendations: Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, Bologna and Copenhagen processes, Lisbon strategy and the Lifelong Learning experiences of more developed countries. A system of mutual integration, coordination and notification among different bodies and institutions responsible for devising and pursuing policies or implementation of the agreed guidelines has been established.

The process of putting in force a coherent lifelong learning strategy should have encompassed all sectors and levels in formal education: ranging from pre-school education, elementary school, vocational education and general upper secondary school, music education, programme for pupils with special needs and students to upper secondary vocational education, higher education and adult education. At the same time, transformation and upgrading of the system of non-formal learning in many fields was also carried out. Therefore partial strategies need to be linked to the common lifelong learning strategy. For coordination the work on the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, Bologna process, the Bruges/ Copenhagen process and the lifelong learning process, an experts’ coordination body- Coordination of education and training 2010, was set up.

Despite the progress in that field there are still several obstacles preventing the fuller accomplishment of the lifelong learning concept in the country. According to the National Report on the Modernization of Education & Training Systems Towards the 2010 Common Goals (2005) the predominant obstacles were identified as: insufficient links established among the higher education area, the economy and employers; no substantial progress was made in coordination between post secondary vocational education and higher education; financial incentives for participation in education were rather marginal; underdeveloped partnership relations have been indicated in the field; a poor image of vocational education and training as well as a lack of information on mobility prospects were manifested as well.

In 1994, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs commissioned a project on the development of the Certificate system to develop and introduce a procedure which would enable the assessment and evaluation of prior knowledge and learning. Several projects have been initiated since then for the implementation of the certificate system in practice. The legal framework for its implementation has been established as well (Law on National Vocational Qualifications, 2000).

The certificate system in Slovenia is conceived as being complementary to the system of formal education and training. The certificates are intended to complement the school ones giving not a degree or educational attainment but recognition on the labour market.

This is true particularly when the school system has not developed programmes of education and training for individual qualifications and such certificates become basic qualifications documents. Useful as they are for the labour market they are not recognised by the school system and so far, not yet, included in attaining the level of formal education.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF KEY CONCEPTS OF LLL POLICY

Learning citizens

According to the understanding of the Learning Citizen Cluster Project (<http://www.learningcitizen.net/index.shtml>) the society is supposed to develop solutions that offer all members of the society easier access to information and better opportunities for lifelong learning and to the citizens to become learning citizens.

The concept of 'learning citizen' as such is not introduced in Slovenia. But basically it could as well be accomplished through the performance of general non-formal education programmes which is supposed to be massive education and learning directed towards balancing personal and social development. The existing network of new forms, contents and programmes into practices (study circles, reading circles, centres for autonomous learning, learning exchanges, project learning for younger adults etc.) are steps towards implementation of the concept of learning citizens. In that sense, the adult education context represents the first step in the democratic 'bottom up' rooted activity of historical, ethnological or other cultural background and was reflected in the action goals of the mentioned projects.

Knowledge society

It is a dimension that is still in preparatory phase and will have to be carefully planned and implemented. The basic directions prepared by the Ministry of Education and Sport as a precondition for the implementation of the concept are: all citizens will have to be 'equipped with' key competences required for an effective and high –quality personal, professional and social life, while the dimension shall at the same time have to appropriately provide for the disadvantaged and introduce entrepreneurship in the education and training process.

Learning cities/regions

Resolution on Adult Education Master Plan aims at increasing investment in all aspects of lifelong learning (individual, community, enterprise and state).

For achieving the concept of Learning cities/regions the emergence of regional development agencies is important. The Government also seeks to ensure effective co-operation and co-ordination among providers of guidance at national, regional, local levels in the provision of guidance services in order to widen the access and to ensure the coherence of provision, especially to groups of risks.

However, the analysis of the situation, points out that there is a remarkable concentration of educational providers in large cities, and a lack of such providers in rural areas- to a large extent. That makes the development of rural learning “cities” particularly difficult. The main problem regarding this issue is the fragmentation of the local communities. The lack of co-ordination at national level is reflected in lacking development programmes at local level.

Learning organisations

The concept of ‘learning organisation’ in the country has not been developed on a national scale. However for developing the idea and implementation of the concept an Institute for learning organisations has been established supporting and promoting the learning organisation according to the already adopted criteria.

4. LEGISLATION AND A POLICY IN THE FIELD OF ADULT EDUCATION

Several documents have been adopted in Slovenia in the last decade or two, either by the Government or by the Parliament comprising some issues of the life-long learning concept. The field of adult education and lifelong learning has been regulated through the Adult Education Act and several other acts of Education and Labour Legislation as well as through some specific regulations within individual commercial and social sector.

The Adult Education Act regulates the normative basis of the adult education system in the narrower sense and the specifics in the system of its administration and financing. Apart from this it also speaks of the necessity of Adult Education Master Plan and foresees its components (determine the goals of the education of adults, priority fields, define the activities necessary to implement the plan, and define the global amount of public funds).

The educational legislation concerning the basic issues of adult education in Slovenia consists of: Organization and Financing of Education Act, Adult Education Act, Elementary School Education Act, Secondary School Education Act, Higher Education Act and the National Vocational Qualification Act. The most significant labour acts directing issues of adult education are: Employment Relationship Act, Employment and Insurance against Unemployment Act, and Collective Agreements at different levels- for commercial, non commercial sector and branch agreements. Among the most important social regulations determining education and learning are the following: Occupational Health and Safety Act, Pension and Invalidity Insurance Act and others.

Beside education, labour and social legislation, regulation of the education field has been included in some other laws, acts and internal rules of particular areas, like: functioning of the public sector, local self management, internal and external policy, civil society activities etc. They all support vocational and professional development and gaining required competences and knowledge.

Furthermore, for the development of lifelong learning, a variety of white papers, action plans, master plans, green papers have been adopted: Adult Education Master Plan (adopted in 2004), Master Plan for Higher Education (adopted in 2002), National Development Programme (adopted in 2001), the Strategy of Economic Development (adopted in 2001), Strategy on Information Policy (adopted in 2003) and Slovenia's Development Strategy from 2004 till 2013 (adopted in 2005) by the Government as well as the Strategy on Raising the Level of Literacy (adopted in 2005) by the Ministry of Education and Sport.

The most significant achievement directing the field of adult education and lifelong learning in the last period is the adoption of the Resolution on the Adult Education Master Plan until the period 2010 by the Parliament of Slovenia. The Resolution systematically governs adult education in the country. The document is to be implemented through annual programmes of adult education.

The highest decision-making body in the field of adult education and lifelong learning is the Parliament. The minister responsible for education and sport is also responsible for the regulation of the whole system of education and learning.

The prime responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Sport are - to define national policy on education and sport as well as on structuring and funding the entire system, including the management of publicly-run institutions, inspection procedures and financial aid. It prepares legislation and is also responsible for implementing laws in the field of the entire education and training system. Within the Ministry of Education and Sport, there functions special Sector for Adult Education responsible for designing the national policy in adult education.

Three public institutions have been set up by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia to carry out development and counselling activities in the field of education: the National Education Institute for Education responsible, for pre-primary, 'basic' and upper secondary general education, the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. They provide expertise for the respective National Councils' decisions, monitor pilot projects, offer counselling services, organise the in-service training of teachers, and design methodologies for writing textbooks. In addition, the Government has set up the National Examination Centre, which is responsible for the state-wide assessment of pupils, students and adult learners.

Ministry of Labour and other ministries undertake specific duties regarding adult education and LLL. Taking into account the promotion of Lifelong learning in everyday practice the Ministry of Labour is the main promoter of the idea. Labour, Family and Social Affairs' ministry, together with the Employment Service of Slovenia, takes care for the education of unemployed, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health etc. plan their activities and undertake their responsibilities in providing and financing adult education and LLL within the framework of particular legal provisions in their respective fields. In directing the field of adult education and lifelong learning, the ministries have to follow the General legal framework of Adult Education Act.

Slovenia has been actively participating in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, since November 2002, when it appointed its representatives in all working groups responsible for the individual objectives within the Education and Training 2010 work programme. Slovenia has thus assumed responsibility for the implementation of these objectives. As a first step, advisory working groups in charge of an individual group of the objectives were appointed for one-year period; their role was to identify and prepare examples of good practices, as well as to draft the national report for working groups within the European Commission.

Slovenia has also been an active participant in the Bologna process and the Bruges/Copenhagen process. The European reference levels of European average performance in education and training, have already been translated into targets and they are currently subject of implementation at national level.

The role of UNESCO and OECD as contributors to carrying out the LLL policy is also significant. The Agenda for the Future adopted at CONFINTEA V UNESCO conference has been integrated in all national documents dealing with adult education. Lifelong Learning Week in Slovenia has been launched in 1996 and is considered as an advocacy tool for raising the visibility of adult and lifelong learning and for attracting and motivating people to take part in learning activities. Throughout the years, LLW has been an active member of the international learning festivals movement. Slovenia has so far been involved in several OECD studies, such as: International adult literacy survey or the Role of national qualification system in promoting lifelong learning.

For the functioning of the initiatives, plans and strategies mentioned previously, a variety of stakeholders have been involved. Some of them have been established and supported by the state. In the field of commerce and business, a number of agencies or other institutions have been established. The general interests of employers in the business sector have been organized mostly in two different associations: Chamber of Industry and Commerce and Chamber of Crafts. The smaller business entities have been organized in their own associations and gatherings as well. As most active representatives of small firms- Small Business Development Centres, Association of Entrepreneurs and Small Business Association have been indicated.

Within the field of Trade Unions, there is a variety of associations, basically organized in the frame of four bigger union associations, representing the employees in particular branches. Employees in particular occupations gather themselves in occupation sector associations. They express professional needs and interests but at the same time they all assist in organizing research activities, development, general and vocational education and training.

The training providers were classified into public adult education institutions (people's universities), schools at different levels (basically providing youth education but having units for adult education) and private providers. In addition, an important role in adult education is played by various organizations offering education parallel with their main activity, such as various organizations in the field of culture, politics, leisure activities and etc.

5. MAIN PATTERNS OF LLL PROVISION AND PARTICIPATION

The patterns of the participation in LLL in Slovenia, have been basically described with the help of the Labour Force Survey indicators, collected by the Statistical Office of Slovenia and the research Participation of the Population of Slovenia in Adult Education, carried out by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. According to this report, carried out on the representative sample of the population, observing participation in the period of 12 month period, the survey gives more accurate data. The share of population's involvement in education has improved from 27% (1987), to 31% (1998) and to 37% in the year 2004. However, such improvements are most obvious among population categories, which are in a privileged position with regard to education.

Analyses of the educational participation of various socio-demographic and economic groups reveal the fact that differences in educational levels and in educational activities among the groups of population were not decreasing; instead they revealed deeper patterns of social inequality. The least active groups in educational activities are people with lower educational level, older adults and adults with lower working statuses. The participation level of unemployed and job seekers in the country is quite low as well. The level of participation in adult education of those employed is much higher compared with other status groups (retired, unemployed, housewives). (Mohorčič-Špolar, Mirčeva, 2005).

The participation of women in formal education has noticeably increased. In 1996/1997, there were 50.667 students enrolled at this level of education, of which 56.6% were women. In the same year 7.724 students graduated, of which 4.658 or 60.3% were women. In 2000/2001, there were 82.812 students enrolled in the system of college and university education, of which 57.3% were women, and that year 10.232 students completed studies (59.2% women). In the year 2004/2005 - 91.229 students were enrolled in undergraduate higher education studies. In the school year 2004/2005, the share of women enrolled in postgraduate higher education programmes was 54.8% (Statistical Yearbook of RS, 2005). It can be seen that women more often decide to continue studies at colleges and universities and that the share of women's completion is also relatively high.

The share of the active working population in educational activities, in the period from 2000 to 2004 rose slightly, just like the share of the employed population has risen as well. However, in the year 2000, the share of women in active population (from 15 to 64 years of age) amounted to 46.2% in the entire labour population while the share of employed women fell down in the year 2004 to 45.9%. The labour market in Slovenia is to some extent- segregated, both horizontally and vertically. Women are predominantly employed in the public sector, mainly in education, health, social and other service activities. In the year 2004 the number of women employed in the field of education was 44521 and the men 12508, while in the health and social work services were employed in the same year 37152 women and only 8960 men.

The International Adult Literacy Survey, conducted in the year 1998, within a cross-national study on adults' literacy, was among the first attempts in the country, to empirically investigate literacy skills of a representative sample of the population. Results of that project have shown that the largest group of the population, counting 42% of the

sample, achieved only the 1st level (the lowest) of literacy; further on- 34% of the population achieved the 2nd level (unsatisfactory); then a group of 20% of the sample came, achieving the 3rd level (denoted by experts as the level rendering possible to function adequately in modern life), while the highest, 4th and 5th levels were obtained by only 3% of the population. It came out that up to 77% of the adult population in Slovenia, are by their literacy achievements *under the standards* that are necessary to understand and use written information in everyday activities, in families, at working places as well as in society. (Možina, IB, 2000).

Research findings indicate that ICT offers new possibilities for learning and increasing the level of literacy. However ICT is basically used by well educated people and having relatively high literacy level. Therefore, it equally reinforces social disparities.

Slovenia is considered as an EU- member state, which already allocates quite a large percent of GDP in the field of education: the amount of 6.02% in 2002³, has even slightly increased to 6.09%⁴ in 2003. Funding of adult education institutions is carried out according to the system of state approved programmes. The Adult Education Act defines that funds from the state budget are assured for the public adult education institutions. Labour and social legislation provide sources of funding activities associated with the rights of workers, unemployed and disabled workers to the preparation for employment, education, training and retraining (http://www.mszs.si/Eurydice/e_organ/e_struc.htm). The research findings of the already mentioned research indicate that the primary role in financing adult education is supported by employers, followed by individuals and their families, than the state. Employers particularly support of more senior and better educated employees, while the state more often finances adults who are in an educationally underprivileged position.

³ Commission Staff Working Paper, Progress Towards the Lisbon objectives in Education and Training. Commission of the European Communities, Report 2005, SEC (2005), 419p.

⁴ Assessment by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, UOE methodology.

6. BROADER SOCIAL POLICY & LLL

Gender

In the field of equal gender opportunities the most significant is the Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2002). It introduces new legal instruments and strategies in this direction. Among the others, it defines the role of the Government and ministries in the field of creating equal opportunities and introduces balancing of positions on the principle of gender.

Due to the different gender position in various areas, specific measures were introduced, whereby the authority deciding on the acceptance or otherwise of these specific measures should evaluate the circumstances and adopt a measure appropriate to the field: for instance in the fields of education, employment, representation in public life etc. The Act specially determines that, if employers adopt measures of positive discrimination, they must ensure the co-operation of the trade unions, or if they adopt education programmes, they must obtain the opinion of the competent professional council.

Social disadvantage

The basic condition declared constitutionally in Slovenia as a social state, is – the harmonized economic and social development. Social policy directs the social development strategy as a set of goals, measures and other instruments developed and applied by the state with the intention of allowing individuals and population groups to satisfy their personal and joint interests, and to operate as full and equal members of the society and the state.

Slovenia signed the Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion in 2002 and formulated a National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (2004-2006), with a document also addressing the issue of accessibility of education for disadvantaged groups. With the help of the working tools, target groups will be able to identify and adapt good practices in basic skills training, to evaluate running basic skills training activities, to conduct surveys of basic skills needs of the adult population and to influence local policies formation in basic skills development.

Ethnicity

In regulating ethnic issues, the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia distinguishes the following three categories of ethnic minorities and communities: autochthonous minorities (Italian, Hungarian), immigrant minorities (who predominantly immigrated into Slovenia

after the Second World War) and autochthonous ethnic groups (Romas). A Strategy for Education and Training of Romas living in the Republic of Slovenia has been adopted in the year 2004. The state guarantees and protects collective and individual rights.

The basic directions for education and training of minority groups are laid down by a special Bureau for Nationalities of Slovenia. All of them are offered two types of educational opportunities: those available to all citizens of Slovenia and special educational programs organized by ethnic communities in their own language and adapted to their own needs and culture.

Special consideration is given to the education of autonomous Hungarian and Italian minorities. The protection of these minorities is mainly realised in the territory where they live. A bilingual educational system has been in operation in Prekmurje, where the members of the Hungarian minority live and near the Italian border, where the members of Italian minority live.

Religion

Slovenia has 29 religious communities which hold legal person status. The Constitution of 1991 declares that state and religious groups shall be separated from the state and guarantees freedom of religious belief in practice, in private and in public. The Constitution explicitly recognises the right of parents to provide a moral and religious education in accord with the parents own belief. The Government has maintained an enlightened view on religious belief and activity. For that purpose it established an Office for religious communities which aim is to contribute towards good communication and understanding of people with regard to various types of faith.

The educational law introduces various possibilities for the establishment of the private schools including the religious interests in the field of education. Within the limits defined by the law they are free to choose their religious and philosophical conviction. However legislation that has been introduced prohibits the denominational/confessional activity in elementary and secondary school financed by the Government.

Age

Specific measures have been taken addressed at improving the participation in lifelong learning for mature workers who need to upgrade their competencies to remain in the workforce or senior citizens preparing for retirement. Slovenia also has a long tradition of adult education and learning which includes older people out of the labour market as well (University for the Third Age). Seniors are attending educational programmes with the aim to acquire knowledge – the main reasons being: personal growth and desire for more and diversified knowledge as employment is no longer a decisive factor in this group.

The research results from the study 'Education of Adults in Their Later Life' focused on education of adults in their later life, showed that educational programmes for older adults

meet their needs but that the didactical approach should more intensively stress their autonomy, responsibility and competences (Findeisen, 1999).

7. EFFECTIVENESS OF LLL POLICIES

There is no doubt that on the policy level Slovenia declares its firm orientation towards creating lifelong learning reality for all. It is a strategic aim of the Adult Education Act, Organisation and Financing of Education Act, Resolution on the Adult Education Master Plan until the period 2010 and some other documents adopted by the Parliament.

The mentioned documents state that intensive investment in knowledge and education should provide a basis for further economic and social development of the state and individuals, for balance of the labour market movements, the promotion of social cohesion and citizenship. They also accept the principles of lifelong learning and define conditions for their implementation; the creation of education and learning opportunities for different target populations, improvement of the level of general knowledge and skills, access to opportunities in the labour market and support of active employment measures.

The most important document for adult learning, in this respect, is the Adult Education Master Plan which defines four global aims and three priority fields. Global aims are: 1) Improve the level of general adult education, 2) Raise the level of educational attainment whereas at least 12 years of successfully finished schooling is the basic educational standard, 3) Increase the employment possibilities and 4) Increase learning possibilities and participation. Priority fields are: 1) General adult education and learning, 2) Raising the level of educational attainment and 3) Education and training for the labour market.

Within priority fields targets regarding programmes and achievable objectives were set.

The first priority field covers the area of general adult education and learning assuring adults various forms and possibilities to participate in programmes of: a) raising the level of general and cultural education, personal development and social inclusion, b) active citizenship, c) healthy lifestyle, d) environment protection, e) retaining cultural tradition and national identity, f) developing literacy skills, g) acquiring new basic skills, h) decreasing social neglect, i) motivating and stimulating learning and abandoned schooling. To achieve these aims the share of population participating in various forms of general education will reach 6% by 2010. The defined target groups are: younger adults, less educated persons, unemployed, marginalised groups, population in less developed regions, migrants.

The second priority field relates to - raising the level of educational attainment and assures adults various forms and possibilities to acquire or finish: a) basic education, b) lower, upper secondary vocational and general education and c) higher vocational education. It is foreseen that at least 50% of adults without compulsory basic education will achieve it, at least 25% of those without finished upper secondary education will achieve either lower or upper secondary vocational or general education, and at least one tenth of those with finished upper secondary education will achieve higher vocational education.

The needs of the labour market will be taken into consideration in this respect, while the target group are adults without a level of education and unemployed. In Slovenia as well as in other EU countries priority will be given to the natural-technical field.

The third priority field is intended for education and training for the labour market. It is stated that adults will be assured various forms and possibilities to: a) participate in programmes raising the level of literacy in order to retain, modernise and update the knowledge and skills necessary to increase the employment possibilities and, b) acquire National Vocational Qualifications through the certificate system.

To achieve this aim 50% of the unemployed will participate in programmes aimed at increasing the employment possibilities. Those whose workplace is threatened because of low educational attainment will be included as well. Ten percent of the unemployed and employed without vocational or other education will acquire National Vocational Qualification by the certificate system. They are also the priority group.

By realising the aims of the Adult Education Master Plan Slovenia will achieve the following by 2010: the share of adults aged 25 to 64 with at least upper secondary education will reach 85% (Slovenia in Eurostat 2005 – 80.5%), the participation of labour active population aged 25 to 64 in lifelong learning will be at least 15% (Slovenia in Eurostat 2005 – 17.8%).

In order to achieve all the aims of Adult Education Master Plan various activities are envisaged dealing with: a) teachers and other professional staff in adult education, b) programme provision, c) information and guidance in adult education, d) research and development activities, e) information relating to provision and demand, f) organisational structure, and g) promotion of lifelong learning. Within each and every one of the mentioned activities specific tasks are elaborated.

Worth mentioning are three other initiatives relating to the realisation of lifelong learning principles: programmes for the unemployed (5000 and 10000+), e-points and Centres/points of lifelong learning. Unemployed (5000 and 10000+) is a programme adopted by the Government aiming at helping the unemployed to find employment through obtaining the level of education. The first one aimed at including in this activity 5000 unemployed while the second one is more ambitious and foresees inclusion of more than 10000 unemployed. E-points were supported by the Ministry for the Information Society (now Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology) and are places with ICT support for learning activities of the whole population. Relatively new is the last one, Centres/points of lifelong learning, which are basically ICT supported learning places drawing together, at this point of time, learning exchanges, centres for autonomous learning, multimedia centres and also e-points. The concept of this is still under the discussion.

There is some evidence given earlier that these documents are giving the foreseen results (Adult Education Master Plan and the Programmes for the unemployed) but for the rest of the initiatives, it is too early to say since they have been, or not, introduced quite recently.

Slovenia has so far been involved in several OECD studies, such as: IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) and the Role of National Qualification System in Promoting Lifelong Learning (2003). The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia also provides some useful data. The Office submits the data to UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat. Slovenia is participating in the Eurostat statistical survey as well. Slovene research organisations also take part in international education studies: IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement), i.e. TIMSS (1995, 1999, 2003) and PIRLS (1991, 2001) and in the studies conducted by the Council of Europe. All of them are a valuable

feedback in the process of evaluation. The research project- Participation of Adults in Education in Slovenia, carried out by the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education is an important source of evidence in this field.

As it has been already mentioned the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (EC 2000) emphasised two goals: active citizenship and employability. The role of the educational area is to support the citizenship through the sharing of the common values and the development of the sense of belonging to common social and cultural arena (1997, p.4).

In the document Education and Training in Europe: diverse systems and shared goals for 2010 EU denoted three strategic goals:

- to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the EU;
- to facilitate the access of all to education and training systems;
- to open educational and training systems to the wider world. (EC, 2002)

Slovenia has developed a national policy emphasising the accomplishment of the Lisbon strategy and the mentioned European documents and directions. A special coordination body (Coordination for education and training, 2010) has been established for that purpose.

The overall output of the established national policy could be critically overviewed in the longer period. However there are already some indicators showing that despite the efforts and positive achievements in the field certain deficiencies could be noticed.

The most visible of them are:

- There is an imbalance between investments in general education and vocational education. More attention is given to education for fulfilling the labour needs in comparison to education for accomplishing active citizenship and individual development. Social, cultural, psychological elements of knowledge and skills have so far been neglected.
- The access to educational opportunities that has been provided is highly selective. A closer look into the reality admits insufficient participation in adult education as one of the weaknesses making international comparativeness rather low. The educational activity is lowest among those categories that are already in an underprivileged position, as we have already mentioned (people with lower education level, older adults and adults with low work status and unemployed people). The time comparison (1987-2004) of the extent of educational activities shows improvements. However they are most obvious among those who are already in a privileged position with regard to education.
- Too much emphasis is put on the quantity and not on effectiveness of the knowledge and skills. One of the outputs of such approach is quite low level of adult literacy. As has been pointed out earlier only 23% of adults in Slovenia possess competences for understanding and using the information for everyday activities and working circumstances in the modern society. Therefore educational attainment

needs to be evaluated in terms of the quality of the learning outcomes. The literacy achievements of the Slovenian population are comparatively low. In this regard Slovenia faces substantial challenges: not simply to raise the educational levels and participation of the population but also to improve the quality of outcomes in terms of literacy achievements.

Several national analyses (Drofenik, Ivančič, 2006) have been critical towards the setting of the national goals in relation to the recommended international goals, instruments and indicators measuring lifelong learning policy and its implications. According these analyses the majority of the criteria express the average European directions not following the national needs and particularities, e.g the objective in the Resolution on the Adult Education Master Plan in Slovenia to reach 15% of adult participation in education (according to EUROSTAT methodology). It was appointed on the base of the EU average and not on the base of the achievements of the countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland) being the most successful. It was not unexpected that the country has achieved in a relatively short period of time this not very stimulating objective (17.5% in 2005).

8. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the fact that Slovene education system is quite developed, with some targets and indicators reaching the EU average, Slovenia's efforts to overcome the problems, listed in the previous section – remain a permanent task.

In the process of development and implementation of the Lifelong Learning policy, the country has experienced frequent reforms of the education system. All of them are very much connected with the reform policy and campaign that was launched some ten years ago (1996) – the year of lifelong learning. The process of putting in a place a coherent lifelong learning strategy has encompassed all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal education. Now the partial strategies need to be linked to the common lifelong learning strategy. That presumes the involvement of all stakeholders being involved in the educational process and social partners. Some of them (trade unions) sometimes neglect the idea particularly in realising some phases of lifelong learning in general and education in particular (implementation gap). Improving the financial incentives for employers and all adults to increase the private sources is necessary as well.

The quality assurance is the next issue. One of our conclusions is that effectiveness of the knowledge and skills is underestimated in the country. Therefore the quality promotion is an important topic in this concern. The precondition for achieving that is to enable and provide appropriate knowledge and counselling for all educational providers to evaluate their own quality and to determine ways for future development. Effective counselling is necessary for other specific area of education and training as well (counselling related to the method of programming, implementations of projects into practice, selection of the educational programmes etc.).

Regarding the increase of the participation level of the population it is important to provide incentives for:

- involvement of all generations in learning, from the youngest to the oldest but a targeted approach is needed;
- promotion of learning needed by an individual for development and recognition of numerous dimensions of one's own personality;
- learning in various ways, possibilities and circumstances in which the entire population have a possibility to learn as well as the appreciation of alternative sources for obtaining knowledge and skills; in this respect stimulation of further development of APEL and its integration in formal educational system is one of the preconditions; it is also important to clarify and define the role of public institutions of adult learning within the public network of providers;
- increase of responsibilities of local environment for developing stimulating ambient for learning for all;

- considering all components of the strategy of lifelong learning: multicomplexity of learning, learning in all ages of life, learning in various environments as well as with different sources and contents;
- developing and performing various ways and channels of obtaining and enriching knowledge. Substantial attention must be devoted to the mobility of pupils, students, teachers, adults and trainers as the process has a profound impact on the introduction of the European dimension into the national framework.

Apart from what was indicated above a Cross-sectored Committee for Lifelong Learning should be established to co-ordinate activities among various ministries and other decision making bodies and thus ensure a harmonised development of lifelong learning in the state.

It should be recognised that the progress and quality in education and lifelong learning relate to various contexts and time spans. The impact of the educational investment requires sustained efforts and can only be expected to yield visible effects over time. Some actions require time to produce the desired impact. If we try to make assessment on the basis of early evidence or only on quantitative basis, some deficiencies and faults can appear either to individuals - users of educational services or their providers.

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GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE LLL 2010 RESEARCH PROJECT

In March 2000, the then 15 European leaders committed the European Union to become by 2010 “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment”. The Lisbon strategy, as it has come to be known, was a comprehensive but interdependent series of reforms, which has significant implications for a whole range of social policies, including policies for learning.

As part of the Lisbon strategy, the European Union has set the goal of raising the number of adults participating in lifelong learning to 12.5% by 2010. However, the proportion of learning adults in Europe differs widely across countries. The project "**Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: the contribution of the education system**", which forms part of the European Commission’s 6th Framework Research Program, is dedicated to identifying the reasons behind these differences and to studying the policies and practices related to adults’ participation in and access to lifelong learning in a number of European countries (see project’s web-page <http://LLL2010.tlu.ee>).

The project involves researchers from thirteen countries and regions of Europe: Scotland, England, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Norway and Russia.

Project objectives

The objectives of this project are to:

- Show to what extent the countries differ in terms of patterns of lifelong learning.
- Reveal how these differences depend upon specific institutions and policies of each country.
- Assess the contribution of each country’s education system to the development of lifelong learning.
- Trace the ways institutional and policy prerequisites for lifelong learning have been developed in European countries.
- Identify the barriers to participation in lifelong learning in terms of policies, educational institutions, enterprises’ practices and potential learners’ motivation.
- Identify the best solutions and most successful practices in terms of participation in lifelong learning and to decide to what extent these would be applicable in other countries.
- Propose changes, which would enhance adult participation in lifelong learning and decrease social exclusion.

The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.

Potential impact

Project is expected to contribute both to competitiveness and cohesion of the EU by (a) developing and carrying out a joint agenda for a better understanding of the tensions between the knowledge-based society, lifelong learning and social inclusion in the context of enlargement of the EU and globalisation, (b) identification of best practices and suggestion of ways for implementation in order to reach the objectives for lifelong learning. The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through five sub-projects.

The plan for disseminating the knowledge

The project aims to examine and report on national differences in approaching formal lifelong learning, but also to assist policymakers and practitioners in learning appropriate lessons from contrasting practice in other countries. Therefore, disseminating knowledge to relevant audiences – individuals, institutional actors and policymakers – is of the core issues within this project, and so dissemination activity will take place throughout the life of the project.

The preliminary results will be discussed in the workshops and conferences and introduced to national as well as international audiences. The results of the different research projects within LLL2010 will be presented in five comparative reports – one per subproject – and a final report, and two books will be published as a result of the project. A Conference “The Contribution of the Education System to Lifelong Learning”, scheduled in the end of the project, is aimed at discussing findings, conclusions and expert opinions on a European level.

To contribute to scientific discussion and enhance comparative studies in the field, further analysis of the results of the research will take place in articles published in specialized and interdisciplinary journals. As LLL2010 will undertake a number of original studies, the data, questionnaires and codebooks, and all the other relevant materials generated in the project will be made available to the scientific community at large.

Results achieved

The present summary covers the findings of the team during the first Sub-project, ‘Review of Literature and Policy Documents’; the full comparative report of the results of this Subproject will be made available on the project website by the end of 2007. The Sub-project undertook comparative research on lifelong learning policies and practices. The aim was to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe.

Purpose & Methodology of Sub-project 1

The purpose of the first Sub-project was to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. The nature of the educational and lifelong learning regimes in each country, and how they are changing, were investigated. The report considers how far lifelong learning has entered the policy rhetoric in each country, and in what forms it has done so – in particular, how far it has been shaped by the European Union’s thinking, or by national or other influences. It considers how far rhetoric and practice diverge in each

country. It also considers how far actions of different areas of policy and government support lifelong learning, or hinder its development.

The Sub-project applied a comparative documentary analysis of approaches to lifelong learning, through analyzing national policy documents and addressing lifelong learning in participating countries.

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