

Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) in Slovenia – 2016

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New initiative at European level

Dana-Carmen Bachmann, European Commission

Following the New Skills Agenda for Europe, the Upskilling Pathways initiative will enable adults with a low level of skills to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competences and/or a wider set of skills, ... relevant for the labour market and active participation in society ...

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Skills are in the forefront of our endeavours

Dr Maja Makovec Brenčič, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

PIAAC results are a good basis for future work. Currently Slovenia is developing a Skills Strategy in cooperation with the OECD. Inter-sectoral cooperation will be crucial when designing the action plan ...

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Awareness raising is crucial

The implementation of EAAL in Slovenia has been focused on awareness raising – new approaches have been developed and put into practice. Now a strategy and action plans are being designed – on innovative outreach activities, cooperation with other ministries, role of learners and educators etc.

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From local to national and European

Seven Slovenian events yielded findings and recommendations regarding skills for life and work – especially as far as vulnerable target groups are concerned. Event coordinators shared thoughts and initiatives at the closing EAAL/EBSN conference ...

More on p. 6–12 and 13



Annual EBSN Conference in Ljubljana

Graciela Sbertoli, EBSN

EBSN's vision is to make sure that all inhabitants of Europe have the level of basic skills they need to have access to lifelong learning, ensure their employability and be active citizens ...

More on p. 13



International peer learning

There is a strong interest for cooperation and exchange of experience and viewpoints in the South-Eastern European region. Several events have already been carried out as to establish links and define common challenges such as the implementation of EAAL and EPALE ...

More on p. 14



2016 Adult Skills Conference

Una Buckley, adult learner from Ireland

Learners were the stars of the event that brought together close to 300 stakeholders from all over Europe. Participants agreed that policy initiatives have a better chance to succeed if we listen to learners carefully, recognize their actual interests and needs and act accordingly ...

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Halfway through the 3rd phase of the EAAL project

The implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) has taken solid ground in adult education in Slovenia. It has led to the development of concepts such as the Learning Parade – Days of Learning Communities, and Promoting Adult Skills events. Examples of good practice have been shared via video and other media. In late 2015, the third phase of EAAL was initiated in the majority of EU member states, including Slovenia.

European background

The European background of the implementation of EAAL has been the Council Resolution on a (renewed) [European Agenda for Adult Learning](#) (EAAL; 2011). Its aim has been to activate the potential of adult education, i.e. to contribute to the overcoming of the socio-economic crisis, mitigate the consequences of demographic trends, and maintain the balance between economic and humanistic development of society. The Erasmus+ programme has provided the financial support of this process.

[National co-ordinators](#) (NCs) nominated by member states as institutions and individuals responsible for the implementation of EAAL have designed projects for the following periods: 2012–2014, 2014/2015 and 2015–2017. Throughout the process, endeavours have been based on priority fields of EAAL, namely:

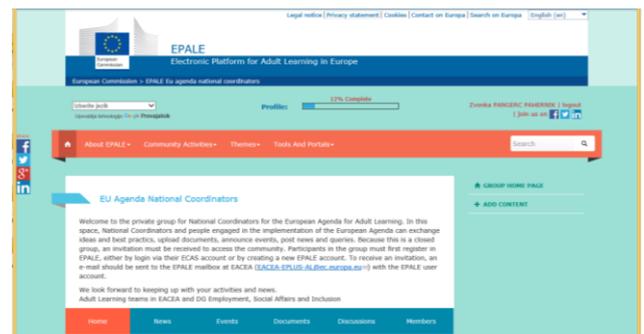
- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; [more >>](#)
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; [more >>](#)
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; [more >>](#)
- Enhancing the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments; [more >>](#)
- Improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult learning sector; [more >>](#)

with special attention given to low-skilled adults and other vulnerable groups.

Since 2012, several circumstances have affected the implementation of EAAL. Due to the transfer of the unit responsible for adult education within the European Commission (EC) from DG Education and Culture to DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, the aspect of education and learning leading to improved employability has been put in the forefront. On the other hand, the 2015 Joint Report (ET 2020) and the Paris Declaration (2015) gave new impetus to fostering active citizenship, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence.

Another important development was the setting up of the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (**EPALE** – [English](#) and [Slovenian](#) site). Adult education, including efforts within the EAAL project, thus gained a new medium offering news, forecast of events, a resources library and substantive contributions in the form of blogs and comments. In 2015 and 2016 close to 30 inputs in EPAL featured Slovenian endeavours related to the implementation of EAAL.

In addition, an EPAL private group has been created for communication among national coordinators and the EC as well as for the exchange of ideas and best practices, documents etc.



The most recent process that has affected the implementation of EAAL was the publication of the [New Skills Agenda for Europe: Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness](#) (June 2016), and the process leading up to the adoption of its initiative, i.e. the [Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults](#) (December 2016). Through both documents, skills – acquired via formal or non-formal pathways, related to work and/or life in general – have been put in the centre stage of all endeavours. Another initiative that was introduced in 2016 was the **European Vocational Skills Week** (5–9 December 2016). Under its umbrella, the **Adult Skills Conference** took place on 6–7 December 2016). It brought together about 300 participants, among them 28 national delegations consisting of various stakeholders under the leadership of EAAL national coordinators. More on this event in the chapter on International peer learning.

Without doubt, the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation (its three steps: skills assessment, tailored and flexible learning offer, validation and recognition; as well as coordination and partnership, outreach, guidance and support measures) will strongly affect the present and future (2017–2019) EAAL process at EU and national level.

National background

Due to the fact that European cooperation in the field of education is founded on the principle of subsidiarity and in line with the Open Method of Coordination, the EAAL guidelines have the character solely of recommendations.

In Slovenia, the policy and strategy of adult education has been set out in the Resolution on the Adult Education Master Plan (AEMP) 2013–2020 and in Annual Adult Education Programmes. These documents have been formulated in a similar spirit and are harmonised with the messages of EAAL. This applies especially to promoting the inclusion of adults in all forms of education and learning, where attention is focused on the educationally deprived and other vulnerable groups. In the AEMP Slovenia set the following targets:

- Raising the educational level of the population and the level of basic skills
- Increasing the employability of the active population
- Improving the scope for learning and involvement in education, and
- Improving the general education of the population

The AEMP has been the background for the implementation of EAAL in Slovenia from the very beginning. It is no coincidence that throughout the three phases, the area of **awareness raising and promotion of adult learning** has found its place in the Slovenian EAAL project and so has the **development of adult basic skills and other competences**.

In the third phase of EAAL, again the mandate of **national/project coordinator** was given to the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE), the umbrella institution for the development of adult education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS) contributed directly to project financing, while the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities contributed indirectly by financially supporting basic SIAE's awareness raising work.

In 2016, in order to ensure an effective implementation of EAAL and the project itself, the **National Coordinating Board** (NCB) was established. In fact, the existing high-level Coordinating Board for Adult Education (run by the MESS) is being used for EAAL coordination in addition to its primary functions regarding the implementation of the AEMP. This guarantees that representatives from several ministries, relevant associations and agencies at the national level as well as key stakeholders at the national and local/regional level are informed on the EAAL project and contribute to steering its implementation. The first contact with members of the national board was established on 2 June 2016 when the EAAL project was introduced and achievements as well as challenges were presented. Participants expressed their interest and willingness to take over the role of NCB for EAAL. The next meeting is planned for spring 2017.

Project activities: awareness raising and development of skills

In Slovenia, raising public awareness about the importance of adult education and lifelong learning is listed among activities needed for the implementation of the AEMP. We have been active in this field since 1996 by implementing the Slovenian Lifelong Learning Week (LLW) and other promotional measures. In the period 2013–2015 these endeavours have been upgraded by the EAAL project through introducing the concept of the Learning Parade (LP) – Days of Learning Communities. In 2016, after three years of European support, the LP has become fully integrated into the LLW and is now financially supported by the state, which is solid proof of the sustainability of this EAAL project result.

Based on the 20-year experience with the LLW, the 3-year experience with the LP and taking into account recent developments and needs, in the current EAAL project we have drafted a revised **Adult Learning Awareness Raising Strategy** (ALARS) until 2020 as well as **three thematic action plans**. The latter are based on practical examples at national and local level, study of relevant literature and consultations with the LLW network.

The first action plan refers to an increased cooperation of various sectors in the awareness raising process. Seven campaigns/projects related to **four public sectors** (education, employment and social affairs, culture and sustainable development) have been analysed by the project team. Identity cards of each campaign were elaborated with emphasis on successful promotional approaches and the existing and potential role of the education sector in taking the lead in these endeavours. The following two action plans focused on effective **outreach activities** so as to attract the marginalized, and on the **potential role of adult educators** in the adult learning awareness raising process.

After the first confirmation by the NCB these drafts will be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholders such as the network of regional and thematic LLW coordinators etc., and incorporated as much as possible into the planning process for the upcoming LLW 2017. The latter will serve as an evaluation milestone for these activities. Main messages of these action plans (and three more – produced in 2017) will be translated into English. They will be published on the project website and in the next issue of the EAAL e-bulletin.

Regarding endeavours for raising the level of basic skills and other key competences, Slovenia completed the PIAAC survey in spring 2015. Its results – published on 28 June 2016 – showed some progress, however confirmed the fact that the development of adult skills will remain one of the biggest challenges of Slovenian adult education policy and practice. In the next chapter 2016 EAAL project activities that relate to skills needed by priority target groups are presented.

More skills for life and work

The methodology as well as recommendations of the 2015 Promoting Adult Skills (PAS) events served as the springboard for the 2016 events. The latter were dedicated to the development of basic skills and key competences of low-skilled adults and other vulnerable groups of population. They also addressed the topic of employability.

The methodology of the [2015 PAS events](#) has been revised and embodied in cooperation agreements that were signed by the national coordinator (SIAE) and each of the seven local coordinators. In the agreement, tasks and responsibilities of both parties were laid out, among others the coordinating role of SIAE, such as its responsibility to take active part in local events by presenting EAAL and the overall Slovenian project, as well as to synthesize findings and recommendations of all events. On the side of the local coordinator, tasks such as the preparation of the event's plan/program, the setting up of the event's co-creators, media coverage, preparation of the report and manifesto as well as active participation at the international closing event were listed.

Altogether, seven events were carried out in May 2016 involving partners from the local and national level, namely:

- four **Promoting Adult Skills – Second round (PASS) events** dedicated to the issue of identifying needs and providing non-formal educational programmes and other services for the development of basic skills and other key competences of four vulnerable target groups, i.e. the low-qualified young adults, the unemployed, Roma and immigrants and adults living in rural areas;
- three **Key competences for improved employability events** focusing on the relation between education/learning and employability for three selected target groups, i.e. the young unemployed, long-term unemployed and the employed at risk of losing their jobs.

In the course of events, the above distinction between both groups turned out to be rather artificial since in both cases education proved to be inseparable from employability, and vice versa.

Events took place within the Lifelong Learning Week 2016. Local/regional as well as national adult learning professionals, policy makers, practitioners and representatives of other agencies whose work is related to this field (employers, civil society, NGOs etc.), representatives of municipalities as well as educators and learners participated in the exchange of experience, information and viewpoints. At all locations, representatives of the Public Employment Service (PES) and its local and regional branches were important partners.

The professional part of all events brought together around **270 participants**. In addition, practical trainings of representatives of respective target groups took place at each venue, involving about **210 learners**.

A harmonized statement/manifesto was produced for each event along with a report and PowerPoint presentation (in Slovenian and English language). The latter served for a panel presentation at the 2016 EAAL closing event. In 21 EPAL blogs (11 in Slovenian and 10 in English language), events, findings, recommendations and initiatives have been described from different angles.

In 2017, seven more EAAL events will be carried out. This time the three specific events will focus on key competences for active involvement in learning communities and will address the needs and aspirations of people living in rural areas, younger and older adults.

More can be found on the [project website](#). On the following pages, main features, findings and recommendations of the seven events are presented.



With the young for the young: on participation, employment and policies

Date and venue: 20 May 2016, Slovenska Bistrica

Target group: young adults

Coordinator: Slovenska Bistrica Adult Education Centre; directress: Brigita Kruder, MA

Invited stakeholders: representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP) and Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLFSA), local community (mayor of Slovenska Bistrica, Mr Ivan Žagar), education providers, Public Employment Service (PES) and youth organizations: Slovenian Student Union, National Youth Council of Slovenia, young unemployed, university students, secondary school students, primary school students, local youth association representatives and other stakeholders – altogether **35 participants**

Professional part: discussion on topical issues young adults are facing – skills they need in life and in the labour market as well as related topics such as housing, voluntary work etc.; the discussion kept revolving around the triangle ‘education – employment – housing’

Practical part: equipping the young with skills for using *apps* (ICT literacy) since everybody has a mobile phone but they don’t know the apps well and they don’t use them



Findings and recommendations:

Youth unemployment is a considerable problem – even for those who completed tertiary education – the main reason for this being the discrepancy between the knowledge and skills required by the labour market and those generated by the education system. Consequently, young people need to acquire additional knowledge and competences for employment.

Some suitable **education and training** opportunities are provided by the PES whereas adult education centres, which offer, among other, the continuation of formal education, face the problem of the so called ‘fictional enrolment’. Many young people enrol just to acquire the status of ‘participant in education’, in order to be able to work through student work service. Non-formal education is more adapted to actual needs of life and work but is not so popular among the young. A ‘lifelong learning culture’ needs to be established. Moreover, the representatives of the young called for a complete reform of the education system.

As for **employment**, the MLFSA reported on several national and EU measures offered to youth (scholarships for shortage occupations, support in the case of first employment, Project Learning for Young Adults, opportunities for apprenticeships or internships and so on). However, not all problems can be solved by the state. It is also essential that the business sector, i.e. the employers, systematically cooperate with policy makers and educators at the local level.



The mayor highlighted the challenge of how to keep the youth ‘at home’, in their local environment where there are scarce employment opportunities. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to hear him praise the excellent cooperation with local enterprises. From another part of Slovenia, self-employment (self-initiative and entrepreneurship) was reported to be a good option for the young – especially in rural areas. Adult education providers have an important role to play in this case.

The MESP introduced the National Housing Programme for the 2015–2025 period that provides four types of measures and will be – initially as a pilot – conducted in cooperation with the youth and local communities. During this phase, the ministry would desire more interaction with youth in order to tailor the programme to their needs as much as possible. This means that members of the youth will share the responsibility for the resolution of the **housing** problem and become relevant interlocutors at national and local level.

In conclusion, the young should work and be able to solve their housing problems but they should also use the ample possibilities for social participation (volunteers active in associations, holders of different functions in local environments) for which they also need additional skills. Especially the acquisition of financial and digital competencies and active citizenship are inevitable challenges on the described paths.

At the end of the PAS event the organizers drafted a [manifesto](#) (in Slovenian) similar to the [Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st century](#) by EAEA. The Slovenska Bistrica Manifesto refers to three fields: participation, active citizenship and democracy; employment and digitalisation; and European and national policies. It shall serve as a beacon for further work with the youth in the local and broader environment.

Find out more about the event in the EPALE blog: [Small events with a large reach \(2/7\)](#)

Together for coexistence

Date and venue: 25 May 2016, Novo mesto

Target group: Roma population and immigrants

Coordinator: Novo mesto Development and Education Center; directress: Marjeta Gašperšič

Invited stakeholders: representatives of associations, municipalities, social centres, adult education providers and citizens, SIAE representatives – altogether **108 participants**

Professional part: discussion on the significance of prejudice, constructive understanding, tolerance, multi-cultural dialogue, expression and understanding of different views and compassion or in other words ‘Was Einstein right when he argued that it is harder to break an atom than prejudices?’

Practical part: workshops ‘Building intercultural bridges via culinary delights’ – exchange of experiences (and food) among representatives of 8 nationalities; ‘What should I know about shopping’ – for Roma participants, and ‘Support for adult educators in developing financial literacy’



Findings and recommendations:

Prejudices and stereotypes are part of life but it is inevitable that we finally bring up respect for diversity, identity, and personal dignity of every individual. According to participants’ first-hand experience, prejudice and stereotypes occur on both sides (i.e. in the majority as well as the minority group) therefore, **solutions** must also be sought on both sides, or even better, **together!**



In addition to existing challenges regarding Roma population, an interesting event is the emergence of a new hierarchy, when Roma see the new age immigrants as a threat due to the fear for their social income. Obviously, this supports another Einstein theory, namely that ‘everything is relative’.

One of the main conclusions was that the issue of minorities and immigrants should be treated **holistically**. Key areas of concern and activity are related to meeting housing and other livelihood needs, employment, health insurance, education and respect for and cultivating the culture of each nationality. According to Ms Hedina Sijerčić MA from Sarajevo, a renowned expert and a member of the Roma community, the last two fields are the most neglected,

due to which adult educators face important challenges.

Members of the target groups should be involved in all phases of the educational process, from planning to evaluation. ‘Nothing for Roma without Roma!’ served as the moto of the event, and it was especially convenient that the members of the Roma community were present among both the speakers as well as the audience.

Especially young, educated members of the Roma community can make a change, but they must tread carefully, while keeping constant contact with those, who they represent, or they shall otherwise lose their trust.

The necessity of **financial literacy** for vulnerable groups, especially for the recipients of social transfers, is an established fact, therefore members of the professional staff in adult education are in need of acquiring additional skills in the field of financial literacy and financial education of the Roma people, both children and adults.

In short, adult educators have to work proactively and in close cooperation with various stakeholders at the national, local and even international level, in order to assure an all-encompassing support to the establishment of new (learning) communities based on the respect of diversity, identity and personal dignity of each and every individual.



Find out more about the event in the EPALE blog: [Small events with a large reach \(4/7\)](#).

Restore the forests in Slovenia

Date and venue: 26 May 2016, Radeče

Target group: rural population

Coordinator: Cultural, Tourism and Recreational Centre Radeče, directress: Marija Imperl

Invited stakeholders: Slovenia Forest Service, Biotechnical Faculty – Department of Forestry, Association of Forest Owners Sopota-Laško, Prosilva Slovenija, secondary and higher education students from the Maribor and Postojna Forestry School, experts in the field of forestry as well as forestry workers, forest owners from different parts of the country and the local community farmers, and representatives from the field of adult education – altogether **75 participants**

Professional part: lectures and discussion on sustainable forest management in case of natural disasters, models of sustainable approaches to forest management and examples of good practice

Practical part: demonstration of forest works following the recent large windthrow and other numerous disasters which have not spared Slovenia during the recent years



Findings and recommendations:



In Slovenia, forests cover 58.4% of its area, placing the country third in the EU, following Sweden and Finland. Thus, forests present a significant treasure and an essential component of the **sustainable development** of certain regions but also excellent business opportunities for the local rural population.

Participants agreed that nature is our greatest teacher since it always offers numerous solutions and many opportunities. We should listen to it carefully so that we are able to identify and exploit these challenges in the proper way. First of all, we should adjust our desires for profit to nature's actual possibilities.

The forest offers many **working possibilities**, which require **specific knowledge and skills**. To ensure smart decisions about nature interventions learning and education need to be systematic and focused, while we must develop education approaches and knowledge for **all generations**.

Learning constitutes a good motivational factor since it provides for the social, cultural and personal growth and the development of **active citizenship**. The latter is important for the progress of the region, country and the society in general.

Development of **self-initiative and entrepreneurship in rural areas** has great potential. With a proactive, independent and innovative approach, individuals successfully engage in their own environment and set an example for others.

For successful and sustainable forest management it is necessary to better connect theory with practice, theoretical schoolwork with fieldwork education. Therefore, such professional events involving a great variety of stakeholders are in demand and highly needed. They support the mutual sharing of knowledge and experience regarding the development of rural population's skills.

In this respect, an element with high potential are Slovenian **study circles**, groups which represent an informal rural power and an open and democratic form of adult education. Their members are connected by common goals and interests while they also learn from each other.

The event ended with the recognition of significance of fundamental opportunities of adults for both individuals and the society, while lifelong learning plays an essential role in rural development and active participation of the local population of all generations.



Find out more about the event in the EPALE blog: [Small events with a large reach \(5/7\)](#)

How can employers and educators jointly improve the business environment in the region?

Date and venue: 30 May 2016, Murska Sobota

Target group: the unemployed

Coordinator: Murska Sobota Adult Education Centre; director: Dejan Dravec; Alojz Sraka

Invited stakeholders: representatives of regional and local units of the Public Employment Service (PES), Pomurje Chamber of Commerce and the Murska Sobota Chamber of Crafts and Small Businesses, as well as the Papirot Institute (working with the unemployed), Adult Education Guidance Centre Murska Sobota, adult education providers, SIAE representatives, media – altogether **26 participants**

Professional part: discussion on existing activities carried out by the above stakeholders, challenges and possibilities for synergy

Practical part: group counselling for young, unemployed members of the Roma minority focused on finding employment opportunities and discussing learning-related problems



Findings and recommendations:



The Pomurje region is characterised by the highest level of registered unemployment in Slovenia therefore the development of fundamental skills of unemployed adults constitutes a significant challenge that is being addressed by the invited stakeholders on a permanent basis.

In practice, **‘tailor-made’ programs** coordinated by the PES have been recognized as the best example of practice since they lead to direct employment – especially of the long-term unemployed. Unfortunately, the PES itself identifies them as (too) expensive for implementation.

The cooperation of the Murska Sobota AEC with the agricultural companies Panvita and Lušt was based on flexible partnership and emphasised practical work within the training of the unemployed. These two implementations of the ‘tailor-made’ approach were definitely a success that could be measured by the resulting number of permanent new jobs.

Therefore, the proposal was expressed that due to their efficiency the state should allocate special quotas within the Active Employment Policy for the implementation of ‘tailor-made’ programs. Other training for the unemployed should retain its own financial fund, rather than both strands of financing being interdependent.

The food industry constitutes a significant share of economy of the Pomurje region, however, there is still no suitable education and training. Participants at the meeting concluded that priority should be given to longer efficient non-formal programmes. Their content must be carefully selected and agreed among the employers and education providers, while their emphasis should be on practical training. The participants believed that the state should co-fund especially longer programmes which lead to direct employment, while there should also be a national overview of these programmes.

In addition to professional competencies, **general competencies** (e.g. social, emotional, entrepreneurial, etc.) are also important. Especially autonomy is a significant problem among youth, while the alignment of values between the active population and youth is also essential. Especially innovation of the latter and the adaptability to the organisational culture of the active population seem an excellent combination which, however, calls for additional training on both sides.

Discipline, attitude towards customers, professional qualifications and qualifications for better performing in the work environment are some of the most important skills recognized by professionals and employers alike. They claim that one can become independent, acquire a broader perspective and loyalty to the company only after the acquisition of these skills.

The Papirot Institute integrates **lifelong career guidance** in its work with the unemployed, while it also dedicates a great deal of attention to the certification of working skills acquired through previous learning and/or work. The identification of the non-formally acquired knowledge and skills is an integral component of activities at the LUMS guidance centre.

Institutions participating in the PAS event as well as some other ones could establish more efficient networking and cooperation to assist the unemployed on the one hand, and the industry with its small and medium enterprises on the other hand – all for a better working and living situation in this and similar regions characterised by high unemployment rates.

Find out more about the event in the EPALE blog: [Small events with a large reach \(6/7\)](#)

The role of non-formal education in solving the problem of the long-term unemployed

Date and venue: 11 May 2016, Celje

Target group: the long-term unemployed

Coordinator: Celje School Centre; Andreja Jelen Mernik and Natalija Klepej

Invited stakeholders: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS), Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLFSA), Public Employment Service (PES) of Slovenia – local branches from three cities across the country, adult training centres, teachers and Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) – altogether **11 participants**

Professional part: focus group on the competences that the long-term unemployed need for a successful integration into the labour market

Practical part: workshop on competences that support employability



Findings and recommendations:



Unemployment in Slovenia is slightly decreasing, however, reducing the share of the long-term unemployed remains a great challenge. Measures of the national Active Employment Policy for 2015–2020 dedicate a lot of attention and resources to this challenge. An important source of funding for **remedying long-term unemployment** is also the European Social Fund that is being channelled through the MLFSA.

At the event, the discussion was focused on the role of non-formal education and training based on experience acquired during the 3-year implementation of the 104-hour ‘Education of the Unemployed’ programme. Participants confirmed the fact that long-term unemployment is a difficult problem for all involved therefore broader and coordinated action is called for. The **trilateral partnership** among employers/the economy, PES services and educators is essential.

Employers require a consistently qualified workforce with not only professional qualifications, but also soft skills. Key competencies and soft content must therefore be added to professional content. Nevertheless, the share of hours allocated to professional training should not be decreased as a result. For employers, flexibility is a priority. They should be involved in initial stages of solving this problem.

The **PES** with its local branches directly or indirectly provides education and training as well as lifelong career guidance. They also organise opportunities for meetings between employers and qualified unemployed persons. In different ways and in tight cooperation with both ministries the PES tries to attain a high level of employability of the target group under discussion.

Participants, i.e. the long-term unemployed have very different backgrounds, therefore the learning groups are heterogeneous, both from the aspect of the participants’ attained level of qualifications, as well as their psychosocial characteristics. This can lead to mutual learning, encouragement, socialisation and a new drive of the long-term unemployed. Continuity is therefore essential. On the other hand, “education on stock” is not a good option, either.

Educators – in our case the School Centre or adult education centres throughout the country – face the challenge to set up links with the business sector and together determine the demand for specific vocational and professional skills. They develop non-normal education and training programmes for the unemployed and motivate the teachers/adult educators for work with this sensitive group. Educators should have a feeling of empathy, the ability to animate and motivate, as well as other adult education competencies. Guidance activities and recognition of prior acquired knowledge are also very useful in the process.

There are already several positive stories of the long-term unemployed, which could be set as an example to the broader public. It would be important to monitor them, not only during their training, but on a continuous basis. Such ambassadors of lifelong learning could serve as an inspiration to others.

Find out more about the event in the EPALE blog: [Small events with a large reach \(1/7\)](#)

Knowledge and competences hand in hand for better employability of the young

Date and venue: 24 May 2016, Kranj

Target group: the young unemployed

Coordinator: Kranj Adult Education Centre; directress: Mateja Šmid

Invited stakeholders: key education providers, representatives of the Public Employment Service (PES) of Slovenia, social centres, Kranj municipality representatives, youth and other organizations, SIAE representatives – altogether **32 participants**

Professional part: the meaning of education for young people, introduction of financial literacy for young people, introduction of an educational programme in the field of composite technologies, competences of young people, young people and the job market and transition to the labour market

Practical part: 'Green workshop: waste recycling – jobs of the future' – workshop on sofa building from waste pallets under the guidance of masters



Findings and recommendations:

One of the conclusions of this event was that there certainly are opportunities available to the young unemployed. One must only know how to find and grab them! Completed education – of any level – does not necessarily equal an opportunity for employment, since young people **lack life skills**. These can be acquired through different forms of work, therefore, young people should sometimes abandon their high expectations and take the jobs on offer as to simply gain experience.

The PES is aware of the fact that employers appreciate candidates who demonstrate a suitable attitude towards others and towards work, and know how to express their comparative advantage. The young often do not recognise the competences they are missing. On the other hand, they need support in being able to recognize the competences they already possess. In both cases, the PES can offer assistance.

Young people need to be more involved in local communities and their **social competences** should be strengthened. They need to be encouraged to take part in non-formal education and their awareness of the advantages of vocational and technical education has to be raised. It is important for them to get to know which are the careers of the future, and determine their perception of a dream job.

The Kranj Adult Education Centre has recognized the topic of **financial literacy** as an added value to the adult education programmes, since it is never too late to pick up something you like and which generates good earnings at the same time. Thus, the content of the programme is very suitable even for inter-generational exchange.



Practical workshops connect young unemployed people with employers. On the one hand, such workshops offer employers the opportunity to test potential employees, and on the other hand, they enable young people to experience the employers' entrepreneurial way of thinking.

Cooperation of companies and educational institutions enables successful and permanent programmes.

International projects are opportunities for the development of new professions. That was the case of the 'Manufacturer of composite products' project by the Trbovlje Adult Education Centre which on the basis of a cooperation with and a study visit to Estonia, designed opportunities for youth – mostly candidates equipped with manual skills (trained carpenters, seamstresses, etc.) – interested in the technologies of the future.

The importance of **systematic career guidance** which should be included as early as in primary school was emphasised by participants. Close contact with employers and an increased number of opportunities for acquiring experience and competences during work are required. The

connecting of youth and youth associations with schools and employers is essential as well. Among other, participants concluded that youth should accept the responsibility for its awareness of different opportunities, and that we should all change the opinion of the society, which has lately been rather negative, claiming: there are no jobs!

Find out more about the event in the EPALE blog: [Small events with a large reach \(3/7\)](#)

Development of key competences and skills of employees as an answer to challenges of 21st century

Date and venue: 31 May 2016, Žalec

Target group: employees

Coordinator: Žalec Adult Education Centre; directress: Franja Centrih

Invited stakeholders: companies, education institutions, local and regional development agencies, local authorities, Slovenian Human Resources and Scholarship Fund and other funds, SIAE – altogether **39 participants**

Professional part: presentations and round table about key competences needed by employees today in order to be employable tomorrow

Practical part: workshop 'Promoting health at the workplace'



Findings and recommendations:



Education and training of employees is an investment. When employees strive to become or remain members of the winning team, the investment becomes successful and continuous. This has been the experience gained in the 'Through the development of people – we can' project that promotes so called competence centres for the development of staff. The spirit in such developmentally oriented groups provides for the vitality of an individual, company and industry.

The acquisition of knowledge on its own has no practical effect if it lacks a specific purpose or fails to bring additional benefits. However, the potential for the latter must be established through a careful analysis of the working processes in combination with the development of the motivational aspects.

In general, the education system is expected to generate competent employees, but employers often find that young people have not been adequately prepared for work. They should establish a greater contact with practice, while counselling and career guidance services should provide for better information and orientation.

The most commonly mentioned knowledge and skills included **social competences** (communication), foreign language skills linked to a specific profession or industry, other communication and digital skills, as well as soft competencies, such as honesty, interpersonal relationships, taking responsibility, work attitude, positive and winning orientation, self-realisation and self-understanding, problem solving, organisation, team work, leadership and management, learning to learn, self-initiative and entrepreneurial competencies, knowledge of fundamental legislation, etc. **Business ethics** was also mentioned, especially due to the current state of mind in the country, which is characterised by excessive competitiveness, acquisition of benefits to the detriment of others, excessive expectations and impatience of youth.

Upon completion of the formal education students require professional initiation to enter the labour market and the businesses should know better that a part of this is also their responsibility and an investment in suitable employees. One of the increasingly popular approaches in this respect is **mentorship**.

Identification and evaluation of non-formally acquired knowledge facilitates the discovery of hidden potential or knowledge and skills, which individuals acquired in different ways. The path for procedures and connections has been chartered by a project of the Žalec Adult Education Centre. The accomplished should now be further upgraded with tools, certificates, awareness raising and training of external experts.

However, the participants in the discussion stated that the appeal of education programmes leading to vocational qualifications must be improved as well as facilitate vertical progression and not lead to a dead-end. It should be based on analyses of demand for specific qualifications in the Slovenian labour market. Another interesting option is also **self-employment**, however, it must be based on the actual demand; therefore, we should promote an encouraging entrepreneurial environment on one hand, and face the entrepreneurs with the sustainability of their ideas from the legal, financial and business perspective.

In all, lifelong learning has been recognised as a tool, which helps compensate deficiencies, while offering the required flexibility to meet the constant change. However, its role can be implemented only through a strong partnership among the education and labour sector and supporting institutions. Participants also expressed the initiative that each institution should specialise for its role and then act in synergy with others, while the state should contribute to the solution of problems.

Find out more about the event in the EPALE blog: [Small events with a large reach \(7/7\)](#)

2016 EAAL closing event

In addition to awareness raising, the main topic of the Slovenian EAAL project is related to the development of basic skills and other key competences. Therefore, it was only natural that we linked the closing event with the annual European Basic Skills Network (EBSN) conference.



Organized jointly by the [EBSN](#) Secretariat and SIAE staff, the conference took place on 2–3 June 2016 in Ljubljana. It brought together close to 100 participants active in adult learning policy and practice from several European countries, the European Commission and EPALE.

Introductory speeches were given by minister of education, Dr Maja Makovec Brenčič, and SIAE director, Andrej Sotošek, MA. They both expressed their support to the implementation of EAAL as well as to endeavours directed towards increasing adult skills for life and work.

Dana-Carmen Bachman of the EC presented current developments at the EU level with special emphasis on the New Skills Agenda for Europe and the initiative Skills Guarantee (now

called Upskilling Pathways).

As far as other international aspects are concerned, Sustainable Development Goal 4 Education 2030 and its literacy target was presented by Ulrike Hanemann from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Graciela Sbertoli, head of EBSN introduced us to activities and other important topics of the network.

The implementation of EAAL was illustrated from various angles. The Slovenian project was presented by the EAAL national coordinator, Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik, MSc, as well as by the seven local coordinators who shared findings and recommendations gained at their professional events.

National coordinators (mainly ministerial level) from the South-Eastern European (SEE) region reported on their experience with the implementation of EAAL. The Slovenian model for increasing basic skills and competences was presented by Estera Možina, MA, of SIAE, as well as EPALE Slovenia by the Slovenian representative of the National Support Service, Maruša Bajt.

SIAE also initiated the roundtable discussion of EAAL and/or EPALE national coordinators from the SEE region on the theme 'From national governance to local implementation: challenges and possibilities'. The following questions were discussed: the



status regarding national policies for basic skills provision in the countries in the region; the challenges for development of policies with national governance (responsibility) and local level implementation; how can such policies integrate all important objectives for basic skills education: individual progress, inclusive society, active citizenship, increased employability, economic development in the country; how can the EBSN, EPALE, the EU Commission contribute to further development of these policies; how can the countries involved help each other? (EBSN Special Interest Group? (SIG).

A [video recording](#) on this roundtable was produced.

More on the conference can be found on the [EAAL website](#) and the [EBSN page](#).

International peer learning

In addition to the before mentioned EBSN annual conference alias closing EAAL event, several other gatherings served as platforms for international exchange, peer learning, and presentation of EAAL project aims and results. The Adult Skills Conference towards the end of the year rounded up findings from various levels and provided grounds for further work – especially with regard to new European initiatives.

International peer learning took place at meetings of national coordinators (NCs) with the European Commission as well as through other direct contacts especially within the SEE region where we have been acting as a unifying factor.



The meeting of the **European Association for Adult Education (EAEA) Executive Board** (11 representatives of 9 European countries) with representatives of the SIAE and other relevant institutions and associations in adult education (18–19 February 2016, Ljubljana, Slovenia). This meeting was an opportunity to present Slovenian endeavours in the EAAL project; its results have been incorporated in the Slovenian version of the Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st Century, i.e. [*Manifest za učenje odraslih v 21. stoletju*](#).

Non-formal meeting of EAAL national coordinators and representatives of EPAL NSSs from the SEE region (9 December 2015, Ljubljana, Slovenia): we organized the meeting alongside a bigger conference titled ‘Building bridges in adult education’ (more: <http://pro.acs.si/gm2015>). The conference brought together 95 participants, 36 of them were adult education stakeholders from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia. In the non-formal meeting of EAAL NCs we exchanged information on planned activities in each of our countries, searched for cooperation opportunities and defined events where we could meet again.



The **4th International Andragogical Symposium** (18–20 April 2016, Makarska, Croatia) with the title ‘Management of Adult Education Providers’, was organised by the NSSs for EPAL in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. It had the aim to bring together various actors in adult education from the SEE region. At the symposium, a presentation was given on the Slovenian EAAL project (as well as on the implementation of EAAL in Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina). An additional presentation was given on the successful cooperation of national coordinator and local provider in the case of staging a Learning Parade. More information and presentations are available on the [event’s website](#).

After a couple years of intermission – the last similar event was held in 2013 in Vilnius – the European Commission organised the 2016 **conference on adult skills** called [Adult Skills: Empowering people](#). Around 300 participants, representatives of policy makers as well as of the professional and practical spheres of adult education from 37 countries, attended this event, which was organised on 6 and 7 December in Brussels as part of the [European Vocational Skills Week](#).

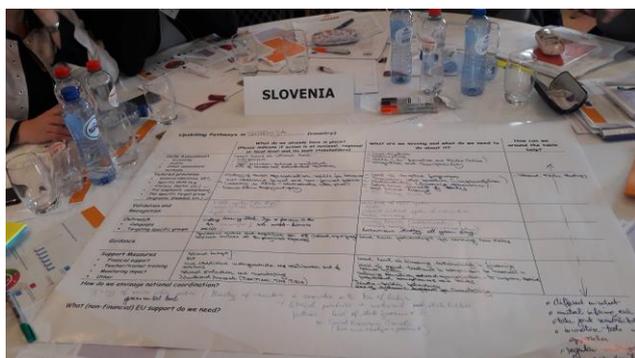
Slovenia was represented by the official delegation composed of 11 members: Irena Kuntarič Hribar from the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Katja Dovžak, MA, from the MESS, Tanja Taštanoska and Saša Ambrožič Deleja from the Eurydice unit of the MESS, Suzana Kerec and Antonija Pezdirc Tandler from the Employment Service of Slovenia and Estera Možina, MA, Tanja Vilič Klenovšek, MA, Andrej Sotošek, MA, and the author of the article, all from the SIAE.





It was easy to tell that the event was sponsored by the General Directorate of the EC for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, which is responsible for adult education, as many of the speakers came from the field of employment: Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, Detlef Eckert, Director for Skills, Dana Bachmann, Head of vocational training and adult education unit, representatives of economic institutes and associations and representatives of vocational education and training. Some balance was restored with the key speakers from the world of adult education, such as the representatives of the European Adult Education Association (EAEA), two convincing learning ambassadors from Ireland, the representative of the Slovak Ministry of Education and – last but not least – the Dutch princess Laurentien, UNESCO’s Special Envoy on Literacy for Development.

Concrete topics of adult education were much more thoroughly discussed in the three subsequent workshops in smaller groups. On the first day, the work was based on the theoretical background of the four priority areas of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL), the implementation of which in the member states started in 2012. On the second day of the conference, we touched upon the messages of the new Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (previously known as the proposition entitled Skills Guarantee) which was to be published on 19 December.



Country teams consisting of various stakeholders in adult education from 28 member states discussed various aspects of the new document, which will shape future work in this field. They discussed what they already have and what is missing in the fields defined by the Recommendation (Skills assessment, Tailored provision, Validation and recognition, Outreach, Guidance and Support measures). The most challenging was the question on who can contribute to the national coordination of the Upskilling Pathways implementation, and how.

A table was filled in by national stakeholders and the determination that synergy is needed was strengthened. Let’s hope for a continuation of this attitude when it comes to practice.

At the conference, it was often plainly asked: “What is new?” A Finnish participant in the panel discussion, Petri Lempinen, even began his contribution by stating that he had been listening to similar things for years and years, but the data (the latest comes from the results of the PIAAC Survey, brilliantly presented at the conference by Deborah Roseveare from the OECD) shows that there has been no real progress. Obviously, the further development of adult skills continues to be one of the biggest challenges.



Presentations of the adult skills conference are available [here](#) (through EPAL).

Impressions from some of the Slovenian participants:

'For me personally, the conference confirmed the importance of guidance in adult education and all its specificities, including guidance before, during and after the learning process. This means support and guidance during the entire learning pathway of the individual! The conference strengthened my realisation that we have to develop innovative approaches to guidance, i.e. new outreach approaches to reach different groups of adults, especially those who are less motivated, who do not know about the options and benefits of education/learning. In order to do this, we should learn from each other, from examples of good (efficient) practices. The networking and collaboration between partners at different levels must also find new forms of connection and collaboration – at the national and local level. It was also confirmed for me that we must include the learners into all processes of education and guidance as ambassadors who represent positive learning experiences and motivate others.'

Tanja Vilič Klenovšek, MA, SIAE



'In short, the topics that were announced were also discussed at the conference panels and workshops, though mostly from a general point of view – in the form of realisations of research on the assessment of levels of (general) skills in the adult population and subsequent general guidelines for their improvement. Even the examples of implemented systems and examples of (good) practices in public and private institutions in the wider adult education field I had the opportunity to hear did not introduce anything new. The common realisation was that both the functioning of an already implemented system and the realisation and transfer of good measures into practice depend on the money. What I missed the most were more concrete guidelines and perhaps even more concrete answers/solutions and novelties we would be able to use in our work with a specific target group of vulnerable adults and in our work with persons with low skill level.'

Personally, everything that happened at the conference sparked my interest or maybe even made me realise that I and all other individuals (and as a consequence the entire society) should be more aware of the problem of the so-called inactive and excluded or, as the Dutch princess called them, the “invisible” people who are not among us. But they are still here – close to us and yet far from our thoughts and eyes! How do we find the way to them?'

Antonija Pezdirc Tandler, Employment Service of Slovenia



'The conference on adult skills included very different participants, brought together by the Directorate of the EC for employment in order to prepare the national environments for the implementation of the upcoming recommendation on Upskilling Pathways. After transferring adult education and vocational education from the Directorate for education, the General Directorate of the EC for employment was forced to deal with a field governed by different rules than the labour market. It seems that the General Directorate of the EC for employment considers the independent national policies in the field of education, which has been even further subordinated to the labour market by the new “skills agenda”, a managerial problem. The dispersion of the adult education sector and the diverse national policies make the problem even worse.'

During the panels, I expected a more in-depth presentation of the upcoming document. The presentations at the workshops and thematic discussions I visited (Coherent policy in adult education and Information technology in adult education) were mostly illustrative and did not focus on the concrete problems.

It seems that the efforts of the Commission (and the resources for the event) were focused mostly on workshops, where they brought together stakeholders from different countries, gave them the planned structure of the discussion and schematics of the action plan and forced onto them the responsibility for implementation of a document that has not yet been adopted and which will not have legislative power but will act only as a political commitment.'

Tanja Taštanoska, Eurydice Slovenia

'One of the important highlights from the EC initiative Upskilling Pathways is that for many adults secondary vocational education (level 3 and 4 of the European Qualifications Framework) can be an unattainable goal, since these adults first need to improve their basic skills, such as literacy and mathematical and numerical skills. At the conference in Brussels, we came to

a realisation that most people agreed with, that the success of the Upskilling Pathways initiative mostly depends on the efficiency of the policies for improving basic skills provided by the Member States.

However, despite the very positive intentions of the EC and the above mentioned initiative, some of the participants, mostly adult educators, warned that the political language uses labels and terms that emphasise the development of only some of the skills. They believe that the term 'low skilled' is inadequate and misleading and that it puts in jeopardy the success of the well-meaning policies, since it is based solely on the results of education and the results of international surveys that assessed only a narrow selection of skills. The political speeches highlight only those skills that were assessed by standardised surveys. But the reality is the adults have many skills, knowledges and competences that were not measured and assessed by the surveys or the school system. Using the term 'low skilled', which has a negative connotation and puts the emphasis on the lack of something in the adults, can lead to policies in Member States that will deter adults from education and training. With this term, we stigmatise groups of adults who need to develop certain skills. The researchers warn that the terminology we use is very important, since it marks our discourse and influences our beliefs and values. If the policies of the Member States are based on prejudices, inadequate assessments and lack of understanding of the needs of certain groups of adults, they will not be able to draw these groups into the programmes. According to David Mallows, researcher and adult educator from Great Britain, we will only be able to ensure successful learning pathways for adults within the EC Upskilling Pathways initiative if we carefully listen to them and recognise their actual interests and needs.'

Estera Možina, MA, SIAE

'The conference on adults' skills again showed why lifelong learning is so important. Through presentations of different practices, the participants from all European countries realised that acquiring skills and competences is essential for the development of an individual, for his/her better inclusion in the society and, last but not least, active participation in the labour market. The emphasis was mostly on researching measures that different stakeholders can implement to offer less skilled and especially inactive adults, motivating adults to participate in trainings to improve their reading, computer and digital skills and competences and to improve their vocational competences. The countries combat adult inactivity in different ways, but the most important thing is to adapt the measures to the individual.

The conference concluded with an inspirational speech by her highness, the Dutch princess Laurentiene, who pointed out that each of us must through our work contribute to improving the situation in the acquisition of general competences for all adults. We must focus primarily on all adults who are inactive, excluded and invisible – recognise them, motivate them for active participation and render them visible.

For me, the most important message of the conference was that we must invest in adult education and draw inactive and less skilled adults to participate in different forms of adult education. The most important part of this is getting to know the adults and listening to them, since their hidden skills offer the key to their personal success and the success of the entire society.'

Suzana Kerec, Public Employment Service of Slovenia



Slovenian EAAL project in 2017

By the end of October 2017, the Slovenian EAAL project will come to its end. There are still many tasks ahead of us. Most of them are a continuation of events or theoretical work that had started in the previous year. We are looking forward to exciting challenges in the field of international peer learning.

In 2017 we will continue to revise and upgrade the Adult Learning Awareness Raising Strategy as well as create three new thematic action plans – one on another four public sectors and the next two on efficient media and visual promotion and on the increased role of learners in the awareness raising process. Main messages of the overall strategy and the final versions of the six thematic action plans will be published on the project website and in the next issue of the EAAL e-bulletin.

Seven more EAAL events will be carried out within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Week 2017. Again local and national stakeholders will discuss the development of adult skills and other competences as regards the four priority target

groups: young adults, the unemployed, migrants and rural population. This time the three specific events will focus on key competences for active involvement in learning communities and will address the needs and aspirations of people living in rural areas as well as the youth and older adults.

The Slovenian EAAL team together with learners' representatives and some other stakeholders will visit the AONTAS Adult Learning Festival (5–10 March) in Dublin and elsewhere. Subjects of discussion will be the involvement of learners in awareness raising and advocacy work and their training, media and visual promotion, the use of social media etc. We will also take part in the policy seminar on the theme 'The European Union: Solidarity in a Time of Uncertainty' on 10 March and report on Slovenian EAAL activities. An international EAAL closing event is foreseen in May/June where we envisage participants from Ireland and elsewhere, especially from SEE countries.

An added value of this project period that merits a mention is the heightened profile of adult education and lifelong learning, and also of the EAAL and other political instruments at the national and European levels. We are keen to continue providing our share to this process. And not to forget: examples of good EAAL practice until now (Learning Parade – Days of learning communities 2013–2015, five motivational video publications on topical adult education themes related to EAAL, and Promoting Adult Skills events) has recently been published in the Erasmus+ publication [Good Practices in the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2012–2016](#) (December 2016). We are keen to contribute some more success stories.



The EAAL team at the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education: Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik, head of project, with collaborators (see photo from left to right): Erika Brenk, Mateja Pečar, Nevenka Kocijančič, Darijan Novak, Neja Colja, Franci Lajovic and Simona Kavčič; Nina Fele, Marjetka Petelin Zadnik, Katarina Šešet, and many others.