



Professional development of adult educators and the role of the EU programme

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March 2019



Cataloguing-in-publication (CIP) was prepared by the National and University Library in Ljubljana

COBISS.SI-ID=302202880

ISBN 978-961-6628-59-4 (epub)

ISBN 978-961-6628-60-0 (pdf)

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Published by: Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes

Translation: Leemeta d.o.o.

Proof-editing: P-Lingo, Petra Tomše s.p.

Design: Simetrija d.o.o.

Cover photo: Klemen Razinger

The study is available at: www.cmepius.si/knjiznica/

Format: .pdf

Ljubljana, in June 2019

The publication is free of charge.

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INTRODUCTION

“We are multitaskers, because we are selling courses, organising, sometimes we act as psychologists, we are officials, there is also a lot of administrative work, especially in Slovenian projects, but at the same time we are also educators. We have many roles.”

(interviewee – coordinator of the EU programme)

The purpose of this material is to present and conceptualise the professional development of adult educators and to examine the impact of the EU¹ programme on the professional development of adult educators in Slovenia.

The material consists of three thematic sets and conclusion.

In the first thematic section (Chapter 2) we present some key characteristics that are important for understanding the adult education system in Slovenia.

In the second part (Chapter 3) (i), a conceptual definition of the professional development of adult educators is presented, (ii) the baseline points for understanding the professional development of adult educators in the context of European adult education policy and European programmes and projects are presented, (iii) the paths, legislation, research and basic roles important for understanding the professional development of adult educators in Slovenia are given.

The third thematic section (Chapter 4) shows: (a) the results of Interim National Report on the Implementation and Impact of Erasmus+ Programme on the professional development of adult educators in Slovenia, (b) an analysis of the impact of the individual mobility of adult educators on their professional development, (c) the findings of interviews with two EU Programme Coordinators at two selected adult education centres about the impact of the EU programme (individual mobility, strategic partnerships) on the professional development of employees in the organisation.

The conclusion summarises the key points for understanding the professional development of adult educators, and presents reflections on the impact of the EU programme on the professional development of adult educators.

¹ This is a Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and/or Erasmus+ programme.

1. On adult education in Slovenia²

1.1 How is adult education defined?

Adult education is an extremely complex and heterogeneous area; it covers the very diverse educational needs of a very heterogeneous population. Adult education “includes education, upgrading, training and learning of people who have been involved in education at any time after completion of initial education with the intention to acquire, update, expand and deepen their knowledge”.

Adult education does not take place only in organisations and institutions that are specifically set up for education. In particular, non-formal education, which is less structured and standardised, and focuses more specifically on the specific interests and needs of individual environments and target groups, takes place in very different ways and in different organisational forms.

1.2 Definition of adults

The concept of an adult is immediately understandable by intuition, but it is difficult to define since the definition depends on “the expectations of society and the time in which an individual lives”.

There are various definitions:

- The word denotes maturity and a person who has reached a period of maturity (age); it refers to a person who has completed the period of growth and preparation, and has passed from the state of immaturity and dependence to the state of maturity and independence, thus obtaining the status of a responsible being towards society.
- Adults can be defined on the basis of different stages of development during childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Such definitions are based primarily on the psychological and psychosocial understanding of adult development, which, due to his/her maturity, should be taught differently and have different educational needs from children and adolescents at earlier stages of development.
- Many social and legal conventions link adults to a certain age. In this context, an adult is defined as a person who has reached the age of majority and has acquired the right to vote at a certain age. However, the age at which this right is assigned to an individual is not

² Summarised from: Ivančič, A., Čelebič, T. Drogenik, O., Jelenc Krašovec, S., Kramar, M., Mohorčič Špolar, V. A., Možina, E., Sotošek, A., Radinovič Hajdič, M., Urbanč, M. and Vilič Klenovšek, T. (2011). Izobraževanje odraslih. In: J. Krek and M. Metljak (ed.). Bela knjiga o vzgoji in izobraževanju v Republiki Sloveniji. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, pp. 369–418. Adult Education Act. (1996). Official Gazette of the RS, No. 12/1996. Adult Education Act. (2018). Official Gazette of the RS, No. 6/2018. Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia for 2013–2020. (2013). Official Gazette of the RS, No. 90/2013. Eurydice. (2019). Slovenia: Adult education and training. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-77_en. Ličen, N. (2006). Uvod v izobraževanje odraslih: izobraževanje odraslih med moderno in postmoderno. Ljubljana: Faculty of Arts. Hunt, C. (2005). Adult. In: L. M. English (ed.). International Encyclopedia of Adult Education. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 33–36. Titmus, C. (1996). Adult Education: Concepts and Principles. In: A. C. Tuijnman (ed.). International Encyclopedia of Adult Education and Training. Oxford, New York, Tokyo: Pergamon, pp. 9–17. European Adult Learning Glossary, Level 2. Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector. (2008). Available at: http://edz.bib.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-b/gdbk/10/adultglossary2_en.pdf. OECD. (2013). OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills. OECD Publishing.

uniformly defined in different countries and varies from 16, 18 and 21 years, which is why attempts to define an adult on the basis of the age criterion are problematic. In the European adult education area, any person aged 16 years or more who has left initial education and training is considered an adult despite the concerns. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which has a global reach, has defined an adult in its study “Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies” on the basis of age – a person aged 16–65 years is considered as an adult.

- In Slovenia, the Adult Education Act (1996, 2006) and the Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia (2013) define an adult as a “participant in adult learning”, i.e., a person who does not have the status of a pupil or student, and is included in an adult education programme, while the Adult Education Act from 2018 specifies that adults are “persons who have concluded their basic education and want to acquire, update, expand and deepen their knowledge” or an adult is a person aged 15 or older years, who did not complete elementary education or fulfil his/her elementary school obligations.

To sum up: adult is a person who fulfils his/her individual and collective roles. In this sense, andragogy uses a definition that an adult is a person who has left regular schooling – when education was still his/her main task and when the pupil’s social role occupied the largest part of his/her time and activity – and now, when the person has assumed other social roles, he/she is returning to organised education, continues with his/her studies independently or learns in a different way.

1.3 What are the dominant forms of adult education?

Adult education can take the form of *vocational training* or *general education* aimed at personal growth and development, and cultural awareness and general social needs.

The low level of regulation and formalisation of adult education enables flexibility, therefore it represents an important way of complementing and adapting knowledge in terms of the changing demands of the economy and society as a whole as well as based on individual needs and interests. However, low levels of regulation and formalisation can reduce the transparency and measurability of the outcomes, and the impact of adult education.

1.4 What is the purpose of adult education?

Adult education has long not only been merely a second chance for those who had no opportunity to gain education when they were young, but an important factor in the development and improvement of human capital in order to increase productivity and competitiveness as well as social and cultural capital, which is necessary to reduce the democratic deficit and preserving social cohesion.

1.5 Which education programmes are available to us?

Educational programmes are:

- accredited educational programmes that enable the acquisition of an accredited education or vocational qualification;
- other educational programmes for adults, some of which allow for the attainment of an accredited certificate (they do not provide accredited education), while others are non-formal education programmes that do not provide either accredited education or accredited knowledge.

Table 1: Adult education programmes according to the priority area, type and nature of educational programmes

Priority area	Type of educational programme	Educational programmes
General adult education	Literacy and basic skills programmes	Training for Life Successfulness: – Reading and writing together – Bridge to Education – Challenges of Rural Areas – My Step – Me and my Workplace
	Other programmes	– Computer literacy for adults – Project Learning for Young Adults (PLYA) – Accredited languages programmes (e.g., Hungarian for adults, English for adults, German for adults, etc.) – Programmes for immigrants (Initial Integration of Immigrants, Slovene as a Second and Foreign Language, Slovene for Foreigners)
	“Liberal” education	– study societies – centres for independent learning – knowledge exchange
Education for raising educational levels of adults	Elementary education	– elementary education
	Secondary education	– lower vocational education – vocational education – middle secondary vocational and technical education – secondary general education – master craftsman/foreman/shop manager education
	Tertiary education	– vocational education – higher education (part-time studies)
Training and education for work purposes	Active labour market policy programmes	– “On the job” training for young adults – Institutional training – Preparation for the National Vocational Qualification – Project Learning for Young Adults (PLYA)

Source: Eurydice, 2018

In addition to the above-mentioned programmes, which mostly take place in educational institutions, adult education programmes are also carried out by organisations that are not educational organisations by their primary activity, but they provide education as an additional activity: professional and expert societies, and associations and their unions; Public Administration; companies; various interest associations and societies, and organisations within the non-governmental sector; libraries, museums and galleries; driving schools. In addition to public adult education organisations, many forms of non-formal education are also carried out by societies, NGOs, companies and private educational organisations, which are a key element of the educational offer in adult education.

1.6 Which are the adult education organisations?

- **Adult education centres:** they are key providers of adult education. They carry out formal and informal adult education for professional, personal and general needs. Currently, there are 34 in Slovenia.³
- **Universities of the third age:** they emerged in the mid-1980s and are aimed at pensioners, elderly workers and workers before retirement. Currently, there are 51⁴. They are organised as independent institutions or operate within other institutions, such as libraries, adult education centres, etc. Their goal is to encourage older people to remain active in their third age through learning; they perform informal education programmes.
- **Educational centres in enterprises:** they meet the educational needs of employees in a specific company, may operate also for several companies. They operate as a special organisational unit with appropriate human and material resources. In addition, education services can also be used in companies that take care of the organised provision of educational needs of employees.
- **Secondary, vocational colleges, high education institutions and faculties:** 47 public secondary schools, 66 vocational colleges and 107 high education institutions provide formal education to adults in education.
- **Educational centres with employers' organisations** (chambers of commerce): Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia, Managers' Association of Slovenia, etc.
- **Institutions, societies, associations and organisations:** organisations that are not educational organisations by their primary activity, but provide education as an additional activity (professional and expert societies, and associations and their unions; Public Administration; various interest associations and societies, and organisations within the non-governmental sector; libraries, museums and galleries; driving schools).

³ Available at:

http://www.mizs.gov.si/delovna_podrocja/direktorat_za_srednje_in_visje_solstvo_ter_izobrazevanje_odraslih/izobrazevanje_odraslih/seznam_ljudskih_univerz/.

⁴ Available at: <http://www.utzo.si/predstavitev/>.

- **Private educational organisations:** they started to form with the entry of Slovenia into a market economy, and perform both formal and non-formal education, especially vocational and professional, as well as non-formal education to meet the needs and interests of individuals.

A review of the available range of adult education in Slovenia by providers and educational programmes is available on the Kam po znanje website (<https://pregled.acs.si/>).

2. The professional development of staff in adult education⁵

Both international and European transnational organisations (e.g., UNESCO, EU) as well as the research community in adult education share an opinion on the importance of well-trained staff in adult education. However, due to the diversity of adult education, professionals working in adult education are very diverse, depending on the sector and institution, in which adult educators work. For example, the areas of work of adult educators working in schools and public universities, commercial institutes, companies, higher education institutions, clients, trade unions, NGOs, associations and interest groups, libraries, museums and galleries can vary greatly. Similarly, the education of adult educators differs greatly from one another since it comes from a variety of scientific disciplines.

This diversity of the adult education area is certainly a challenge for the professionalisation of adult education, which is why it remains a project that is constantly being carried out. Among the main tasks performed by adult educators are management, planning, counselling, and teaching.

2.1 Can we talk about the professional development of staff in adult education?

Those researching adult education find that it cannot be classified as a classical (traditional) profession (such as medicine, law) since there are many occupations and jobs in the field of adult education. Therefore, they say that the professional development of staff in adult education should be regarded as the development of professionalism (expertise), that is, the professional conduct of a person with appropriate scientific knowledge and according to the code of ethics that works in practice in the field of adult education.

Various professional organisations are significantly contributing to the development of professionalism of staff working in the practice of adult education, such as: universities that carry out study programmes in the field of adult education (and other advanced training programmes); (national) adult education centres (centres) that combine research and development with the needs of practice, by ensuring the professional development of adult education staff through education, training and advanced training, and carrying out other tasks; associations of adult education

⁵ Summarised from: Čelebič, T., Drogenik, O., Ivančič, A., Jelenc Krašovec, S., Mohorčič Špolar, V. A. and Zver, E. (2011). *Izobraževanje odraslih v Sloveniji: stanje in izzivi*. Ljubljana: Educational Research Institute. Ivančič, A., Čelebič, T., Drogenik, O., Jelenc Krašovec, S., Kramar, M., Mohorčič Špolar, V. A., Možina, E., Sotošek, A., Radinovič Hajdič, M., Urbanč, M. and Vilič Klenovšek, T. (2011). *Izobraževanje odraslih*. In: J. Krek and M. Metljak (ed.). *Bela knjiga o vzgoji in izobraževanju v Republiki Sloveniji*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, pp. 369–418. *Adult Education Act*. (1996). Official Gazette of the RS, No. 12/1996. *Adult Education Act*. (2018). Official Gazette of the RS, No. 6/2018. Mikulec, B. (2019). Competencies of adult education professionals in the European and Slovene context. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971418805502>. Doyle, L., Egetenmeyer, R., Singai, C. and Devi, U. (2016). Professionalisation as development and as regulation: Adult education in Germany, the United Kingdom and India. *International Review of Education*, 62, Vol. 3, pp. 317–341. Ovesni, K. (2018). Professionalization of the Field of Adult Education in Former Yugoslavia. *Andragoška spoznanja*, 24, No. 4, pp. 19–36. Egetenmeyer, R., Schmidt-Lauff, S., & Boffo, V. (ed.) (2017). *Adult Learning and Education in International Contexts: Future Challenges for its Professionalization. Comparative Perspectives from the 2016 Würzburg Winter School*. Frankfurt. Peter Lang. Nemeth, B. (2017). The role of person and personality in adult education. Adult educators with changing missions and engagements. *Andragogical Studies*, 2, pp. 9–26. Možina, T. (2011). Andragoško spopolnjevanje in strokovni razvoj izobraževalcev odraslih. *Andragoška Spoznanja*, 17, Vol. 4, pp. 23–43.

providers (or associations of individual types of organisations in adult education, e.g. Association of Adult Education Centres, Third Life University Association, etc.); societies engaged in adult education.

In addition to professional organisations the following bodies also contribute significantly to professional development of adult education: (a) the state through the management of the adult education system with legislation and education policies; (b) educational staff and learning persons through a reciprocal teaching and learning process.

2.2 What are the baseline points for adult educators in the context of the EU?

2.2.1 European adult education policy

With the turn of the millennium, we can see that the EU has paid special attention to adult education. In the context of European adult education policy, special attention is paid to the professional development of adult educators. The basic documents of the European adult education policy, such as *Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn* (2006), *Adult Learning: It is always a good time to learn* (2007), an *Action Plan on Adult Learning: It is always a good time to learn*, the *Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning* (2011), *Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on the Quality of Adult Education* (2013), *Upskilling Pathways: New opportunities for adults* (2016), highlight the importance of professional development of employees in adult education as this represents an essential quality factor in adult education. In addition, they also highlight some less favourable factors for the professional development of adult educators, as they face extreme working conditions, part-time employment (or work as volunteers), have few career opportunities, in some EU Member States they also pay little attention to the initial education and advanced training of adult educators.

The European Council thus recommends to Member States, inter alia, that they strive to ensure the quality of adult education providers and to improve the quality of adult education personnel by establishing effective systems for their initial education and advanced training, career development and the promotion of teacher mobility, managers' training and other staff in adult education.

2.2.2 In the EU programmes⁶

One such incentive is definitely the Erasmus+ programme.

Erasmus+ is a programme of the European Union that promotes networking, cooperation and mobility in the fields of education and training, youth and sport. It is the successor to the Lifelong Learning Programme and is being implemented in the period between 2014 and 2020. A new programme is coming in 2021, which will broadly follow the established practice of the existing programme in terms of content and organisation.

The programme covers the entire vertical of the education system, so that within the framework of this programme, organisations working in the field of adult education can also receive funding for cooperation.

⁶ This is a Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and/or Erasmus+ programme.

In the context of the aforementioned EU programmes, adult education is defined as general non-vocational education, which mainly refers to strengthening the basic competencies of adults. Organisations can participate in two types of projects that differ according to the needs of the organisation and, consequently, the project's goal.

Mobility projects (Key Activity 1 – KA1) focus on the quality of the work of adult education organisations. If the organisation detects the need to expand the competencies, knowledge and experience of its staff, it may opt to participate in a mobility project. It allows educators to participate in a structured course, visit a related institution abroad, where they exchange experiences with their colleague or colleagues from this institution, and may also teach at this institution. Participation in projects should contribute to improving the quality of work of educators and activities for adult learners, better understanding of social, linguistic and cultural diversity and responding to it, opportunities for professional and career development, as well as improved knowledge of foreign languages of educators. All this leads to a higher quality of the work of the adult education organisation itself.

Strategic partnerships (Key Activity 2 – KA2) focus on the quality of the education system. They are designed to find solutions in a specific area where a deficiency is identified (inadequate material for a specific target group, unmanageable curriculum, etc.), or an upgrade of the existing work method is required. Strategic partnerships projects involve organisations from different countries and can develop a specific innovation addressing the identified deficiency (for example, a new curriculum, a new manual, new materials for work, etc.) or transferring good practice among themselves in the area where it is identified that organisations can thus enrich their work with one another, share this good practice at national level, and thus contribute to improving the quality of the system. Participation in a strategic partnership project represents a contribution to the enhanced operational capacity of organisations at the EU or international level, and enables an innovative and better orientation of the organisation to its target group. With appropriate dissemination of results, cooperation contributes to the quality of education systems in the participating countries.

Here are some examples of projects co-financed by the EU:

- As part of the Lifelong Learning Programme (sub-programme Grundtvig), the EU co-financed the project “A Good Adult Educator” (shorter AGADE)⁷, which identified the basic areas of knowledge, skills and the ethical code of adult educators in Europe. The results of the project were also adopted by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) in the form of recommendations⁸.
- The EU co-financed the project “Adult Learning Professions in Europe” (shorter ALPINE), which examined the skills and competencies of adult educators in informal (or non-professional) education. From the point of view of the roles of adult educators, the project stressed that teaching is still the most important task of adult educators, but is combined with other tasks, such as: management, consulting, coaching and supervision, financial administration, acquisition of projects and activities related to development strategy and evaluation.⁹

⁷ Project No.: 114092-CP-I-2004-I-EE-Grundtvig-GII.

⁸ Available at: http://edz.bib.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-b/gdbk/06/adult_education%20trends.pdf.

⁹ Available at: https://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/MumAE/adultprofreport_en.pdf.

- The EU co-financed a research report entitled “Key competencies for adult learning professionals”¹⁰, which identified seven generic competencies relevant to the implementation of all adult education activities (these competencies should be developed by any expert working in the field of adult education), and twelve specific competencies that depend on the field of work of adult educators.
- Within the Erasmus+ programme, EU co-financed the “Comparative Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning” (shorter COMPALL) project, which, through the preparation and implementation of the COMPALL module at the second or third Bologna level in various European universities, helped to strengthen the professionalisation of adult educators in the European environment. The project also created an on-line community of graduates and young researchers in the field of adult education¹¹.

2.2.3 In the ePlatform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)

In addition to participation in the programmes, the EU also promotes the linking of educators from one or several fields of education, and through this, encourages them to collaborate or exchange knowledge, good practices and experiences. In the field of adult education, there is an active platform EPALE¹², which covers content from both vocational and non-vocational adult education.

This is an electronic adult education platform in Europe for professionals in the field of adult education. It is available in the Slovene language as well as the remaining 23 official EU languages. At EPALE, adult educators can keep track of news, blogs, sources and events in one place, monitor the development of adult education policies. It also enables the search and exchange of good practices of adult education professionals from all over Europe.

Educators from all over Europe can monitor developments in their field in other countries, and find related organisations that share their experiences. In this way, practices are shared, organisations can find topics that are of interest to them on the platform, and perhaps also partners to participate in projects.

2.3 The course of professional development of adult educators in Slovenia

2.3.1 Initial and in-service training and up-skilling of adult educators

The following institutions are responsible for a systematic initial training of educators:

- Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana with the study programme Andragogy in the second and third Bologna cycle (within the scope of the interdisciplinary programme Humanities and social sciences), meanwhile the study programme Pedagogics and in the first

¹⁰ Available at: <https://docplayer.net/30496777-Key-competences-for-adult-learning-professionals.html>.

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.hw.uni-wuerzburg.de/compall/startseite/> and <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8445381>.

¹² Website: <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sl>.

Bologna cycle enables the acquisition of knowledge in adult education as part of individual subjects;

- Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska with its study programme Adult Education and Career Development, meanwhile the study programme Educational Sciences/Pedagogy in the first Bologna cycle enables the acquisition of knowledge in adult education as part of individual subjects.

Knowledge in the field of adult education can also be obtained in the context of individual subjects at the first and second Bologna cycle in the Pedagogy programme at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor; in the context of individual subjects in the first, second and third cycle in the programme Organisation and Management of Human Resources and Educational Systems at the Faculty of Organisational Sciences, University of Maribor; in the context of individual subjects in the second cycle in the programme Sociology – Management of Organisations, Human Resources and Knowledge, and in the third cycle in the programme Human Resources and Organisational Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana; in the context of individual subjects in the first cycle in the programme Innovation Management in Social and Education Sector, and in the second cycle in the programme Management in Social and Education Sector at the DOBA Business School, and in other related programmes.

Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana and Maribor, Faculty of Education in Ljubljana, Maribor and Koper are conducting pedagogical-andragogical training for educational staff in primary and secondary schools, and lecturers of higher vocational colleges in the context of training programmes. Experts (alumni from non-pedagogical study on other faculty) undergo this study model to acquire a teacher's licence.

Those who want to further improve the knowledge of adult educators, who are already working in adult education or other areas, but also face adult education in their work, are covered by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE)¹³. Three basic training courses performed by SIAE are:

- general basic training and up-skilling for andragogical work (knowledge of andragogical cycle)
- basic specialist training for special roles in andragogical work (specialist knowledge for the provision of specific roles in adult education);
- andragogical advanced training (enhancing knowledge and strengthening professional identity).

2.3.2 Legislation

Adult education is one of the areas where educational requirements for the performance of works and tasks, which are formally defined as a prerequisite for the implementation of educational activities, are legally defined. "Adult education is carried out by teachers, lecturers on vocational colleges, adult education organisers and other professionals at adult education centres, schools or their units, specialised organisations for adult education, and other organisations registered for adult education [...], in entrepreneurial education centres and by private teachers who have the status of a private teacher." The condition is higher education of the second level of the appropriate direction, and persons coming from other educational routes must undergo a programme of pedagogical-andragogical education, which is accredited and carried out by the competent university institutions. It is also necessary to pass the examination of professional competence. The law states that young

¹³ See: https://izobrazevanje.acs.si/programoteka_as/.

people who conclude higher education or university studies in this field are required to undergo an internship of 8 to 10 months prior to their employment, depending on the educational attainment.

The fulfilment of those requirements applies to those wishing to be entered in the register at the competent ministry. The fulfilment of educational requirements is also required for the implementation of non-public informal education, which is (co-)financed from public funds.

2.3.3 Research findings on the up-skilling of adult educators

Based on accessible and conducted studies on the professional development of adult educators (at primary and secondary school level and in non-formal adult education), we can highlight that in adult education: work is carried out by people of different educational profiles; jobs are predominantly based on copyright and work contracts; based on formal education, there are predominantly staff with higher education degree; only one half of the teachers and other educational staff have pedagogical-andragogical education, and three quarters of people with pedagogical-andragogical education have passed the examination of professional competence.

In a study carried out by SIAE in 2008 regarding the andragogical up-skilling of adult educators, almost 70 per cent of respondents perfect their andragogical knowledge within an organisation where they work as adult educators, a little over 40 per cent is perfecting their knowledge at SIAE, 36 per cent on various domestic professional consultations, a good 20 per cent in international projects, a little less than 20 per cent on study visits abroad, less than 15 per cent at the Faculty of Arts (and a little more than 6 per cent in other faculties), and a good 8 percent do not improve their knowledge.

2.3.4 Some of the professions and jobs of adult educators in practice

Some basic professions, work positions and roles carried out by adult educators in today's practice are:

- andragogue;
- organiser of adult education;
- director/headteacher of an educational organisation for adults;
- head of adult education;
- teacher (lecturer) of adults;
- mentor in adult education (e.g., mentor in e-learning, mentor of study circles, mentor in the project learning of young adults, mentor in the company, mentor at the university of the third age, etc.);
- an advisor in adult education (e.g., advisor at the ISIO centre, education quality development advisor, advisor in organised self-study, etc.);
- instructor in adult education;
- animator in adult education;
- informer in adult education.

3. The impact of participation in the EU programme on the professional development of adult educators in Slovenia

Professional development of adult educators can, in addition to the system of initial education and advanced training, be enhanced also by the participation in mobility projects or in the projects of strategic partnerships within the Erasmus+ programme.

In accordance with the above, we were interested in the impact of participation in the EU programme on the professional development of adult educators in Slovenia. For this purpose, we have:

1. summarised the results of Interim National Report on the Implementation and Impact of Erasmus+ Programme¹⁴, which, among other, also examined professional development in the field of adult education;
2. analysed the reports of 207 participants who participated in individual mobility in the field of adult education within Key Activity 1¹⁵, in terms on their professional development;
3. analysed the international (co)operation (individual mobility, strategic partnerships) of two selected adult education centres in Slovenia within the framework of Key Activities 1 and 2 in terms of the professional development of employees in organisations.

3.1 Findings of the Interim Report on the Implementation and Impact of Erasmus+ Programme

The aforementioned evaluation study included 301 institutions for adult education (adult education centres, adult education units in secondary schools, private institutions and other institutions) and 152 respondents in the field of adult education; of these, 89 responses were suitable for the analysis.

40% of respondents performed the work of a director, 25% were organisers of adult education, 17% were heads of adult education, 8% were coordinators of EU programme¹⁶, 3% worked as teachers, educational staff, or performed other works. Respondents came from various institutions: 33% came from the adult education unit in a secondary school, 29% from private adult education organisations, 18% from adult education centres, 3% from NGOs and other specialised organisations, and 17% from other providers (e.g., a public institution, a development agency, a youth centre, etc.).

¹⁴ Klemenčič, E. (2017). *Vmesno nacionalno poročilo o implementaciji in učinkih programa Erasmus+*. Available at: http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/SMEU/E__nacionalno_porocilo_izobrazevanje.pdf

¹⁵ Cmepius, 2019 (internal material).

¹⁶ This is a Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and/or Erasmus+ programme.

The study examined the impact of the Erasmus+ programme at the individual, institutional, and system levels. The respondents had to select one of three options when answering: whether the impact in a certain area was negative, positive or there was none.

3.1.1 How familiar are adult educators with the EU programmes and EPALE

Most adult educators (68%) believe that they are very familiar with the EU programme, while EPALE (Electronic Adult Education Platform in Europe) is less known; 37% of respondents know about the platform, while 31% of respondents know it well.

4.1.2 What is the impact of the EU programme on the professional development of adult educators?

At the institution level

At the institution level, the professional development of adult educators was studied through the respondents' opinion on the positive impact on many areas of work of organisations, for example on promoting cross-curricular integration, new forms and methods of teaching, the use of new study aids and materials, the implementation of a compulsory program and additional activities, ICT in the institution, and the skills of employees in a foreign language in terms of the communication.

The majority of respondents (91%) believe that participation in the EU programme has a positive impact on the use of new learning tools and materials, familiarity with new forms and methods of teaching, the use of diverse forms and methods of teaching, training of foreign language teachers, familiarity with and understanding of adult education systems in partner countries, familiarity with foreign didactic environments, motivation of educators to introduce changes and innovations in teaching.

A bit fewer (between 80% and 90%) believe that cooperation has a positive impact on the social competencies of educators, the organisational and managerial skills of educators (the ability and willingness to organize and manage projects, and teams), educators' awareness of the European cultural and moral values, strengthening respect for different cultures and familiarity with the European institutions, and their functioning.

The results, which focus primarily on studying the professional development of adult educators in relation to teaching, i.e., the role of the adult educator, show that the EU programme contributes to the strengthening and modernisation of didactic knowledge, the use of a foreign language and the work in the international (intercultural) environment, and strengthens organisational and managerial skills.

At the system level

At the level of the education system, the professional development of adult educators was studied through the respondents' opinion on the positive impact on various aspects of the work of

organisations, including on the quality of work of organisations, and on the professional development of educational staff.

The majority of respondents (96%) believe that the participation in the EU programme has a positive impact on innovation and the dissemination of good practices within Slovenia, 93% of them consider that it impacts the professional development of adult educators, and 91% believe that it promotes quality improvements, and a general increase in the quality of learning/teaching.

Among 80% to 90% of respondents believe that participation in the programme has a positive impact on the internationalisation of the adult education system, the participation of different stakeholders (educators, decision-makers, local communities, etc.), promotion of awareness of the importance of life-long learning in Europe, support to national adult education policies, the dissemination of good practices in Europe, and the better use of EU transparency and recognition tools.

The basic message of the obtained results of the Interim Report is that, according to experts in adult education, the EU programme contributes both to the quality of the adult education system, and to their professional development at the system level.

3.2 What do participants of individual mobility think about the impact on their professional development?

The analysis of the individual mobility of participants encompassed data for the period 2014–2016. In 2014, 114 educational staff members attended individual mobility, 69 in 2015, and 24 in 2016¹⁷. In total, 207 educational staff members.

Data were collected on the basis of individual mobility reports, completed by each participant after completing mobility. The organisation submitting the project must report each individual mobility to the reporting system (Mobility Tool+). Through this system, a questionnaire is automatically sent to the mobility participant, through which the participant prepares a report on his/her mobility. The participant uses a five-level scale (1 – I strongly disagree to 5 – I strongly agree) to assess the importance of mobility for his/her personal and professional development. Table 2 shows the results of individual mobility on the personal and professional development of adult education professionals.

Table 2: Personal and professional development of educational staff after performed mobility

Personal and professional development after performed mobility	Average value	Number of participants	Standard deviation
I have made new contacts	4.66	207	0.634
I have studied abroad based on good practice	4.60	207	0.674
I have improved my social, language and/or cultural competencies	4.48	207	0.723
I have improved my knowledge on the subject I teach, about my area of expertise	4.45	207	0.780

¹⁷ The number of approved projects is increasing each year, with the exception of 2016, when we recorded a drastic decline in applications, and consequently only 4 projects in the individual mobility action (KA1) were approved. In that year, there was also a significant reduction in the number of participants.

I have acquired practical skills relevant to my current work and professional development	4.41	207	0.776
I have strengthened or expanded my professional network	4.29	207	0.839
I have upgraded my knowledge of adult education systems in other countries	4.27	207	0.941
I have improved my knowledge of a foreign language	4.23	207	0.854
I have increased my work satisfaction	4.18	207	0.893
I have increased my awareness of new methods of evaluation/credit validation of skills or competencies acquired in a formal/non-formal educational context	4.15	207	0.920
I have shared my knowledge and skills with learning and/other people	4.10	207	0.961
I have increased my awareness of (European) mechanisms of project financing of adult education	4.08	207	0.967
I have strengthened the cooperation with a partnership institution/organisation	4.06	207	0.969
I have improved my employment and professional possibilities	3.88	207	0.955
I have strengthened my organisational/managerial skills	3.85	207	0.882
I have improved my competencies in the use of ICT tools (e.g. PC, Internet, virtual platforms, software, ICT devices, etc.).	3.37	207	1.116
I have started co-operation with agents in civil society	3.36	207	1.086
I have started co-operation with agents on the labour market	2.78	207	1.078

Source: Cmeplus, 2019

According to the opinion of participants in individual mobility, the latter most strongly influenced their professional development in the field of acquiring new knowledge about good practices abroad, their social, linguistic and cultural competencies, the professional field of work (or teaching), and the practical skills relevant to their professional development. Mobility also has a significant impact on the strengthening of professional networks involving educational staff, the familiarity with and understanding of adult education systems in other countries, and the use of new methods for assessing and valuation of knowledge acquired both in formal and non-formal education. It is also possible to recognise the impact in acquiring managerial and organisational skills, and the skills of using information and communication technology.

We can conclude from the above that individual mobility strengthens the professional development of educational staff, since through mobility, they acquire both new professional knowledge and practical skills as well as social, linguistic and/or cultural competencies relevant to their professional performance.

3.3 What representatives of adult education centres think about the impact of mobility and a strategic partnership on professional development

To gain a deeper understanding of what new knowledge, practical skills and different competencies important for the professional development of adult educators are acquired by the participants in the EU programme, we conducted two interviews with the EU programme coordinators in February 2019 at two select adult education centres from the eastern Slovenian region – institutions that can be considered key providers of adult education by providing both formal and non-formal education for vocational, personal and general needs. In order to gain the trust of both adult education centres and coordinators, we provided them with anonymity. With the permission of both adult education centres, we recorded interviews with a sound recorder. Recordings of interviews were copied and edited for further processing.

Both EU programme coordinators have been working in the field of adult education for almost ten years. They have reached the seventh level of education according to the Slovenian classification (meaning a university degree) in the field of social sciences, and have obtained formal pedagogical-andragogical education. One of them has also passed a teaching certification examination. In addition to their role as EU programme coordinators, they also perform other work tasks (organiser of education, head of language programmes), although one of them works mainly as the coordinator of the EU programme in recent years. Both of them also stressed that they, as well as other colleagues of the people's university, are actively involved in the programmes of further professional training for adult educators organised by SIAE. They also take part in annual adult education conferences and conferences organised by the SIAE, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MIZŠ), the CMEPIUS, the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, the Association of Adult Education Centres of Slovenia (ZLUS), as well as various training events and up-skilling, organised by other people's universities or adult education centres. They are mostly focused on those areas that are related to the needs of the adult education centre in the local environment. They acquire, for example, new knowledge in the field of mentoring, counselling, languages, work with immigrants, basic professional competencies, the use of information and communication technology in teaching, (new) methods of teaching, management and leadership in education, valuation of non-formally and occasionally acquired knowledge, etc.

According to the coordinators of the EU programme, participation in programmes, further education and training activities at national, regional and local level is very important for the professional development of employees at both adult education centres.

Education, training and acquired knowledge in mobility and in a strategic partnership

We interviewed both EU programme coordinators at selected adult education centres to find out their opinion is about education, training and acquired knowledge in mobility projects, and in a strategic partnership project regarding the professional development of employees in the organisation.

As reported, their employees educate, train and gain knowledge in various fields. They specifically put an emphasis on counselling, work with vulnerable target groups (e.g., migrants, the unemployed, adults with special needs), primary education, key competencies, education for sustainable development, multi-generational learning, motivational measures in education, the use of information and communication technology in education, modern approaches to teaching and learning (e.g., reverse learning, combined learning), and media literacy.

By participating in the EU programme, the employees in the organisation, according to the coordinators, gain and/or strengthen also other competencies, such as language competencies,

computer-digital competencies, intercultural competencies, communication competencies, and organizational and managerial competencies.

According to one of the coordinators, the organisation may learn from another organisation in a strategic partnership.

... I have had such a good example in these [...] partners [...] because in fact you can observe someone in his/her own project, who is much more experienced than you, you are lucky to see a person that has done this work many times, which you doing for the first time. And then it is also luck that [...] in this project, which we coordinate, I have a mentor.

(Interviewee No. 1)

Knowledge and innovations from the EU programme are transferred to employees either by presenting the innovations to all the employees in the organisation after the implemented mobility, or by including more employees from the organisation in a certain programme.

... every person returning from KA1 [Mobility] had a compulsory presentation for colleagues.

(Interviewee No. 1)

... it has always seemed to us a good idea to register more people for the same area [in the EU programme] who are working.

(Interviewee No. 2)

As one of the coordinators explained, the EU programme also promotes forms of group learning, which are important for finding new ideas and designing common solutions.

I think that when you get 15 or 20 people from Europe who are doing different things, you learn so much more than you have ever expected to be possible. I expected that the emphasis will be more on what the speaker will tell us, but we have found out that we already have a lot of knowledge, and if you take a few turns, talk about these things, [...] you get a lot of ideas as well as solutions to the issues you are facing at home, and you were not even aware of them.

(Interviewee No. 2)

The second coordinator stressed the importance of the EU programme for the acquisition of new knowledge and the reflection of one's own work within the organisation, which enables the view from the outside.

... I also get a lot of information in the Erasmus projects from my colleagues from abroad, who do things that we are not, or work differently, or better, or longer. However, Slovenia – at least the adult education centre – is like a smaller pool, so it seems to me that knowledge

is rapidly saturated. I think that it is really necessary for you to go out and look at your work from the outside.

... but when you go out and you move away from your local environment, where you are somehow “stuck” in one pattern of thinking and moving in the same circles, you always have the same thoughts. And when you step out, you see your workplace from afar, and your area, and then you see what your colleague is doing abroad, and is in some ways more relaxed, you are looking more creatively at things at home.

(Interviewee No. 1)

You get a lot out of being in an international environment, you also see the situation. Let us say, you are in a country where this issue is three times as topical as ours, and you actually see that partners use something, and that is exactly what we need in our country.

(Interviewee No. 2)

The EU programme also strengthens cooperation between organisations at regional and national level.

I am still often in contact with a few colleagues from other adult education centres or we have strengthened our cooperation, because we help them and they help us, and we share our experiences.

(Interviewee No. 1)

The EU programme represents a “mechanism” for introducing changes in the organization as well as for the professional development of employees in the organisation.

... Erasmus projects implement changes. You develop some new learning materials, some new practices, basically this is an attempt to make changes. The introduction of changes can be a stressful thing because the change itself is stressful [...] it depends on the leverage available to you, or also the motivation techniques you know, how you can really put these things into life.

(Interviewee No. 1)

... projects help us to reach a higher level, to solve some issues, where we will in fact have the greatest benefit, in the long run. Not to make something just to put it on a shelf, but to really have something that is then happily received by someone else and use it or change his/her way of working solely because he/she has learned something new.

(Interviewee No. 2)

The issue, which also remains topical in terms of the professional development of staff of the adult education centres, is that most of the employees are part-time employees, and it is difficult to ensure further professional development for these colleagues.

... we have outsourcers, majority of our teachers are outsourcers. This is also an issue of how to motivate these colleagues, who teach maybe in three different schools in addition to their regular job or just in different places. How to motivate them to start using the new method with us ...

(Interviewee No. 1)

... we have a lot of outsourcers coming from different backgrounds, from different business profiles, whether they are teachers in elementary schools, they teach elementary school pupils or elementary school for adults, or they can be people from the profession, people, who have their own businesses and then lecture on economic subjects. And it has always been a major problem – how to ensure that all these educators will use new methods of ICT education obtained in the EU programme.

(Interviewee No. 1)

We were interested in how the EU programme can help to upgrade the existing system for training staff in adult education at the national level. Both coordinators agree that the EU programme signifies a significant upgrade of the established national system of up-skilling and training. They particularly emphasise the speed and responsiveness with the EU programme (unlike the national system) is able respond to the current needs of the organisation in the local environment.

... there is a need, and within two years, there will be some impact and some solution to that problem. So, as far as responsiveness to any issue or need is concerned, Erasmus is really very fast. When something happens, projects on that topic appear. Let's say, if we look at the example of refugees and asylum seekers. However, it still takes time before some useful and quality training is provided, but Erasmus provided very quickly some quick solutions to solve this issue. [...] At national levels, there is a huge amount of bureaucracy before the matter comes to life, and it takes time that they are able to do something, that it gets a confirmation. Here you have the option – I have this knowledge, you have that knowledge, they know something about this, we know about that. Let's get together, and you can quickly come to one thing, within the year, two or three can already test it, and if it is great, you can go ahead. And this is it! Here, I see Erasmus as a great tool for these umbrella organisations, that things actually come in, that some good practices come into the environment, which otherwise maybe would never emerge.

(Interviewee No. 2)

One coordinator also pointed out that it would be sensible to use a more systematic approach to link the national up-skilling and training system with the achievements of the EU programme in the country, with SIAE being able to play a key role.

I think SIAE could really play some key role here, since we (with colleagues from other adult education centres) often do similar things. Perhaps SIAE could collect all this knowledge into an educational package, and afterwards offer a workshop or some kind of training for a particular area. I think that there are plenty of things to be done with different project providers. [...] Here, I see that it would be possible to connect both Erasmus and SIAE, this would be really great.

(Interviewee No. 2)

Finally, we were also interested in what is crucial for the organisation to be successful in the field of international engagement, and to upgrade its regular work by integrating newly acquired knowledge, practices, experiences in the regular work of the organisation.

Both coordinators agreed that this is the support of the management, and above all, it is incorporated in the vision of an organisation, to accept international cooperation as one of the branches of its regular activities, and also dedicates the time of its employees to it. Only in this case can international cooperation in the organisation lead to positive impact, development and upgrading.

... it was a bit shaky at the beginning, step by step, we had the same problem project after project. We were not able to make it work to the extent we have wanted to. Then there was a turning point when the director decided that the international activity would become an important activity of the institution, that this was something that we were developing, that this was something that were are doing, that this was something that needed to come into force, that it also had to be acknowledged, and that it was not something what the education organiser got as an "extra". If you get something "extra", then you also consider it as "marginal".

(Interviewee No. 2)

4. Conclusion

The present material gives the reader an insight into the complex and heterogeneous adult education system in Slovenia, and offers a reflection on the conceptualisation of the professional development of adult educators. In this context, it draws attention to the importance of the established system of initial education and advanced training, in which, in line with the role they perform, all educational staff working in the field of adult education should be involved. Namely, it is possible to build the expertise of all those who work in the field of adult education only through professional behaviour, which is based on appropriate scientific knowledge and ethical conduct.

The participation in the EU programme may contribute significantly to strengthening of the system of advanced training and up-skilling, as it is noted in Chapter 4. Participation in projects or participation in mobility strengthens the professional development of educational staff, as in this way, they acquire new expertise and practical skills, as well as social, linguistic, (inter)cultural, IC, organisational and managerial competencies, which are relevant for their professional work. Consequently, the quality of the organisation (in our case, the adult education centre) also strengthens, which has a favourable impact both on the professional development of the staff in the organisation, as well as wider in the local and regional environment, although, unfortunately, it does not reach all staff in the organisation to the same extent. Due to the large number of outsourcers at people's universities, the effects of the EU programme primarily reach regular employees of the organisation.

One of the essential components at this point is also the orientation of the organisation to work in the international field, and the determination to transfer the newly acquired knowledge and experience to its regular operation. This is a vision of the functioning of an organisation that does not perceive international engagement as an additional activity, but as a way of working.

For a more comprehensive picture of the impact of the EU programme on the professional development of adult educators, it would be necessary to have the results that would cover a larger number of studied adult education centres operating in different regional settings, as well as different types of institutions that work in the field of adult education, and significantly complement offer in adult education.



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