

As part of the Youth Ambassadors for Non-Formal Learning, DRPDNM conducted an interview with employees of Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, leading organization in the field of Non-Formal Learning in Slovenia, the questions were answered by Dr. Petra Javrh with the help of her colleagues at ACS.

Could you, please, introduce yourself briefly and say a few words about yourself, your work and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (ACS).

ACS covers general non-formal education after the division of the work of the public institution. At ACS, several experts deal with this field, for example M.Sc. Estera Možina, Vera Mlinar, Ph.D. Nevenka Bogataj, M.Sc. Peter Beltram and other experts. Each is a specialist in their specific field. For many years, I (Dr. Petra Javrh, a/n) have also been engaged in research and development on the issue of education for vulnerable groups and literacy.

In my replies to this interview, I have reproduced the views and statements of the colleagues to whom I sent your questions. Therefore, overall, it is a kind of compilation of the answers of several ACS employees. In the preparation of the answers, Estera Možina, my close colleague in the field of literacy, helped me a lot.

Who are your target groups? How many of your users are in the group between the ages of 15 and 30 and why do they come to you? What would you like to learn?

The following data was prepared by my colleague M. Sc. Peter Beltram, who has an overview of the education system at ACS. These data reveal that the defined target group is only one of many, as we are a national institution and do not work directly with the participants, i.e. adults. We take care of the network of those who work with them.

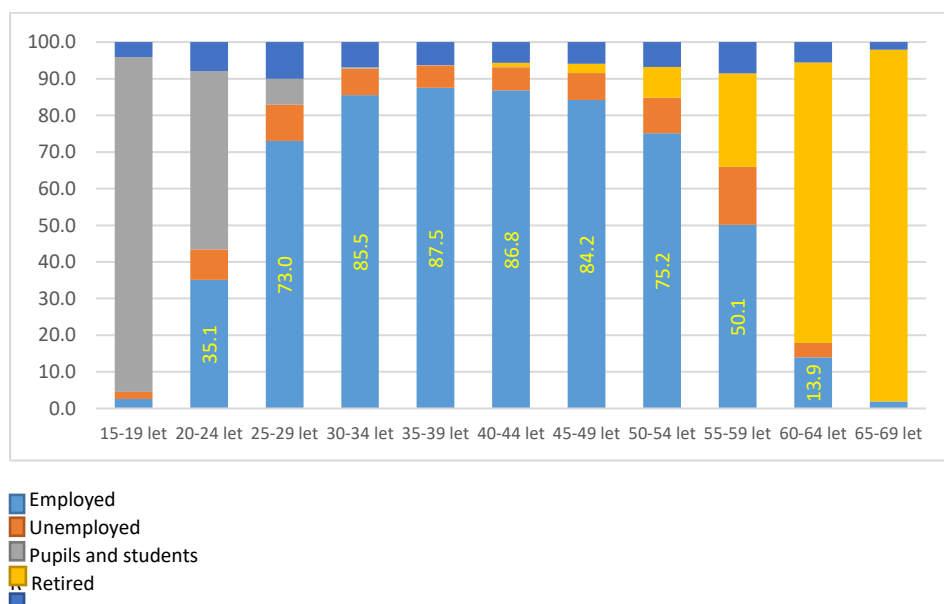
The data below is from the expert basis of the new ReNPIO 2020–2030 (Resolution on the National Adult Education Program in the Republic of Slovenia), material from 28th of May 2020.

Activity

One of the characteristics of the population of Slovenia, which is a burning problem in the further development of the country, is the low level of activity of the elderly, especially women. This level is already increasing due to demographic trends, but it largely depends on the level of education. Older, less educated residents will eventually be one of the basic target groups for adult educators.

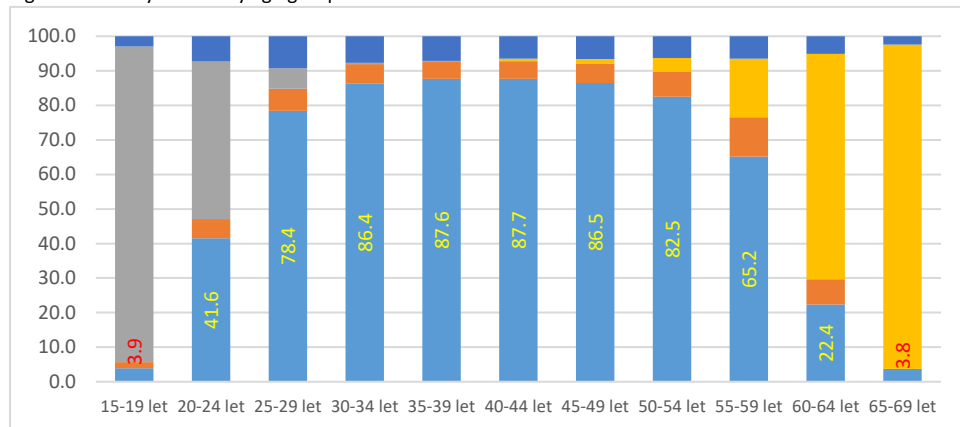
Activities by age and gender

Figure 1: Activity of men by age groups in 2011



Other inactive
 Source: Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office (SURS)

Figure 2: Activity of men by age groups in 2018



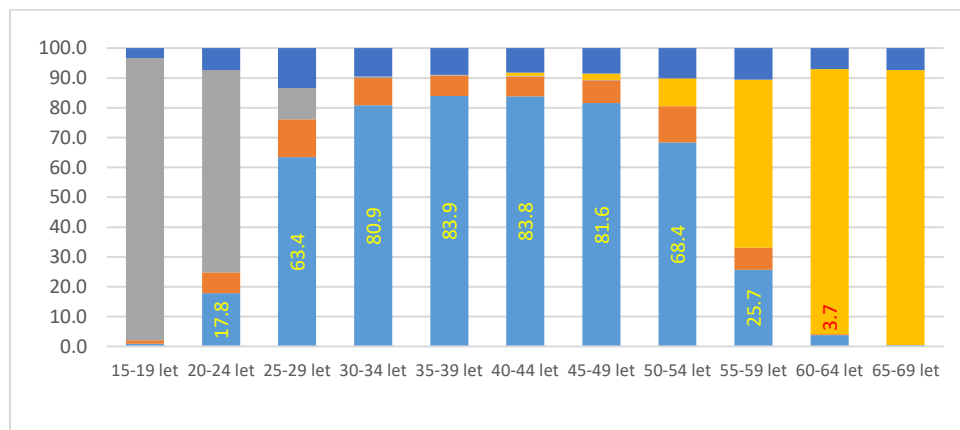
Employed
 Unemployed
 Pupils and students
 Retired
 Other inactive

Source: Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office (SURS)

In Figures 1 and 2, we can see several characteristics of the activity of the male population:

- despite a certain retirement at the age of 65, the share of active people over the age of 55, and even more so among those over the age of 60, is very low. However, we can see that this share has increased significantly in both categories in recent years;
- the share of the unemployed increases with age;
- in the most productive years (25–29), the share of the inactive in 2011 was almost 30% (of which 10% without employment or educational status), and by 2018 it had fallen to a still high 22%.

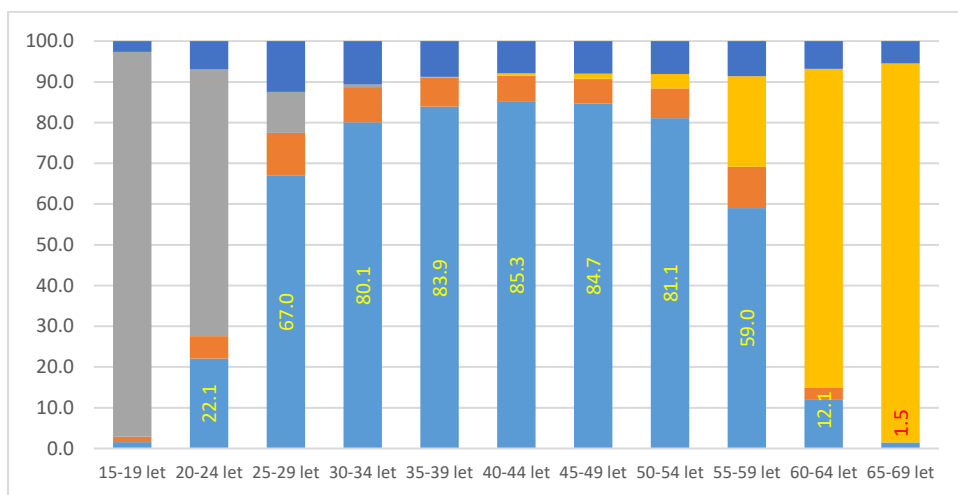
Figure 3: Activity of women by age groups in 2011



Employed
 Unemployed
 Pupils and students
 Retired
 Other inactive

Source: Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office (SURS)

Figure 4: Activity of women by age groups in 2018



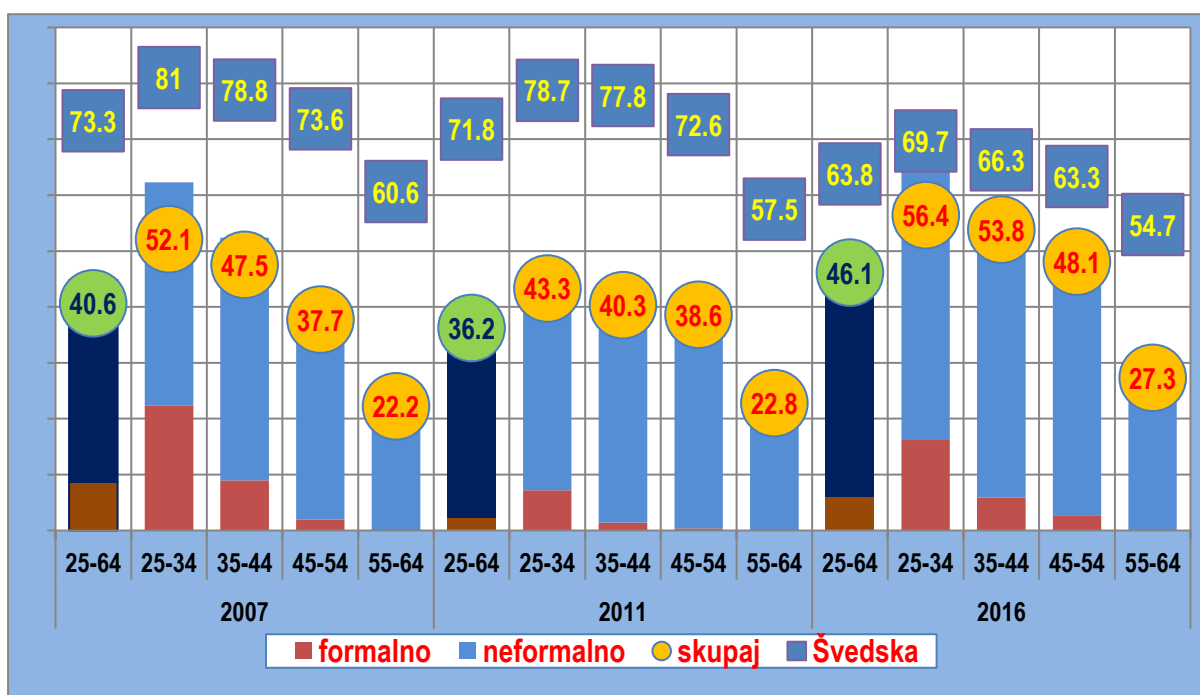
■ Employed
 ■ Unemployed
 ■ Pupils and students
 ■ Retired
 ■ Other inactive
 Source: Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office (SURS)

If we look at the same type of data for the women of Slovenia (Figures 3 and 4), we see that the above-mentioned characteristics are even more pronounced:

- the share of active women after the age of 55 was extremely low in 2011, but by 2018 it had significantly improved for the 55-59 age group. This is undoubtedly the effect of the new retirement rules;
- the share of inactive women aged between 25 and 29 is extremely high (around 38% in 2011 and still high at 33% in 2018). About 12% of them are without status.

Measuring Lifelong Learning inclusion in the 12 months before the survey understandably shows significantly higher values than those obtained when asking about activities in the last 4 weeks. The data for 2016 showed that we have already reached the target set for 2020. Nevertheless, it is useful to compare these results with one of the most successful countries in this field, i.e. with Sweden:

Figure 5: Involvement in lifelong learning (AIO) by type of education and age category



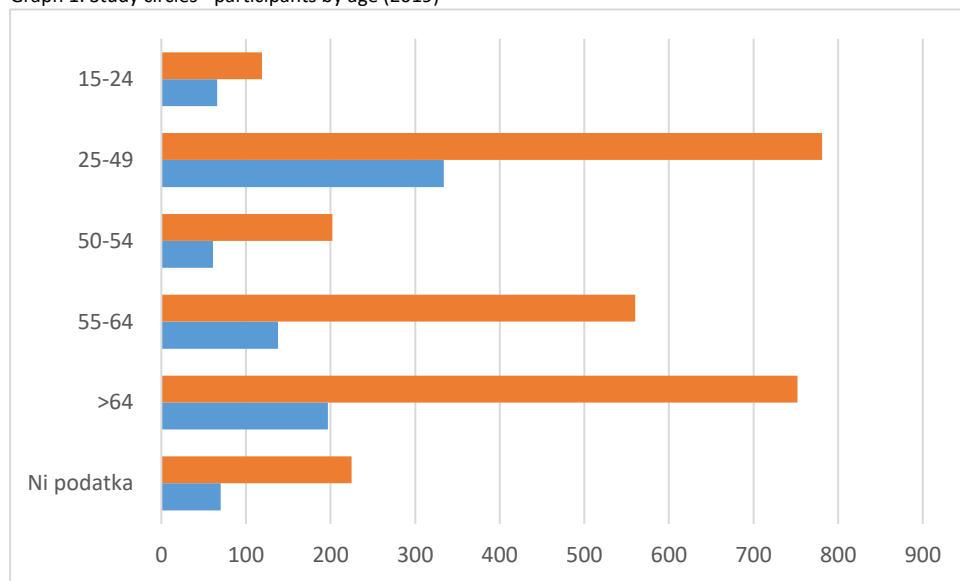
Source: Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office (SURS)

From the picture above, we can see that despite the relatively good results in the survey in 2016, we lag behind the most in the inclusion of the elderly. The proportion of adults involved in lifelong learning (formal and/or non-formal) decreases significantly with age. This is especially true for the group of adults over the age of 55, though.

The figures in the picture (especially those concerning the field of non-formal education) for all age groups show that the situation in 2016 is significantly better than in 2007 and 2011. Nevertheless, the low participation of the population in formal education remains particularly acute, especially those in the most active age (e.g. in the 35-44 age group) who will be active in the labour market for a very long time.

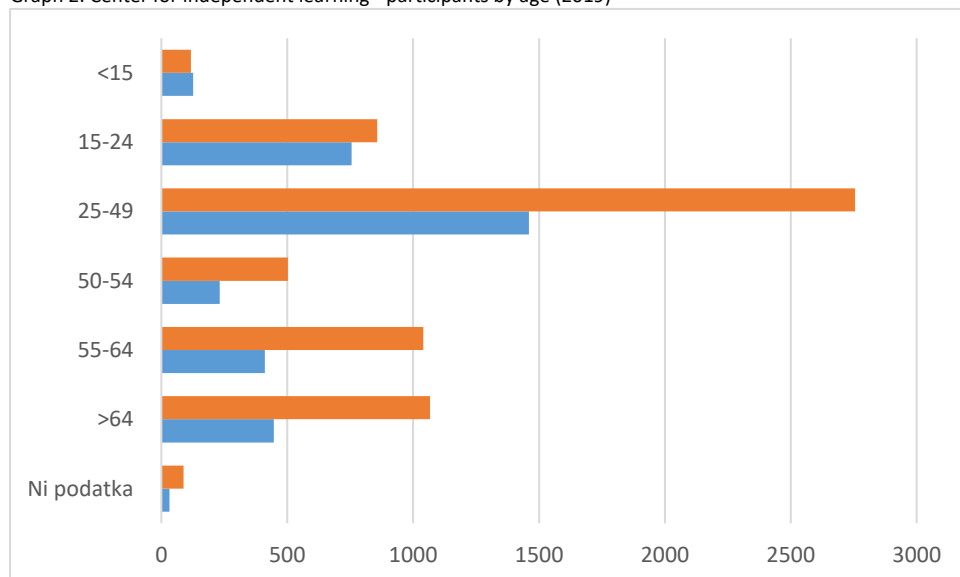
The following data, which speak for themselves, are also interesting:

Graph 1: Study circles - participants by age (2019)



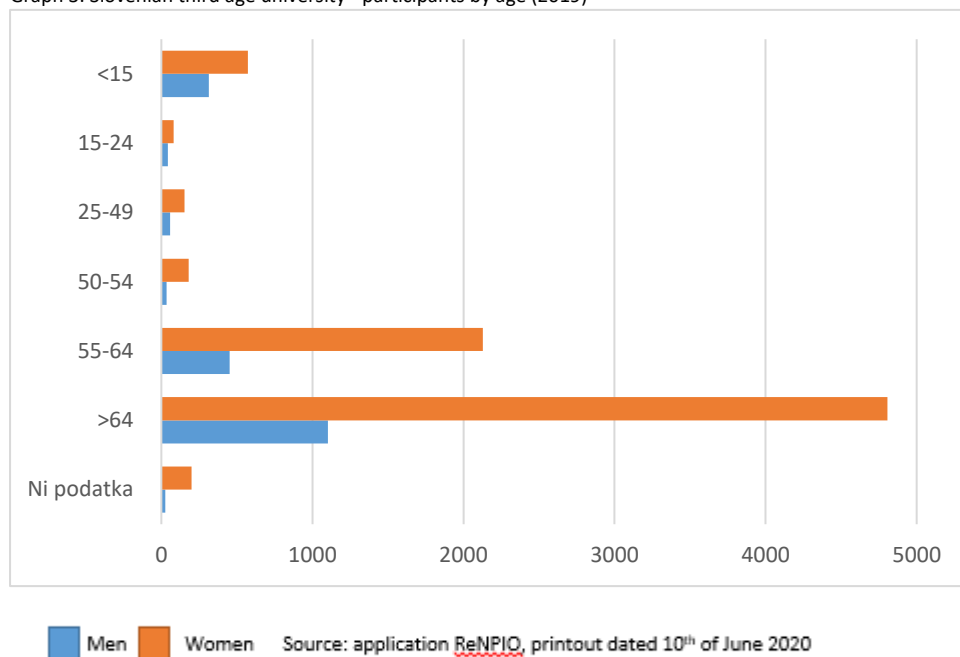
Men Women Source: application ReNPIO, printout dated 10th of June 2020

Graph 2: Center for independent learning - participants by age (2019)



Men Women Source: application ReNPIO, printout dated 10th of June 2020

Graph 3: Slovenian third age university - participants by age (2019)



Graph 4: Knowledge exchange – participants by age (2019)

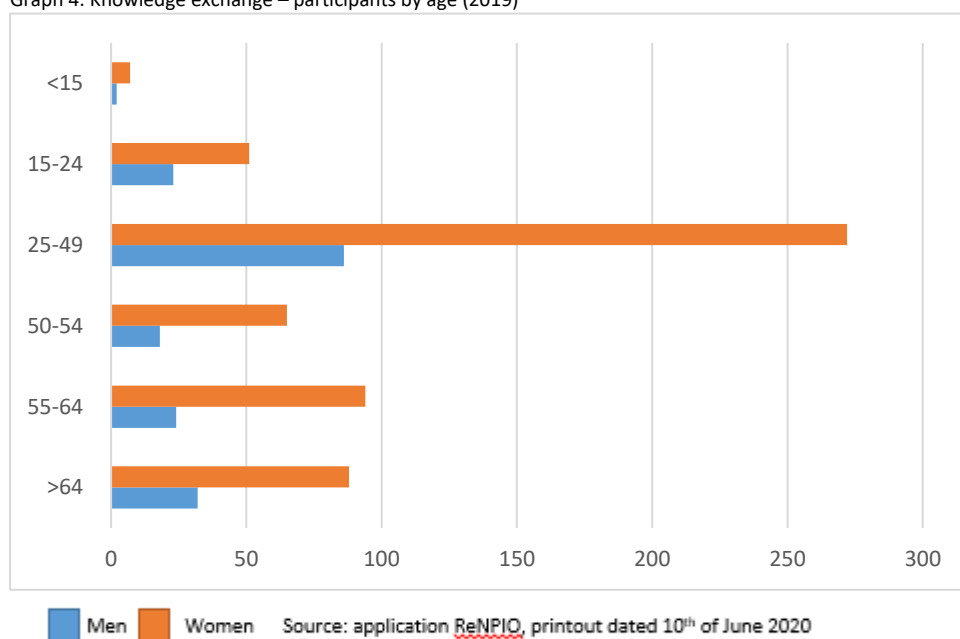


Table 1: Involvement in lifelong learning according to age (Slovenian Adult Education Association - 4 weeks before the survey)

Age between	25–34 years		35–44 years		45–55 years		55–64 years	
	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019
EU 28	15,8	17,9	9,3	11,6	7,5	9,7	4,6	6,7
Denmark	42,6	34,7	32,6	25,6	31,2	22,5	25,1	18,3
Germany	17,4	18,2	6,7	7,4	5,3	5,3	3,0	3,3
Austria	23,0	24,4	14,1	15,1	11,4	12,1	6,7	7,6
Slovenia	29,6	18,1	17,4	12,1	11,1	9,6	6,4	6,0
Finland	33,7	37,8	25,4	31,8	21,6	27,3	13,0	19,3
Sweden	34,4	42,1	25,5	35,5	22,4	33,2	16,7	24,9

Source: EUROSTAT

Table2: Involvement in lifelong learning by age (adult education survey - 12 weeks before the survey)

FORMAL EDUCATION

Age between	25–34 years		35–44 year		45–55 years		55–64 years	
	2007	2016	2007	2016	2007	2016	2007	2016
EU 28	13,3	13,0	4,6	4,6	2,6	2,5	1,2	0,9
Denmark	28,0	31,9	8,7	13,1	3,9	3,3	2,1	1,3
Germany	14,8	12,0	3,6	2,4	2,8	2,4	1,5	1,0
Austria	11,4	16,6	3,5	5,5	8,2	3,3	7,4	2,5
Slovenia	22,3	16,2	9,0	5,9	:	:	:	:
Finland	24,0	32,4	11,0	15,2	1,5	1,0	:	:
Sweden	26,5	28,6	13,9	14,0	5,3	6,9	:	4,1

Source: EUROSTAT

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Age between	25–34 years		35–44 years		45–55 years		55–64 years	
	2007	2016	2007	2016	2007	2016	2007	2016
EU 28	35,5	46,5	34,9	46,2	30,9	43,6	18,2	31,9
Denmark	35,7	43,9	35,9	46,7	32,0	43,9	20,0	32,4
Germany	46,8	50,6	37,4	50,9	34,0	47,3	19,5	36,1
Austria	40,2	65,4	40,4	46,5	31,6	41,6	19,1	27,5
Slovenia	40,0	48,7	40,5	26,4	38,2	24,9	20,3	14,6
Finland	55,7	53,3	43,6	50,3	39,9	48,9	21,5	29,1
Sweden	72,4	54,1	45,1	50,1	41,7	46,2	27,3	35,1

Source: EUROSTAT

Is the knowledge they acquire from you certified? In fact, is there a law in Slovenia that determines what non-formal education is and how it is recognized? If so, can you tell me more about the law itself?

First, one needs to have an accurate picture of what non-formal education is and what is formal.

Areas of adult education according to formality and purpose

FORMAL	GENERAL		NON-FORMAL
	General education	Knowledge and education for general needs	
	Vocational education	Knowledge and education for vocational needs	
	VOCATIONAL		

Source: Zoran Jelenc, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education, 2016

The Act governing non-formal adult education is the Adult Education Act 2018 and has a whole chapter on NF: https://www.uradni-list.si/_pdf/2018/Ur/u2018006.pdf.

In addition, ReNPIO, the last one is for the period from 2013 to 2020, which dedicates one of the three priority areas to general NF education, see the goals and indicators here: Recognition of NF is regulated by several regulations, for more information see https://www.uradni-list.si/files/RS_-2013-090-03262-OB~P001-0000.PDF, <https://www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/114925>.

- Recognition of NFEs is governed by several regulations:

http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/Publikacije/Potrjevanje_Neformalno%20znanje.pdf, page 17;

- For vocational and professional education and higher professional education:

http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/Datoteke/evalvacija/Porocilo_PNZ-9_11_2010.pdf.

- Vocational and Professional Education Act;

- Rules on the assessment of knowledge in vocational and secondary vocational education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 78/2007), which introduces in secondary vocational and technical schools the possibility of recognizing formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills when enrolling in the initial year. In accordance with the rules, the school must establish criteria and procedures according to which it will recognize candidates' formally and non-formally acquired knowledge and skills;

- For higher professional education: Rules on the recognition of previously acquired knowledge in higher professional education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 20/10).

Can you describe in more detail the existing strategies and action plans that define non-formal education in Slovenia?

At ACS, dr. Nevenka Bogataj takes care of study circles and deals with non-formal education in general, and especially from the point of view of sustainable development and community learning. She answered to this question as follows: "The last such Slovenian documents are (to my knowledge) the new ZIO-1 (2018), which focuses on non-formal education, and the working material of the Starting Point for NPIO 2021-2030, where proposals are formed on the review achieved at in the field of general education (e.g. "public tender for general non-formal programs..."). Achievements in the areas of literacy, basic skills, programs for the less educated, vulnerable groups and dropouts, the unemployed and young people, organized independent learning, community learning in study circles, VITR and recognition and validation of non-formal skills are listed. On this basis, proposals are made for the period up to 2030, which, however, highlight only one, detailed proposal: Development of basic capabilities and competencies, and everything else is summarized in eight indents without justifications or more detailed proposals."

* ZIO - - Adult Education Act

* NPIO - - National Adult Education Program

* VITR - - Education for sustainable development

Is the knowledge they acquire from you certified? In fact, is there a law in Slovenia that determines what non-formal education is and how it is recognized? If so, can you tell me more about the law itself?

Vera Mlinar, who is also an expert on such issues, has been working in this field and has helped me (dr. Petra Jevrh, a/n) with this issue. Here is her explanation: The ACS is the central public institution and umbrella institution for adult education in the Republic of Slovenia. The basic purpose of our work is to develop the field of adult education, in accordance with the Resolution on the National Education Program in the Republic of Slovenia (2013–2020) and other national and European strategic documents and development guidelines in adult education. Our competencies and responsibilities are also determined by legal regulations in education, especially the Organization and Financing of Education Act and the Adult Education Act (2018).

In our work, we connect with policy makers at the national and international level and other stakeholders in the andragogic and pedagogical professions, as well as with coordinators and participants in various projects, adult education institutions and learning individuals in Slovenia and beyond. We actively participate in international organizations in all areas of operation. Our work is

research and development.

In 2018, the Adult Education Act (ZIO-1) was adopted, which regulates the public interest in the field of adult education and the manner of realizing the public interest in the field of adult education programs and activities in the field of adult education. ZIO-1 stipulates non-formal adult education in Article 2, namely it defines that “non-formal education program for adults is a general education program according to which no publicly valid education or vocational or additional qualification is acquired” «. In the following, the law defines programs for adults that are non-formal (Article 21), providers of non-formal adult education programs (Article 22) and educators in non-formal programs (Article 23).

Article 52 of the ZIO-1 also defines the content of the public service, which states “»advisory activity in identifying and documenting knowledge, skills and abilities acquired in non-formal education and informal learning on the basis of documentation, namely for personal development, further education and integration into the labour market””. Therefore, in the field of evaluation, ZIO-1 defines consulting activities for the identification and documentation of knowledge acquired in various ways, but does not define certification or recognition of these. Recognition of non-formally acquired knowledge along the entire vertical is carried out in accordance with other laws governing the field of education.

Have you also participated in the development of strategies, a law or an action plan related to non-formal learning? If so, can you tell me if your suggestions were successful?

Dr. Petra Javrh: “Personally, I participated only indirectly in the preparation of projects and their results or products. Other ACS experts were quite involved, for example, my colleague Mag. Tanja Vilič Klenovšek, in charge of consulting activities, before her Metka Svetina and Dr. Angelca Ivančič, recently Vera Mlinar. My colleague Dr. Nevenka Bogataj also participated, but she believes that she was not successful with the proposals. Colleague mag. Esther Možina was not directly involved.”

I know your programs are based on non-formal education. But how do you promote non-formal education in public? Do you also collaborate with other NGOs and governmental organizations in the local environment and beyond? In which way?

Of course, primarily with real-time and public publication of the results and effects of expert work. As a national public institution, we cooperate very widely and make sure that we cover the entire country and as many areas as possible. An important way of the widest cooperation is through LLW - Lifelong Learning Week, as well as the promotion of Study Circles, PUM-O, ISIO centres, quality...

* PUM-O - Project learning for young adults

* ISIO - Information and counselling in adult education

ACS cooperates with social partners, NGOs, libraries, museums, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and associations, in accordance with the needs of providers. Concrete examples are published in the ACS Novička newsletter, and as an example of a concise presentation, we cite the publication https://sk.acs.si/sites/sk.acs.si/files/zbornik_sk_kako_obogateti_2019_opt.pdf.

Is there a lot of interest among young people in getting involved in non-formal education? How does ZIK attract young people to get involved? In your opinion, do young people even know what non-formal education is or do they know the differences between non-formal, formal and informal education?

We cooperate with social partners, NGOs, libraries, museums. We have written a lot about this in our ACS materials (eg Dr. A. Ivančič). Colleague Natalija Žalec, who is most responsible for this area in our country, answers as follows: “From the point of view of ACS work, I can only answer in the context of the PUM-O program. PUM-O is a non-formal education program. From this point of view, it could be said that the young people of the PUM-O program are involved in non-formal education and, judging by the results of the evaluation, find it interesting, useful and, above all, very different from school education. Within, informal education also takes place, when an individual or an entire group casually learns something new, when it happens without a prior plan or ad hoc; through subsequent reflection, it determines the value of the learning experience. I believe that most young people do not pay attention to the categorization of learning; they are more aware of the differences between school and extracurricular learning. In the context of the PUM-O program, we

think it is important to raise awareness of individuals to recognize their knowledge - to make hidden knowledge visible to themselves and others, and above all to encourage them to cultivate or to spread the culture of learning or lifelong learning. Namely, raising awareness of learning achievements strengthens - empowers young people and has a stimulating effect on their self-esteem. Getting young people to join the PUM-O program is a very demanding job. ACS is involved in this process indirectly, by developing the program, collaborating with performers, especially program mentors, and developing animation strategies with them. There are basically two things; interinstitutional cooperation is needed to establish a network that intercepts young people for whom education is intended and to establish a dialogue with young people. Young people need to be listened to and talked to about what kind of learning and education they want and need."

Have you included in the process of involving young people things that are important for non-formal education?

My colleague Natalija Žalec answered this question in accordance with her experience: "YES. The key is to follow the needs of young people, take into account and also develop their interests, and in doing so connect with the wider environment. A learning environment needs to be created that extends beyond the boundaries of the classroom and the learning groups in which someone is involved."

Should politics or government be more actively involved and contribute through cooperation (for example, the recognition of non-formal education, even more different NPQs ...), if we are talking about youth and youth policy?

As to the previous question, my colleague Natalija Žalec answered this question with regard to the field of youth also: "I believe that much has been done in the field of recognition of non-formal education in Slovenia in the last 20 years; both in terms of developing non-formal education programs and recognizing knowledge acquired outside the formal education system. On the other hand, this development seems to have stalled and stopped at NPK recently. NPKs are only part of the system of recognition of informally acquired knowledge and skills. I miss developments in the field of non-formally acquired knowledge in education programs; e.g. general knowledge, which is currently recognized mainly based on formal evidence - e.g. certificates, but not others. We also do not have developed tools that would enable the identification of already acquired knowledge. We have a poorly developed theory and practice of testing and assessing knowledge. In the field of general education, examination methods still prevail, paper and pencil type tests, which often do not meet the basic principles of assessment, and even less often allow an individual to demonstrate their knowledge. We still have a lot of work to do in this area. Instead of encouraging research and development work in this field, we prefer to uncritically resort to traditional procedures."