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**Tanja Čelebič****Selected topics on adult education in Slovenia and international comparison with EU-27 countries****Working Paper** No. 8/2010, Vol. XIX

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**Summary**

This working paper's purpose is to present selected topics in adult education in Slovenia, and compared to EU-27 average, and to show the main issues in this field. This paper presents the participation of adults in formal and non-formal education, mean instruction hours spent by participants in education, reasons for participation in education, obstacles in education, mean amount of money spent by participant in education, financial support to learners for education, as well as access to information on learning possibilities and the network of learning organisations. Data from the year 2009 or the last year for which data are available are presented.

Participation in education and acquired formal education has a positive impact on individual personal development, social inclusion and social cohesion. Among people with upper secondary and tertiary education, the unemployment rate is lower on average than among lower educated people (persons who finished at most primary school). They also have higher income. Also, the at-risk-of-poverty rate is lower among better educated persons. The importance of adult education is a topic in national and international strategic and other documents (Slovenia's Development Strategy, Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, Adult learning: It's never too late to learn etc).

According to the Labour Force Survey for second quarter 2010, the participation of the adult population, aged 25–64 years in lifelong learning (formal or non-formal education) was higher than the EU-27 average and showed an increase for the second successive year. Both the participation in formal and non-formal education are relatively high, but decreased in the 2004–2009 period. Adult participation in education depends strongly on the socio-economic characteristics of the adult population (gender, age, formal educational level, status of activity, occupation, place of living, etc), as indicated by several domestic and foreign studies and also shown in our analysis. In 2009, the participation rate of women in education was higher than participation of men (annual data). The difference in participation in education among women and men exceeded the EU-27 average. In the 2004–2009 period, the participation rates of both, women and men in education decreased. In 2009, the participation rate in education was the highest in the youngest selected age group (25–34 years) and the lowest in age group of 55–74 years. The difference between participation of the youngest and the oldest age group in education was among the highest in the EU-27. The participation rate of adults in formal education decreases strongly with age, while the participation of population, aged 25–34 years, 35–44 years and 45–54 years in non-formal education stays almost at the same level and decreases after the age of 55

years. Participation in formal or non-formal education decreased in the 2004–2009 period in all age groups. The participation rate of adults aged 25–64 years in formal or non-formal education increases rapidly with the level of acquired formal education and is the highest among tertiary-educated persons. The participation of low-educated people (those with primary school at most) in education is low; in 2009, the difference in participation between low- and tertiary-educated in education was the highest among the EU-27 countries. In the 2004–2009 period, participation of the low-educated in education decreased. Regarding participation in education by labour status, participation is the highest among unemployed people, followed by persons in employment and the inactive population. Participation in formal education is the highest among unemployed persons, participation in non-formal education among persons in employment. Slovenia exceeds the EU-27 average in all statuses of activity, the most among the unemployed persons and the less among the inactive population. In the 2004–2009 period, the participation of adults in formal or non-formal education increased only among unemployed persons. Regarding the participation of adults in formal or non-formal education by occupation, large differences exist. In 2009, the participation in education was the highest in among managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals and the lowest among plant and machine operators and assemblers, and elementary occupations. In the 2004–2009 period, the difference in participation in education between these two groups decreased. Participation of adults in education is higher than the EU-27 average, but according to adult education survey data for the year 2007, Slovenia lags behind the EU-27 in mean instruction hours spent by participants in formal or non-formal education. The average length of education per participant decreases with age and increases with the achieved education level. Among the employed, the greatest length of education is in among clerks and sales. Regarding the status of activity, the average length of education is the largest among inactive population.

In Slovenia, according to adult education survey data for the year 2007, the most frequent reason for participation in non-formal education was to do one's job better or/and to improve carrier prospects. Women deviate from men mostly by higher share of persons who mentioned getting knowledge/skills useful in everyday life. Men differ from women mostly by higher share of persons who mentioned that they were obligated to participate. Among all age and education groups, the highest share of persons mentioned doing their jobs better or/and to improving their career prospects. However, among low-educated persons, this reason is less important than among better educated persons. Some people who wanted to participate in education did not, because of various obstacles. The highest share of persons who wanted to participate in education but did not cited the fact that training conflicted with their work schedules. Also, the cost of training or that the individual could not afford it, was mentioned as an obstacle, most commonly among women, while among men the most common obstacle is scheduling conflicts. This is also the most common obstacle among all ages. Among the low-educated persons, the highest share mentioned too expensive education or that they could not afford it, while among the upper secondary and tertiary educated that training conflicted with work schedule.

Mean amount of money spent by participant on formal or non-formal education in 2007 were higher than the EU-27 average, according to adult education survey data. Costs decrease rapidly with age and increase rapidly with achieved level of education. Costs by status of activity are the highest among the unemployed persons, followed by persons in employment and inactive persons. The average amount of money spent by participant by occupation are the highest among clerks and sales. In Slovenia, several forms of financial support for adults are available: free-of-charge participation in education, scholarships, supplements for activity and for transport, educational leave, co-financing of education. etc. In other EU-27 countries. adults may obtain several forms of support for education (education free-of-charge, vouchers, individual learning accounts, reimbursement of education costs, scholarships, grants and supplements, loans for education, etc).

Examples of good practices from abroad have shown that vouchers are an efficient measure to support low-educated people in education. They should be accompanied with information and counselling for adults. Commonly, the criteria regarding quality that should be fulfilled by educational organisations are set as a condition for the financial support. In Slovenia, co-financing of education exists, but as reimbursement of costs, which means that an individual should first pay the education by himself and then the costs are reimbursed. Individuals with low incomes may have difficulties paying for their education.

An important factor of participation in education is local accessibility of education. The number of primary and upper secondary schools for adults decreased in the period 2000/2001–2008/2009. The number of people, aged 15–64 years in primary school is higher in regions with a higher share of population with uncompleted primary school. The number of such people, aged 15–64 years, is much higher than Slovenian average in Zasavska, Koroška and Savinjska statistical regions. The number of higher vocational colleges increased in the 2000/2001–2009/2010 period, but the Zasavska region is still the only region without one. The number of higher education institutions has also increased significantly. The highest number of institutions for non-formal education is in the largest region: Osrednjeslovenska. In 2008/2009, almost 40% of communities had an institution for non-formal education. The network of institutions for non-formal education is the least developed in economically less developed regions.

Certain issues exist in adult education. The participation in education of the low-educated, older, unemployed and those employed in less demanding occupations should be enhanced. The participation of adults in educational programmes for the needs of the current labour market and in educational programmes that enable individuals to develop transferable skills and thus higher degree of adaptation to labour market needs should be enhanced. Higher participation of adults in education should be enhanced with certain forms of support (free-of-charge upper secondary education, vouchers, individual learning accounts, loans for education, prolongation of study leave). Educational programme supply should be enhanced, especially for groups of the population that participate in education less frequently. Instead of co-financing education with reimbursement of educational costs, co-financing at the enrolment in education should be introduced. Counselling activity for adults should also be provided. Measures of the quality of educational programmes and educational institution should be set. The supervision of the efficiency of use of public funds for adult education should be introduced. For the groups of people that participate in education less frequently, the accessibility of information on the possibilities for education should be enhanced. More equitable educational institution development in regions should be provided and thus local accessibility of education enhanced. Within the educational programme for unemployed persons and adult education programme, the number of persons enrolled in education and the efficiency of funds use should be increased.