Study trip Learn for Life/Festival Team to Slovenia, 10 – 17 May 2018

Project title: European Input for Sustainable Education and Learning (EISEL)
EC Project Number: 2017-2-NL01-KA104-038513
Sending organisation: Learn for Life, NL
Host organization: Slovenian Institute for Adult education (SIAE),
Study visit to Slovenia: Slovenian Lifelong Learning Week (LLW)

Participants
- Geja de Koekkoek, Service Point Learning and Working Stedenvierkant
- Marten Groen, reading and Writing Foundation
- Jenny Holtrop, Learn and Work Office Twente
- Lidwien Vos de Wael, Learn for Life

Aims of this study trip

The EISEL project should benefit Learn for Life in the search to a new structure of the learning festivals. The organisation is looking for a strong regionalization of the Festival and a more limited role, in terms of time and money, of Learn for Life. Therefore the KA1 project will focus on the creation of sustainable regional and local partnerships that promote lifelong learning and foment a vivid learning culture, especially for adults for whom learning is not obvious. In EISEL we search for good examples of chain cooperation in order to facilitate the learning of these adults.
In Slovenia we want to learn about the Life Long Learning Week and the Learning Parade, but our interest also goes beyond these activities: we hope to meet good local and regional partnerships and discuss with our Slovenian colleagues about:
- What are the partners do you need in such partnerships (a balance between providers of non-formal and formal education and other relevant organizations)?
- What are key conditions for successful sustainable partnerships in the field of education?
- How can you organize the cooperation on management level and how do you organize this on the level of the daily work?
- What are problems and pitfalls you might encounter?
Programme overview

May 11 National Opening Lifelong Learning Week (LLW) in Šmarje pri Jelšah
May 14 Mini conference in the office of SIAE
May 15 Visit Public Employment Office, Ljubljana
Visit of Adult Education Centres in Jesenice and Kranj
May 16 Visit Learning Parade in three different towns: Trbovlje, Novo Mesto and Postojna

May 11, 2018

The delegation visited the National Opening Ceremony in the well-equipped Šmarje pri Jelšah Public Library/Cultural Centre. In Slovenia, the opening address of this ceremony rotates annually between the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. This year it was the turn of the latter. Important part of this festive event is the SIAE Award Ceremony for the Promotion of Adult Learning and Knowledge in three categories: individual learners, learning group and institution/business/local community. All award winners were presented with attractive short videos. Local Festival organizers coordinated the cultural programme. The ceremony was in the Slovenian language, but there was excellent translation (into Dutch!) of a Slovenian professional living in The Netherlands.

May 14, 2018

At the mini-conference participated approx. persons, amongst them professionals from SIAE and local Festival organisers, a delegation of EPALE Hungary and the Dutch delegation. The following presentations were held:

Adult Education System in Slovenia by Peter Beltram, SIAE
Slovenia has an Adult Education Act, defining rules and procedures for public financed non-formal education and an Adult Education master Plan for long time policy. We can be jealous of that in the Netherlands! The DIMA toolkit is used for the development, implementation and monitoring of adult education strategies.

Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners (GOAL) by Tanja Vilic Klenovsek, SIAE
Slovenia and the Netherlands participated in this European project that aims to improve the services for study and career guidance for low-skilled adults. In the final cross-country report GOAL paid much attention to the development of partnerships around this issue and is therefore very relevant for EISEL.

Slovenian Guidance Centers by Tanja Vilic Klenovsek, SIAE
In Slovenia 17 Guidance Centres provide services to help individual adults a to reflect on personal educational issues and experiences and to make appropriate educational choices. The centers provide free of charge high quality level information and guidance for all adults in regional/local environment. They connect relevant partners in a regional guidance network. The centers have outreach units and mobile services in order to reach vulnerable groups better. SIAE monitors and supports the work and development of these guidance centers.

PIAAC by Estera Mozina, SIAE
Estera presented the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies, an OECD comparative research on key competences (language, mathematics and problem solving ability) of adults between 16 – 64 years. Slovenia is in place 26 on this ranking, showing that the need of good adult education is very high.

SIAE by Zvonka Pancer Pahernik, SIAE
SIAE is an umbrella organization that supports organizations to develop regional and local activities in the field of adult education. The organisation is financed by the government, ESF and other European funds. SIAE is the national coordinator for implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning.
They have four main work areas: research & development, guidance and validation of previously acquired knowledge and experience (EVC), monitoring quality and training teachers in the field of adult education and promotion & information (such as LLW and Learning Parade).

NB: In the Netherlands we do not have a national umbrella organization for adult education (research, coordination, promotion, monitoring, etc.) which is something we really miss!

The Slovenian LLW and implementation of the European Agenda by Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik, SIAE
SIAE coordinates the LLW since 23 years. The national umbrella organisation supports national and (more than 9000) regional events. They coordinate the network cooperation of organisations, the national opening ceremony, the award winners’ activity including videos and the Learning Parade. SIAE is also responsible for the web-based monitoring and evaluation of the LLW events.

The Learners Voice by Darijan Novak, SIAE
SIAE gives learners a voice by making high quality video portraits of inspiring role models. There are 213 fascinating portraits online: https://llw.acs.si/awards/winners/. When choosing the award winners, the extent to which they can act as role models also plays a role.

Three regional LLW coordinators
Marija Imperl (Radece), Brigita Kruder (Bistrica) and Karmen Kosem (Kranj) have vast experience in organizing the LLW and the Learning Parade in their region. They explained how they organize their partnerships and told about the impressive results.

Dutch delegation
By the end of the mini conference it was the turn of the Dutch delegation. Lidwien Vos de Wael put a number of issues and questions about strategic partnerships at a glance. These will be further developed in the course of the EISEL project. Jenny Holtrop, Marten Groen en Geja de Koekkoek told about their main findings while preparing their regional festival events in September 2018.

May 15, 2018

Public Employment Office
In Slovenia the social benefits are quite low. There are many (and in many cases compulsory) courses and workshops for unemployed persons. The working method of the Public Employment Office seems to be similar to the job-seeking services from the UWV. They work closely together with the Guidance Centres and local offices participate in the LLW.
Adult Education Centres in Jesenice and Kranj
Jesenice education center has many projects on key competences for employees and job seekers. Employers do not finance this education. Slovenian economic sectors do not have so-called O&O funds (Employers’ Education Funds).
In Kranj the adult education center has a broad spectrum of educational activities, both formal and non-formal. We joined a kind of gymnastics in the open air.
Many projects in Slovenian adult education centers are financed by ESF.

May 16, 2018

During this day we attended the Learning Parade at three different locations: Trbovlje, Novo Mesto and Postojna. In summary, this was very nice to experience: the Learning Parade is colourful; many different partners of education participate in the event. Adult education centers and cultural centers presented their programme. Study circles demonstrated what the learned and what plans they have for the coming year. It was possible to taste/buy regional specialities and specific delicacies made by study circles, we could enjoy a nice chair massage, etc. A great variety of organisations were involved. Each Learning Parade had its own character and atmosphere. They were all wonderful examples of the joy and the culture of adult learning.

Considerations

The study visit was very well organised by the staff of SIAE. We were well attended. We were very pleased by the mini-conference that SIAE had organised where all the topics we wanted to learn (and more!) in the study trip were discussed. This gave us also the opportunity to learn about the broad spectrum of SIAE’s work and get insight in Slovenian and European policy developments. The following two days were also well organized with instructive field visits. At each location, we were received very warmly.

An important objective of this study trip was to investigate how Slovenia cooperates with partners in a sustainable way during the Lifelong Learning Week and Learning Parade. The basis for this question lies in the fact that in the Netherlands, we are very much in search how we can organize national and regional sustainable partnerships. We experienced that during the Slovenian learning campaigns there is strong and successful cooperation between a big variety of organisations. Together they manage to arrange attractive activities. Persons from different organisations know how to find each other. However, sustainable cooperation throughout the year also seems to be a challenge in Slovenia. The focus of the partnerships is mainly on organizing a good event or several events during the LLW.
Naturally, this leads to closer contacts between organizations, but there is no structured cooperation to jointly optimize the adult education provision at the regional or local level.

The Dutch delegation discussed a lot about the issue of sustainable partnerships. Maybe we have a wish (or a dream) that goes beyond real possibilities? The Learning and Work Offices in the Netherlands are structured partnerships between regional education centres, public employment offices and municipalities. Cooperation between these partners is already quite a challenge and the results differ considerably per region. And then we are not even talking about closer cooperation with all those other organizations that can also play a role in the regional education field.

Just before the study trip to Slovenia, we started with a work document about sustainable partnerships. In this document many points of attention and discussion are mentioned. This study trip helped us enormously to sharpen our thoughts and gain new insights in this matter. Our ambition is to develop the work document more and more in relation to the EISEL visits to come.