

EVALUATION OF THE “PROJECT LEARNING FOR THE YOUNG ADULTS” – PLYA PROGRAMME

1. CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION IN SLOVENIA

Due to the consequences of the international economic and financial crisis, Slovenia expects a significant real decrease in gross domestic product. The decline in economic activity in 2009 is, considering the large integration of the Slovenian economy in international trade flows, mainly a consequence of a large decline in the export of goods and services which is expected to be reduced by almost 18 % this year. The aforementioned decline of activities had a major influence on the labour market and employment reduction. According to a Labour Force Survey (ILO),¹ the employment rate in Slovenia (15-64 years) in 2009 has as a consequence of the crisis fallen, the same as in other EU states. In the first quarter of 2009, there were 40.000 or almost 4 % less people employed than in the past quarter in Slovenia. More than one of the working population was employed in processing activities. In detail, the survey's unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2009 was 5.4 per cent (5.5 per cent for men, and 5.2 per cent for women), and in the previous quarter 4.3 per cent (4.0 per cent for men, and 4.7 per cent for women).

The scope of employment has decreased particularly in the processing industry, the building sector, trade and transport. The number of unemployed is still increasing, but at a reduced rate. Undoubtedly, the a) measure of partial subsidization of working hours, and b) measure of temporary unemployment contributed to this. The number of self-employed is slowly increasing. These individuals mainly decide on the path of becoming a private entrepreneur; (in June 2009, 6 per cent of all persons in employment). (IMAD, Economic issues 2009).

Based on the publication by IMAD (Spring Forecast 2009), the accelerated reduction of economic activity will also cause employment to be reduced and unemployment to grow this year. The foreseen recovery of economic growth in 2010 will not yet reflect on average employment growth. The average number of persons in employment will be 1.7 % lower next year than this year. At the same time, the further reduction of employment will, according to the foreseen economic growth, increase labour productivity growth to 2.8 %. Unemployment rates will further increase: survey to 7.0 % and registered to 10.3 %.

¹Note: all the statistical data derive from the following source: IMAD: Spring Forecast of Economic trends 2009

The aforementioned economic situation presents an especially urgent problem, in particular for young first-time job seekers, young people without occupation, education and with no motivation for acquiring adequate competences for life. The central part of the document refers to a description of the situation of young people in Slovenia, and more a detailed description of good practice - the Project Learning for the Young adults (PLYA).

2. SLOVENIA, LABOUR MARKET AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The employment rate for young people (15-24 years) has slowly increased over the years in Slovenia, since it reached 38.4 % in 2008 which is higher than the EU-27 average (37.6 %). The employment of young men in Slovenia (43 %) was higher than the employment of women (33.2 %), as is otherwise the characteristic of the EU.

Table No. 1: Comparison of the key indicators for young people in the EU in Slovenia for 2008

Source: EUROSTAT	EU-27	Slovenia
Employment rate (15-24)	37.6	38.4
- Men	40.4	43.0
- Women	34.6	33.2
Unemployment rate 15+	7.0	4.4
- Men	6.6	4.0
- Women	7.5	4.8
Youth unemployment rate	15.5	10.4
- Men	15.6	9.9
- Women	15.5	11.3
Youth unemployment ratio	13.8	4.5
- Men	14.8	4.7
- Women	12.6	4,2

Source: EUROSTAT

In Slovenia, young people are more exposed to temporary and short term employment than other age groups. In 2007, 68.3 % of all young persons in employment had a temporary employment (we estimate that this was also in the form of student work), while this share for all persons in employment was 17.2 %. In Slovenia, the unemployment rate for young people was 10.4 % in 2008 (in EU-27 it was 15.5 %). The unemployment rate began to grow in the time of the crisis, the same as in the other states of integration. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs is prepared for this growth with new measures for accelerating the employment of young people.

2.1. Young people and measures on the labour market for accelerating youth employment

In Slovenia, in the first four months, following the conclusion of schooling, the majority of young people are included in the measures of job-seeking, counselling and assistance which compose a part of the measures of active employment policy. In 2007, according to the report by the Employment Service, there were over one hundred thousand treatments with job-seeking counselling and assistance. In the framework of active employment policy, the following measures are earmarked for young people:

- education and training (formal, national vocational qualifications, functional),
- all the programmes contributing to vocational and career orientation, counselling for employment, and motivation,
- on-the-job training,
- subsidies for employment and refunds of social contributions,
- encouragement for employers, and encouragement of self-employment,
- implementing innovative programmes for youth employment,
- in September 2009, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social affairs started executing a public tender for the training and employment of candidates for graduation in the framework of the AEP.

Compared to other age groups, young people intensively participate in the measure of on-the-job training at employers and in work tests which often indicate a first step on the way to employment, and also in other programmes of education and training. According to the participation structure, the most important method for young people is Programme 10,000 – Formal Education (in 2007, 38 % participants were young unemployed persons).

Additionally, **special measures at the educational institutions** were also carried out to reduce educational deficit, the aim of which was larger individualization, and assistance to individuals regarding learning and achieving new knowledge (individual educational plan, introduction of a summary folder, development of key competences and replacing deficit with secondary school students who have weak background knowledge).

With amendments to the legislation in 2006, the recognition of informally and formally obtained knowledge is facilitated. Slovenia sets as one of its important projects in this area the establishment of a **national qualification framework**. Among other things, the

framework will connect the career and academic paths of obtaining qualifications in a unified and transparent system, enabling passing over, that can be complemented according to the needs of society, economy, and individuals in the light of lifelong learning.

Table No. 2: Job-seeking counselling and assistance - inclusion of youth in AEP programmes

	2005	2006	2007
Differently about professions (88 % secondary school students, 17% primary school pupils)	16.992	20.107	7980
Occupational orientation (100 % of primary school pupils)	19.984	18.754	18.611
CIPS (62 % unemployed, 14 % secondary school students, 10 % pupils, 7% students and others)	108.321	91.295	74.023
Workshops – job-seeking assistance (28.3 % of the participants were of age up to 25 years)	4985	7474	4511
Job-seeking club	1278	1219	1025
Training for lifelong effectiveness (27.8 % of the participants were of ages from 15 to 25 years).	248	333	245

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

In 2006, Slovenia adopted legislation introducing special benefits for employers who hire young people. Employers are eligible for a reimbursement of social security contributions if they hire an unemployed person younger than 26, a first time job-seeker whose occupation is in excess supply, or people under 28 for 24 months for each such person's salary.

On the other hand, there is an important programme **The Project Learning for Young Adults (PLYA)** within the framework of active employment policy. It is dedicated to young people of ages from 15 to 25 years who suspended schooling to overcome social exclusion and to continue and finish their schooling or to acquire an education or occupation.

2.2. PROJECT LEARNING FOR THE YOUNG ADULTS

2.2.1. Background of the programme

The programme arose primarily as an answer to the growing number of young people who were without (any) school education, dropouts or unemployed. On one hand, the programme presented a response to the transitional crisis of Slovenia after 1991, since in the framework of restructuring, the number of redundancies has grown drastically, and on the other hand,

due to economic stagnation, new workplaces (of all the qualification structures) were not opening for young people.

With the emergence of the economic crisis that we are witnessing today, we can count on a higher level of young people corresponding to the profile of inclusion in the programme The Project Learning for the Young Adults due to larger social distresses and increasing unemployment. In this context, the aim of the programme continues to be a) strengthening the content of the programme according to a potential inflow of young people due to hardship and lack of motivation, and b) the effective recovery and monitoring of dropouts, and an estimation of the sustainability of the programme itself.

According to EUROSTAT data, Slovenia is highly above the EU-27 average in the area of education. The share of people from 22 to 24 years of age who completed secondary school was 90.2 % in 2008, and the EU-27 average was significantly lower, namely 78.5 %. On the other hand, Slovenia can boast a low share of dropouts. In 2007, the share of dropouts was estimated at 4.3 % in Slovenia, and the EU-27 average was 15.2 %.

Table No. 3: Comparison of dropouts in the EU-15/27 and in Slovenia

TOTAL	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
THE EU27	17.6	17.3	17.1	16.6	15.9	15.5	15.2	14.8
THE EU15	19.5	19.0	18.7	18.3	17.5	17.1	16.9	16.4
SL		7.5	4.8	4.3	4.2	4.3	5.2	4.3

Source: EUROSTAT

Despite the successful educational policy of Slovenia, the problem of dropouts and young unemployed persons without education is urgent, and can lead to long term dependence on society and, on a personal level, to passiveness and non motivation for personal motivation. The Project Learning for the Young Adults (PLYA) presents an important programme of social integration of young people, and has already risen in 1999 as a reaction to the existing economic conditions. It is intended for young people from 15 to 24 years of age; a smaller proportion of young people are older than 25 years. PLYA presents a programme in the framework of programmes for increasing social inclusion; namely, it includes activities that help participants to improve their general knowledge and flexibility of mind, and to acquire functional knowledge, necessary for successful reintegration into the school environment and everyday life. The inclusion is carried out on the basis of an employment plan. **We were mainly encouraged to prepare the programme by the fact that more and more young**

people are dropping out of regular schooling, and there are no comprehensive solutions for effective social reintegration of disregarded youth on the margins of society.

The programme belongs between certified educational programmes in the framework of active employment policy, that is to say as a preparation for the long term integration into the social environment either as an inclusion in the educational process for employability or as an assistance for inclusion in the labour market. In the last phase, the programme enables persons with the lowest employment opportunities the possibility for social inclusion as a prerequisite for further educational and career paths.

The programme includes the activities of cooperation and mutual support; it also includes problem solving simulations, and investigates the possibilities of vocational orientations. As a **distinctive mentoring programme**, it is based on the individual paths of learning and training, and on acquiring modern competences which lead to the personal development of the individual.

Mentors present an important, even key, person regarding the progress of an individual. Their task includes listening to the individual, reacting to identified problems and obstacles of the individual young person on the way to integration. The mentor discusses with the young participant of the programme ways to solve problems, how to face changes, and how to find courage and the will for reintegration into education, training or employment. Therefore, the programme uses unconventional methods of learning, innovative programmes of learning and their selection.

In detail, the programme due to its specificity, presents diversity of learning methods, namely:

- group learning (based on the common interests of the entire group)
- project work (e.g. products manufacturing ...)
- Individual project learning (based on the interest of each individual, and aimed primarily as a preparation for the completion of schooling or transition to the labour market).
- optional group activities (excursions, theatre, sport events, workshops ...).

The characteristics of the programme are presented by a possibility of entering and leaving during the year, a larger number of mentors per number of participants, informal learning and acquiring of knowledge, basic competences (mainly literacy, calculating, computing), and

forming of the basic vocational identity. Enabled remedy of failures and the correction of the programme make it possible for the aims of the programme to be achieved.

2.2.2. A short evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme

The main finding of this evaluation was a confirmation of the long term social integration component of the participants. The participants had a clearer picture about their future at the end of inclusion in the programme, but sometimes the mentors or participants had opposing views about what should be included in the programme contents or what should matter.

The participants are renewing and acquiring basic skills connected with literacy and other contents which are of key importance for conquering teaching content, for demonstrating the learned material at examination, and for success in a more demanding workplace.

The main problem of the young population that is included in the PLYA programme is presented by incomplete education and a lack of competences or a lack of work experience. The programme is set in the direction of raising motivation, social inclusion and self-confidence. On the other hand, it enables higher competitiveness of the individual and his/her employability on the market which presents the key aim of the programme in the adult age. The effectiveness of the programme is pointed out by numerous success indicators.

The programme is voluntary, and lasts from at least three months up to one year, depending on the expectations and motivation of the individual young participants. The programme is free of charge to the participants, and financed by the Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Labour, Family, and Social Affairs and by interested local communities.

Table No. 5: the age of the participants in the period from 2006/07 to 2008/09

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Total:	134	124	186
Under 18 years of age	8	15	27
From 18 to 25 years of age	118	101	154
Above 30 years of age	8	8	5

Source: *Employment Service of Slovenia*

It is evident from table No. 5² that **the majority of participants in the period 2006–2009 fall within the age category from 18 to 25 years.** The inclusion ratio by age group did not change in the period of the three years. The majority of young people also did not conclude any schooling (approximately 85 %); the young people included in the programmes actually presented the category of young people that was observed in the longer period as belonging to the category of people with low employment prospects. In the time of economic crisis, alongside an increasingly difficult situation on the labour market, those young persons without treatment can become a long term social and economic problem for society, and along with negative demographic changes also an unused and available labour force.

There is some interesting data about how much time passes by before an individual is included in the Project Learning Programme.

Table No. 6 : the waiting period for participants to be included in PLYA

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Total	134	124	186
Less than 3 months	8	50	83
Between 3 to less than 6 months	37	31	58
From 6 months to less than 9 months	27	8	12
From 9 months to less than 12 months	8	10	10
From 1 to less than 2 years	30	14	16
From 2 to less than 3 years	30	14	16
From 3 to less than 5 years	6	3	3
From 5 to 8 years	2	3	/

Source: Employment Service of Slovenia

The data for the period from 2006/2007 to 2008/09 indicate that from the time of leaving school or inactivity to inclusion in the programme is, on average, at least 3 to 6 months. In the last year, the inclusion time has significantly shortened due to the intensive work of the Employment Service of Slovenia. Therefore, the largest part of young people, qualified for the programme, was included within it in the first three months or in the period of the first six months following their dropping out from the school process. This data is favourable, since faster activation and individual treatment presents a nice promise for more successful activation and integration.

² Due to the difficulties with ensuring data, some of them (inputs) are given for the actual period 2008/2009, and the evaluation of effectiveness can be, due to the nature of works, estimated only after the end of the period of inclusion. They are mainly given for the school year 2006/07.

Already at the beginning of the programme (2000–2002), the programme was estimated as very successful and had reached its aims: 40.4 % of the participants returned to school, and 23.7 % of young people entered the labour market. Approximately 21 % of young people remained unemployed, and for approximately 7 % of young people the data could not be acquired. Two thirds of the participants intended to continue schooling. And does the success data for the period 2004–2007 show us? In the aforementioned period, 11 regional centres of the Project Learning Programme operated in the area of Slovenia; in the period 2006/2007, three centres were not included in the programme.

Table No. 7: PLYA realization in the school years from 2004 to 2007.

	2004/05		2005/06			2006/07		
	No.	No success in %	No.	No success in %	M	No.	No success in %	M
TIN	75	16	43	32	7	58	25,8	7
LU M. Sobota	22	23	25	8	3	20	10	3
LU Radovljica	39	18	26	19,2	3	24	12,5	3
Mocis	36	11	26	*	3	41	14,6	3
AZ Maribor	31	10	20	10	3	36	13,8	3
LU Ajdovščina	20	5	29	7	3	19	10,5	3
Memory	38	18	34	23,5	3	30	23,3	3
PLYA Celje	46	22	31	35	5	96	5,2	5
PRC Tolmin	21	14	20	10	3	/	/	/
LU Škofja Loka	23	43	20	43	3	/	/	/
RIC NM	9	66,6	212	14,2	3	/	/	/
TOTAL	361	15	295	18,9	39	324	14,5	30

Source: PLYA annual reports

No. – the number of PLYA participants in an individual school year, and in an individual programme

No success – the share of young people who did not achieve the aims of the programme in the area of education and employment.

M - number of mentors per individual PUN unit

From the above table for the period from the beginning of the school year 2004/05 to the end of the school year 2006/07, there is also evident the great effectiveness and efficiency of the programme. **Only 15 % of young people on average did not achieve the aims of the programme in the school year 2004/2005; in the school year 2005/06, there were 18.9 % unsuccessful young people on average, and in the year 2006/07, merely 14.5 %.**

In detail, **in the year 2006/07, 35 % of the participants found employment, in the year 2007/08 17 %, and in the last year 2008/09 6%.** The effectiveness of the programme varied by individual units. In this context, the data on the economic development of the region where the PLYA unit is located, and subsequently the social situation of the individual young participant or his/hers family, is important for the analysis.

3. Other relevant characteristics of the PLYA programme

3.1. Recruiting potential participants of the PLYA programme, or how the programme is connected with efforts for the reduction of dropouts.

The Unemployment Service of Slovenia refers the participants to the PLYA programme only after they had already registered as unemployed in the register. The inclusion of unemployed persons into the programme started in the school year 2002/2003, namely in the framework of measures of active employment policy, under the auspices of the Education and Training Programme for Unemployed which is, for an individual school year, prepared by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Sport, and adopted by the Government of the RS. Therefore, the Service does not have any direct influence on the reduction of the share of dropouts in the state, but during the individual treatment of young unemployed persons, and with the use of instruments of vocational counselling and informing for young people, and their parents, significantly influences the reintegration of dropouts into regular schooling or, if this is not possible, their inclusion in employment and therefore into the pension scheme.

The programme implementation presents a systematic approach to reduce the number of unemployed persons without vocational or professional education, the rise of their education, qualification, and competence level, and therefore, contributes significantly to the personal and professional development of the individual unemployed person in relation to further education and lifelong learning, and also to the improvement of his/her employment opportunities or position on the labour market, larger social security and welfare.

The Service throughout the years of implementation notes a higher share of included unemployed persons' effectiveness than the national average, since according to the registers, after the conclusion of the PLYA programme, around 70 % of the participants are included in regular education, partly through programmes of formal education for unemployed persons, and on average 20 % of them find employment. Merely around 10 % of them need further in-depth treatment and assistance by also professional workers of the

Service after the conclusion of the programme. Therefore, the PLYA programme implementation significantly contributes to the promotion of social inclusion for the population groups with special needs or those for whom there is a risk of exclusion from the labour market, increases the possibilities for learning and inclusion in education, and also contributes to an increase in the rate of employment and a decrease in the rate of unemployment in the long term.

3.2. Results and information about the long term sustainable effect of the programme

An evaluation study (2003) showed that the achievements of PLYA participants are sustainable. All the young adults who were, since the beginning of the programme, i.e. 1998 included in the programme, were represented in the study. The data on their latest position – that was in spring 2002, showed that 40 per cent of them were attending school, 9 per cent were gainfully employed, 15 per cent were employed for a specified period of time, 2 per cent were intending to start with schooling in the upcoming school year – were already enrolled in the programme, 2 per cent were on maternity leave, 2 per cent were serving military service, 2 per cent were treated for drug addiction, and 7 per cent were placed in the category of “other or unknown”. The answers, given by the participants about their plans for the future, also show that they had a clearer picture about what they wanted out of life – 2 thirds wanted to continue schooling (33 per cent regularly, and 33 percent of-the-job). The research group which performed the study has also expressed the opinion that the PLYA programme has long term social integration effects in the report – compare *ibid.*, page 9.

3.3. How was the programme adjusted to changes in the time period of its functioning, what has worked and what has not worked with different groups of participants?

From conversations with the mentors, and also from the evaluation study we can conclude that the PLYA programme is effective, and that it works for different groups of participants. We see the main success factor is open and to the individual oriented curriculum. Each participant makes his/her own personal plan of changes in the framework of the programme - **personal education plan**. The personal education plan is formed by the participant through counselling communication with the mentor - this communication is open and cooperative, and above all continued and in many ways derogates from the conventional one in the sense that the counselling takes place mainly in the form of a planned conversation in the office, scheduled in advance. A lot of counselling work is performed by the mentors directly related to the activities attended by participants in the framework of learning projects or related to the diverse actual situations that enable reflections on the participant's expectations, interests,

troubles, distresses, progress and achievements. Joint work and project learning brings them closer together as humans, and creates the conditions for trustfulness and confidentiality, necessary terms for solving problems. Mentors communicate that the participants trust them or reveal their troubles to them in various circumstances – e.g. when they travel together for more hours - on a train and sometimes completely unexpectedly.

We believe that the everyday presence of and direct access to mentors is the variable that exceeds the range and capabilities of a traditionally organized counselling service. The other advantage, as we see it, is also a comprehensive treatment received by the PLYA participant - mentors approach the participants comprehensively - as a person who might have different problems. The problems that exceed the mentor's expertise become problems that are solved by the individual with the assistance of the mentor in such a manner that, in agreement with the participant and with his/her full cooperation, the mentor enters into social interactions with individuals and institutions that are competent for solving concrete problems. In that sense, the mentor becomes the participant's advocate who takes care that the circle of assistance to the participant is adequately completed around diverse subjects who can assist him/her with solving the problem.

In view of all this, we should mention that the mentors who otherwise have an university education, and fulfil all the other requirements foreseen in the Slovenian legislation in the area of organisation and carrying out educational activity, upon different groups of participants meet also with difficulties they do not know how to handle. At the beginning of the PLYA programme operations, there were difficulties connected with identifying drug addictions. Today, mentors point to an increasing share of young people who have mental health difficulties – diverse diseases – anorexia, depression, phobias, and schizophrenia, upon which the mentors do not feel secure with the knowledge they possess. Similarly, the network of institutions and experts dealing with such problems is relatively rare and unevenly distributed on the state level. Together with mentors we note that regular meetings, college debates, and professional training lead by experts are necessary for the adequate quality of mentors' work. Because of that, and also because of the demanding nature and difficulty of the mentor's work, supervision is necessary for every mentor team.

Currently, all of this is not taken care of. A few years ago, the mentor teams and the management of implementing organisations met at annual organisation and evaluation meetings where they could point out the problems they were faced with, and the needs for education through the debate. Every year, sixteen hours of training followed in which the mentors could participate. Today, this does not take place anymore, and the mentors point

out that professional training in such a manner should be re-established. Also, mentor teams would necessarily need supervision.

3.4. What did not work?

A part that is otherwise defined as **the production project work** in the PLYA programme, and should mainly assist the participants to develop competences they need in the professional area: for example acquiring national vocational qualifications or direct work experience or for job seeking was realized at worst. Since the Organization and Financing of Education Act does not enable investment in ensuring that the material equipment of the implementing organisation or in programmes that are intended for adults, in the PLYA programme, with the exception of one implementing organisation, the proper equipment was never taken care of (premises, means of work and materials) that would enable the realization of learning in production projects.

The production projects were carried out as optional learning projects, meaning that they were realized as single projects for the learning group in a limited time period. As a rule, the production projects differ from optional projects in the continuity of their course, meaning that they are carried out as a continued activity defined by a work programme and being typical for a certain implementing organisation or local environment where it takes place. A learning premise enables the production of certain products and their distribution or sale. In this point of the curriculum, the PLYA is not completely defined, and would demand completion or reconsideration. In this direction, a draft was already prepared in 2007, drawn up by a working group composed of co-workers of the Institute for Adult Education and selected mentors from implementing organisations - **Development of production project in the PLYA programme (expert's detailed report)**, ordered by the Ministry of Education and Sport. Inside, there are defined some possibilities for upgrading the project on the level of thinking and analysing the needs and also the weaknesses. We believe that upon the eventual completion or also renovation of the programme it would be reasonable to proceed from this draft.

The other need that is pointed out by the PLYA mentors and implementing organisations is the need for **project coordination on the national level**. In 2002, when the former development project of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education "set up on its own", there was foreseen and defined the role of coordination body (Coordination Unit), operating at one of the implementing organisations but due to unsuitable human resource selection and also organisational difficulties it did not succeed. With the termination of the coordination unit in

the following years, nobody performed this work. We agree with the opinion of implementing organisations and mentor teams that for the development and progress of the programme it would be necessary to provide for coordination on the national level. This coordination can happen parallel with consideration on changes and completions of the PLYA programme, already written about above, and further set out hereinafter.

3.5. Effectiveness estimation of the programme compared to the formal programme?

The PLYA programme's effectiveness is hard to compare with formal programmes, since they have different aims than the PLYA. It would be hard to compare them by the spectrum of diverse affects that one or another has on the life of participants, since we do not have such research in the area of formal education. It would probably also be hard to discuss the comparison between sustainable effects of the programmes, since the efficiency of the formal programmes is probably linked with, for example, employment stability or participation in further education, although employment is not entirely dependant upon education itself but also upon other factors – e.g. conditions on the labour market at a given moment.

According to so far performed evaluations we can claim that the PLYA programme gives good results mainly in the sense of the better capacity of the participant – competence for solving vital problems (also connected with job seeking) – in this sense, the PLYA functions more durably on the participants' successfulness. As said, we are not familiar with similar research in the area of formal education; therefore, it is hard to compare the successfulness of one with the other. We are convinced that the PLYA programme already presents an important completion, or if put otherwise, **support to formal education** which improves the efficiency of education – mainly the formal system.

Should the PLYA programme be adequately placed into the educational system, it would act even more comprehensively in a precautionary manner in the sense of final school dropout or would shorten the years of schooling for secondary school students who are at risk of dropout and repeatedly (even for several years) change from one to other educational programme or from regular to part-time education, while some of them never obtain a certificate on successful conclusion of the programme. Therefore, with treatment in the PLYA programme we could not only avoid dropout but also prolong schooling which, in many cases, lacks success in the end. Also, with the PLYA assistance we could shorten the time when young adults are inactive – either in school or employed.

3.6. What kind of a role is played in the PLYA programme by cooperating institutions and what is the estimation of integrations benefits?

The PLYA programme was already at a starting-point designed as a programme tightly connected with the environment in which it operates. This is one of its main strategic advantages. The PLYA programme links with different subjects (individuals and institutions) on diverse levels of the adult education cycle: upon identifying the needs for education, planning and conceptualisation of learning, performing learning, values of learning and its effects, and acquiring sources for learning. Beside animating the participants for inclusion in the PLYA programme, and ensuring some material conditions for their participation, today the majority of participants find the most important cooperation with the Employment Service.

Cooperation with schools where the career of dropouts usually begins seems more and more important. Counselling workers in both institutions can decisively assist with animating – recruiting young people into the PLYA programme, since precisely they have the data on who the participants are. They can also present the PLYA programme to them. In environments where this cooperation functions well, the programme functions well, and the participation in the programme is good. In environments where there is no such cooperation but implementing organisations report about how they invest a lot of energy and time in animation, it is still sometimes very hard for them to ensure participation. Namely, it is also typical for this target group that their motivation for inclusion in any kind of education is very low from the start, since they are burdened with bad experiences.

In general, according to the data from the Evaluation Study (2003) it can be noticed that the majority of participants find themselves in the situation of social isolation and with strong feelings of anxiety that further increase their passiveness. Therefore, we estimate that cooperation is necessary, and that the measures should be introduced that would on one hand impose on the mentioned institutions, and on the other with the presentation of the programmes, also enable the offer of participation in the PLYA programme to people they are counselling - young adults upon proper presentation.

3.7. The role and importance of the PLYA programme in the context of the financial crisis (is it useful in the time of crisis, is it adjusted to a potential increase of those involved as a consequence of the crisis).

We believe that the need for including young adults in the PLYA programme in the context of the economic crisis is increasing, since the inclusion of mainly vulnerable groups in these

circumstances is further increasing. Employment is reducing, poverty is increasing, and the opportunities and sources for social inclusions - e.g. free time activities – are, as a rule, lower. For people, and especially for young people who are just beginning their professional career, that is even more important. Failing this, it could lead to young people not acquiring the necessary social experiences nor developing adequate competences that would enable them to recognise opportunities for social inclusion and cooperation in different social circumstances; actually, this is already happening. In this context, the important competence is enterprise, communicativeness, learning how to learn and of course all the other key competences. In the PLYA programme, through project work and learning, we create authentic circumstances in which young people gain all these experiences – so called experienced based adragogics or experienced based learning or learning by doing.

The learning environment is created in the living environment - project learning takes place in the environment and with the cooperation of institutions (companies, cultural institutions, other) and important individuals (celebrities) from the environment. All this makes learning authentic, and to the best possible extent similar to realistic situations in which the work takes place. The young people with assistance from the mentors and other co-workers on the project think about the work and learning they had performed, widen their interests, interconnect different elements, and therefore also acquire relevant experiences for employment or further schooling. For many, such cooperation means an opportunity for establishing and to be noticed, to get an employment offer or any other opportunity for the realisation of their goals.

Regardless of the conceptual possibilities held by the PLYA programme, we estimate that with current organisation and placement into the system of education and schooling, also active schooling policies – mainly from the point of a view of financing and the number of mentors, performing such work - are not adequately prepared for an increase of those included. For this, it would be necessary to ensure the number of mentors as officially foreseen in the PLYA programme - i.e. 3 + 1 per basic group from 18 to 24 participants. The financing method has, for all the implementing organisations, increased the scope of administrative work for which, as a rule, the head of a mentor team or one of the mentors is in charge; therefore, obviously, they can not carry out their mentor work. In given circumstances, there is also plenty of other work that could be called project management, and is connected with ensuring sponsor funds for the programme – i.e. the purchase of means of work and work materials, connection within various European projects (that also imply ensuring additional funds and the possibilities of training for mentors and participants – e.g. ensuring the inclusion of young people in these projects - e.g. Youth in Action and

Moovit which according to current evaluations significantly influence the successfulness of young people in the PLYA programme.

We believe that after ten years of successful operations the time has come to reconsider the starting-point and purpose of the PLYA programme. Upon changed economic and social circumstances (also in the global sense), it would be wise to think about numerous different possibilities, offered by the PLYA programme – about new problems that the PLYA programme can assist in solving, new forms of connecting between the formal and informal parts of the educational system, and consequently, to reconsider how to place the PLYA programme in the education and training system and the system of social assistance for young people so that the given good results could multiply. In this regard, it would be necessary to also change the official curriculum of the PLYA programme in some places that today precludes the inclusion of young people who would otherwise need it but they do not own the adequate status to be included – unemployed who do not have a pupil, secondary school student or student status. The change of definition of the secondary school student which took place as late as in the past two or three years precludes participation in the PLYA programme of many young people. These are the young people that now do own the secondary school student status but actually as students are not successful for a variety of reasons. Should they be included in the PLYA programme, their successfulness would, judging by experience, improve. This is especially important for those students who do not receive other encouragements and assistance. Furthermore, this is important for the young PLYA participants, for whom acquiring the secondary school student status would enable faster achievement of their set objectives with less obstacles. This is made impossible for them in this situation.

4. HOW TO PROCEED?

The described PLYA programme presents the verified good practise of social inclusion of young persons without education, without employment and with no motivation for the path to a better future.

As the largest **two advantages of the programme** we can describe the following specific categories: to young people an adjusted programme that enables social inclusion as the prerequisite for further inclusion in the education or working process, and also the comprehension and integrity of the programme.

The programme is not perfect; among existing **disadvantages** we could include the diversity of existing forms of financing that precludes transparency of the programme and use. The mentioned obstacle for more effective implementation demands reconsideration about the adequacy of the existing form of financing, and also demands improvements and better transparency.

Many actors are bound to the management and implementation of the programme which once again precludes the transparency of the implementation and consistency of the programme. But the largest challenge by many creators of the programme and its development lies in the possibility of monitoring the participants on their path of life also after the period of concluded activities in the programme. This way, the programme would upon monitoring of the durability of the individual's inclusion in the long term acquire additional value and justify its existence, and also improvements and an adequate evaluated position among the existing programmes of the active employment policy.

By the end of 2009, a **detailed evaluation of the programme for project learning** will be drawn up in the framework of the Ministry of Education and Sport that will give answers to the modern challenges of young people, and also guidelines for improvements and updating of the programme. The summary of the evaluation will be forwarded to all the participants of the Peer Review.

APPENDIX

5. EVALUATION OF THE PLYA PROGRAMME IN RADOVLJICA 2008/09

5.1. General description and achievements of the group

In the school year 2008/09, the PLYA Programme in Radovljica was attended by 35 young people. The majority of those included belonged to the age group from 18 to 19 years. Among them there were 25 boys and 10 girls. The majority of young people who participated in the programme was attending secondary vocational or professional education before they entered into the programme.

Among the key achievements of the programme is the concluded education of the participants upon leaving the PLYA programme, namely:

- 6 persons acquired formal education, of which 3 persons concluded primary education, and 3 persons successfully concluded secondary professional education.
- 10 persons continued interrupted secondary professional education, 5 persons secondary vocational education, 2 persons lower vocational education, and 1 person continued primary education.
- 3 persons continued education in a newly selected field of education, namely 3 persons lower vocational education, 2 persons secondary professional education, and one person primary education.
- Upon leaving the PLYA programme, 1 person acquired gainful employment.
- 5 persons acquired informal education (for which they received a certificate – e.g. a foreign language course, computing ...) in the time of participating in the PLYA programme.

5.2. Socio-personal achievements in the PLYA programme

The group was diversified, the young people had many personal problems, and therefore a lot of time was dedicated to individual work, also with their parents. The majority of the participants came from families that are coping with many problems. The consequence of the circumstances was presented by a low self-image of the young people, since they lacked positive encouragements from the environment. Lately, coping with growing poverty in the families is observed – the great majority of the participants does not have travelling expenses

refunded which presents a large problem in the area of cooperation. Many of the participants have, in addition, health problems, including mental illness (4 participants from the group were included in the mental health programme – 3 successfully, and 1 person was hospitalized).

The Centre for Assistance, Therapy, and Social Rehabilitation carried out workshops from the area on the use of illegal drugs, since an increasing use of heroin or experimenting with it (1 person included in the individual programme) was observed.

Numerous preventive workshops were carried out for raising awareness of problems of the group and for searching for solutions. Some participants had attention difficulties (hyperactivity), therefore the workshops were adjusted and carried out in two groups. The participants developed tolerance among participants in the time of participating in the programme; positive changes were noticeable in the area of gaining self-confidence – in short, they gained the experience that they too can be successful.

5.3. Estimation of the PLYA Radovljica programme implementation in the school year 2008/09

The school year 2008/09 was very successful in the educational area. The majority of the participants achieved their educational aims, passed the missing exams and continued their education. Six participants concluded education, one was gainfully employed. Four participants did not achieve their educational aims, but did achieve their pedagogic aim (personal growth) and functional aims (development of skills). The group was very full; there was even a "waiting line" for entry into the programme. A lot of time was unfortunately also used for acquiring the necessary financial means for carrying out the project.

5.4. Selected areas of the PLYA Radovljica programme projects in the school year 2008/09

Selected projects

1) Relaxation room

Brainstorming of innovative project, development of manual skills, developing spatial conception, and learning of communication skills and cooperation inside the group.

2) Does (not) bother me

The decision for the work topic – music and video, drawing up of a working plan, selection of three kinds of music and making of a video, learning about screenwriting,

framing, editing, shooting, acting lessons, scene settings, learning of text forming, sponsorship and marketing activities, learning of media criticism, developing communication skills and effective problem solving, and learning about the use of computers.

3) *Give away tin*

Understanding tin recycling, and understanding the basic notions of ecological and nature friendly recycling

4) *Youth exchange*

The topic of European citizenship and the situation of underprivileged groups (dropouts, immigrants ...) was chosen. The young people got to know the topic of refugees, and problems with which those young people are faced.

Production projects

1) *St. Nicholas and Christmas stand*

The purpose of the workshop was to develop manual skills, to acquire working habits, and to understand marketing. The participants learned how to make cards, candles, wax products, and also gained experience in selling (mathematical skills), skills of public performance and learned about communication skills.

2) *We're baking for a better tomorrow*

The participants learned about manual skills with cookie package making; they also learned about the pastry chef and merchant vocation.

Workshops

- Creative workshop of **jewellery making**.
- Creative workshop of **English language learning** (grammar rules, communication ...)
- **Understanding the system of government** of the Republic of Slovenia
- Project »**Reading is cool**« (within the library); the participants read a book, discussed it along with tea and cookies, practised reading and familiarization with diverse topics.
- Prevention workshop – **mental health** (reasons causing mental illnesses, symptoms ...)
- Prevention workshop – **on marijuana and dance drugs** (the PLYA participants got to know the effects and consequences of drugs, discussed their own experiences and linked them with theory).

- Theme workshop – **racism**. The participants got to know about the notions of prejudice and anti-Semitism, and determined how racism was present in their lives.
- Prevention workshop – **AIDS and hepatitis**. The participants come to know about sexually-transmitted diseases, and prevention measures.
- Lecture on **Finland**. The participants widen their horizons and got to know about a new culture.
- Theme workshop – **vocations**. The young people got to know about a huge variety of vocations; among them there were the ones for which the most interest was shown. The process of enrolment in secondary schools and faculties was also explained.
- Prevention workshop – **values**. The young got to know the notions of value, norm and rule; they estimated their values by importance and discovered the meaning of values for forming relationships.

Animation activities

- Interview about the PLYA programme (radio interview)
- Press conference

5.5. Statistical data on the PLYA Radovljica programme participants in the school year 2008/09

a) Changes in the number of participants by months

MONTH	THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE MONTH		THE NUMBER OF NEWLY ENROLLED DURING THE MONTH		THE NUMBER OF WITHDRAWALS DURING THE MONTH	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
SEPTEMBER	10	3	0	1	0	0
OCTOBER	15	6	4	1	1	0
NOVEMBER	13	6	4	1	4	0
DECEMBER	16	6	3	1	0	1
JANUARY	17	6	4	2	2	1
FEBRUARY	19	6	1	0	0	1
MARCH	19	5	1	0	1	0
APRIL	18	6	0	0	1	0
MAY	15	4	0	0	3	1
JUNE	15	6	0	0	0	1
JULY	15	6	0	0	0	0
AUGUST	15	6	0	0	0	0

Source: PLYA Radovljica Final Report 2008/09.

b) Participants upon withdrawal from the programme by age

AGE		No. of participants		NUMBER OF MERELY INFORMATIVELY ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS (UP TO 1 WEEK)	
		M	F	M	F
	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS				
up to 15 years of age					
from 15 to 16 years of age		1	1		
from 16 to 17 years of age		1	3		
from 17 to 18 years of age		4	1	1	
from 18 to 19 years of age		6	1		
from 19 to 20 years of age		3		1	2
from 20 to 21 years of age		3	2	1	
from 21 to 22 years of age		2	1		
from 22 to 23 years of age		3			
from 23 to 24 years of age		1			
from 24 to 25 years of age		1	1		
from 25 to 26 years of age					
26 years or more					
TOTAL		25	10	3	2

Source: PLYA Radovljica Final Report 2008/09.

c) The scope of cooperation with out-workers by month

MONTH	THE NUMBER OF OUT-WORKERS	THE AREA OF COOPERATION (OPT, PRO, INT, IND)	SCOPE OF THE COOPERATION IN HOURS
SEPTEMBER	2	ind-learning	35 (ind. learning)
OCTOBER	3	int., opt., ind.-learning	2(int.), 56 (ind. learning)
NOVEMBER	3	Ind-learning	55 (ind-learning)
DECEMBER	3	ind-learning	42 (ind-learning)
JANUARY	5	ind-learning, int.	55 (ind-learning), 2 (int.)
FEBRUARY	6	ind-learning, opt	45 (ind-learning), 8 (opt.)
MARCH	6	ind-learning, opt.	130 (ind-), 8 (opt.)
APRIL	6	ind-learning, int.	75 (ind-learning), 2 (int) 10 opt.
MAY	7	ind-learning, opt.	75 ind-learning, 28 (opt.)
JUNE	7	ind-learning	85 (ind.-learning) 40 opt.
JULY	2	ind-learning	20 (ind-learning)
AUGUST	2	ind-learning	25 (ind-learning)

Source: PLYA Radovljica Final Report 2008/09.

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