

The Educational Offer for Older Adults in Different Municipalities in Slovenia

Sabina Jelenc Krašovec

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

sabina.jelenc@guest.arnes.si

Sonja Kump

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

sonja.kump@guest.arnes.si

Abstract

This paper aims to find out whether the supply of education for older adults depends on the level of well-being in the municipality (Rovan et al. 2009), or the supply and contents of education for older adults changes depending on the urban and/or rural character of the region, and the basic features of the supply. The analysis of adult education available in Slovenia shows that the prevailing share of the range of organized education is offered by the University of the Third Age (UTA) and the Adult Education Centres (AEC). We have found out that the level of well-being in a municipality says nothing about the supply of education for older people in the community, but that the supply of education for older adults depends more on the degree of urbanization and individual factors such as the size of the place, the existence of the UTA or AEC in that place, the number of volunteers, and nongovernmental organizations, etc. In urban settlements, the supply of education for older adults is more diverse, but the more organized and long-term forms of education are attended primarily by women (from 80 to 90%) and older people with higher degree of education (at least secondary school and over), aged from 50 to 65 years. The supply of education in many municipalities does not respond to different needs of older people, it is stereotypical and excluding, limited to a small share of older people who are socially and educationally privileged. The majority of education for older people is free-of-charge, and therefore the reason for low attendance must be other obstacles. In the investigated municipalities, we noticed no in-depth consideration of education organizers of how to attract older non-participants. In Slovenia, it will thus be necessary to draw up appropriate local and national educational policies making the municipalities more responsible for the provision of different educational opportunities for older people.

Introduction

Recent data for Slovenia show that in the last few years its economic development has been increasingly lagging behind that of the European Union, and the population projections for Slovenia are not favourable either. Between 2008 and 2060, according to the medium variant of the EUROPOP2008 population projection, the share of the population aged 65 years or over in the total population is expected to increase by 16.1% (in EU27 17.1%) to reach 33.4% (in EU27 to 30.0%). At the same time Slovenia belongs to those countries in Europe which have the lowest fertility rates (only 1.31 in 2006) (Population of Slovenia...2009)¹. In the next 50 years the age structure of the Slovenian population will change significantly.

Our presumption is that in Slovenia the range of education available to the older persons is chaotic, depending on local conditions, with uneven geographic coverage, while the role of local communities in Slovenia is quite diverse.

Education of older adults in Slovenia

The analysis of adult education available in Slovenia shows that approximately 19% of the total adult education available is intended for older adults and retired persons (Brenk 2012, p. 23); this concerns particularly general non-formal education. In Slovenia, the prevailing share of the range of organized education is offered by the University of the Third Age (UTA) and the Adult Education Centres² (AEC); other education available is scattered and chaotic. Slovenia has a network of 45 Universities of the Third Age with about 21,000 students, 147 educational programmes (2011/12), more than 1,000 mentors and more than 2,000 volunteers in libraries, adult education centres, and societies of retired persons. The activities of UTA have lately reached small towns and villages, thus reducing inequalities in access of the aged to education³. UTA's educational data for Slovenia in 2009 indicate that the majority of participants have a post-secondary or higher education degree, or a masters degree or doctorate (59.4%), and that only 1.4% of all UTA participants have only primary school or less; that the majority of participants are women (90.6%); that most of the UTA participants take part in the humanities, social studies, art (56.4%), and languages (35.2%), and that, for example, programmes in the field of natural sciences which are more interesting to men, amount to only 1.1%; and that the primary motive for participation in UTA is a wish or need for knowledge (Šantej 2009, p. 26-29).

No research establishing whether the level of well-being of the community also influences the availability and possibilities of education for the older adults within the community has been found; however, there are a few studies dealing with the evaluation

¹ According to the Eurostat population projection results, Slovenia will have almost 2,058,000 inhabitants in 2060, almost one third of which will be older than 64 years of age. In 2060, 100 persons of working age (aged 15 to 64 years) will support almost 58 old-age persons and 25 children (24 or 20 respectively in 2010).

² Those are institutions, similar to Folk High Schools.

³ In recent years, the UTA in Slovenia has been networking with public institutions which have established a network of cultural mediators in Slovenian museums, cultural mediators in the University Medical Centre (UKC), garden volunteers in the University Botanic Gardens, and volunteer storytellers. In association with companies, they have a network of mutual computer literacy programmes for older adults and an exchange of knowledge called 'Each One Teaches One.' (University of the Third Age...)

of the influence of education on the well-being of individuals and the community (Field 2009; Golding 2011a). Golding (2011a, p. 113) finds, for instance, that education within a community has a significant influence on the well-being of men in Australia, but – more than education in adult education institutions – such positive influence is brought about by their participation in other community organizations which, according to respondents, provide more diverse and abundant learning opportunities than adult education institutions (ibid, p. 114).⁴

Methodology

The availability of education and other leisure activities for older people which can also have educational function is investigated in the framework of the research of “Care for the older people within Communities in Slovenia.”⁵ The project methodology is based on a successive use of quantitative and qualitative methods (Holland and Campell 2005; Creswell and Plano Clark 2007, 2011). First we performed a quantitative survey of the state of education for older adults available in the selected local communities, and supplemented it with primary research, i.e., case studies.⁶ This was based on the classification of municipalities according to their level of well-being (according to Rován et al. 2009);⁷ there are four groups of communities with respect to their level of well-being.⁸ One municipality was selected from each group and from different Slovenian regions, and interviews were held with the providers of education for older adults and with older persons about the supply and education, as well as other leisure activities for older people. This paper aims to find out whether the supply of education for older adults depends on the level of well-being in the municipality (Rován et al. 2009), or the supply and contents of education for older adults changes depending on the urban and/or rural character of the region, and the basic features of the supply.

Educational availability for older adults in municipalities with different levels of well-being

Nova Gorica

⁴ They perceived such organizations as effective because they were not vocation-oriented, met the needs and interests of older persons, and offered opportunities for exchanging their work and life experiences.

⁵ Basic research project “Care for Older People within Communities in Slovenia,” the principal investigator of which is Dr. Valentina Hlebec, running from 2011 to 2014 (J5 – 4080), and financed in full by ARRS.

⁶ Data were collected from respective web sites, notice boards of various organizations (e.g., libraries, health care centres, societies, day centres for older people, etc.) and advertisements in local newspapers, radio and TV stations, and by means of personal contacts with the representatives of such organizations.

⁷ ‘Well-being’ is a complex multidimensional notion which can be defined as the state of happiness, health, and prosperity. In general, well-being differs considerably from one region of a country to another, which hinders social development, and may cause economic, social, urban-planning, environmental, and political problems. Well-being is defined by 49 numerical social, economic, demographic, and environmental indices. The validity of measuring well-being by means of combined indices was verified by the use of additional methods of multivariate analysis. (Rován et al. 2009, p. 70).

⁸ Group 1: high well-being communities (in economic and social terms highly developed communities), Group 2: balanced well-being communities; Group 3: moderate well-being communities, and Group 4: low well-being communities.

The Municipality of Nova Gorica is a part of the Gorica statistical region which covers 43 settlements. In 2009, it had approximately 32,100 inhabitants.⁹ The average age of the citizens was 43.1 years and so higher than the average age of Slovenian population (41.4 years). The number of the oldest inhabitants of this municipality was greater than the number of the youngest ones.¹⁰ According to the classification of Rován et al. (2009), the municipality of Nova Gorica is ranked in the group of high well-being communities. This group consists of 15 municipalities (9.4% of Slovenian territory) with high degree of urbanization. In terms of the number of inhabitants this is the biggest group (36.5% of Slovenian population), with a high standard of living,¹¹ and the highest values of economic indices. The level of education of the population in these municipalities aged 15 years and over (2002 census data) is higher than the Slovenian average (Population 2003)¹². The registered unemployment rate and the number of social assistance recipients is average, but the total fertility rate is the lowest, the number of divorces the highest, and also the crime rate is higher than average (Rován et al. 2009, p. 82).

The city of Nova Gorica has the most abundant and diverse supply of education for older adults. The UTA alone has more than 50 different study circles and workshops in 11 locations in the municipality (e.g., learning foreign languages, music, art, and literary activities, computer science, photography, medicinal herbs, recreational and social activities) (UNITRI Society). Adult Education Centre (AEC) offers to older adults an educational programme “Let’s stir up life with learning”¹³; older people visit the “Open Learning Centre,” the Learning Exchange, lifelong learning points, Guidance and Counselling Centre,¹⁴ and exclusively for older adults there are courses of digital photography, fast reading, guitar playing, painting, dress-making, and bobbin lace-making. The Nova Gorica AEC also organizes activities in the framework of the Day Centre for Seniors (free language courses, computer and other courses, workshops, and intergenerational socializing).

Older people in the municipality are also the members of many of the 69 societies (e.g., the Prvačina Women's Society, Nature Lovers Society, etc.). Municipal societies include 11 societies of retired persons, which organize educational circles, workshops, various lectures, hiking, excursions, and cultural and sport activities. It was found that intergenerational collaboration programmes (organized by the Youth Centre, Caritas, and the Intergenerational Self-Help Society) were also under way in this municipality in the form of intergenerational camps or intergenerational weekends when children,

⁹ The average number of inhabitants living on a square kilometre large area of the municipality was 115; hence the population density here was higher than in the country as a whole (101 inhabitants per km²). This year, the natural population growth per 1,000 inhabitants of the municipality was negative, amounting to -0.7 (in Slovenia: 1.5).

¹⁰ For every 100 persons aged 0–14 years there lived 143 persons aged 65 years or over; data show that the average age of the population in this municipality is increasing faster on average than that of Slovenia as a whole (Slovenian municipalities in numbers 2011).

¹¹ A characteristic feature of these communities is also high income tax per inhabitant and high share of cars per person.

¹² 31.0% inhabitants finished or did not finish primary school (Slovenia: 33.0%), 53.5% finished secondary school (Slovenia: 54.0%), and 15.5 % inhabitants graduated from post-secondary or higher education institutions (Slovenia: 13.0%).

¹³ The goal of the programme is to renew and obtain fundamental knowledge and skills for increased independence, increased self-confidence, and for participation in the life of the community.

¹⁴ In 2011, all persons seeking information or counselling in adult education included 9.9% of persons aged 50 years or over, or 6.4% of retired persons (Data from the application ...2011).

young people, and older people meet and socialize in workshops in, for instance, computer science, foreign languages, and other creative workshops.

An interview was held with an occupational therapist in the Public Retirement Home in the municipality, and she listed their numerous leisure and educational activities (gymnastics, in-house library, tombola playing, chorus, workshops, excursions, home musical group, cinema evenings, exhibitions of products from workshops, and celebrations of cultural and national holidays). There are more female residents in the Home, and the majority of the participants of activities (aged 70 years on average) have primary school education, fewer of them finished secondary school, and some of them have higher education degrees. The programmes are intended for residents, but they are also open to older people who are not Home residents. The Retirement Home also houses a day centre with art workshops. The programmes are financed primarily by the Retirement Home, and they also have some EU funds (e.g., computer circle) and donations. All the programmes are free-of-charge for the attendees. The advantage that the therapist spoke about, and which is also mentioned as significant in foreign studies (e.g., Newman and Hatton-Yeo 2008, p. 32; Formosa 2012, p. 588) is the Home's cooperation with primary schools (children as companions in excursions, as volunteers in intergenerational social games), with the UTA (Italian language course, and healthcare corner), with the Nova Gorica AEC (medicinal herbs workshop and preservation of old customs), and the Our Ties Society (self-help group). They have no staff with qualifications in teaching or andragogy.

A 73 year-old, retired woman with a higher-education degree in pharmacy says that she regularly attends excursions and educational courses associated with healthy nutrition, eye diseases, effects of medications, etc. held by the Pharmaceutical Society. She likes to learn, to be up-to-date with new medications, and to meet her colleagues again. When asked whether she encounters any obstacles in connection with educational activities, she replies:

“Obstacles exist, particularly the distance to the place of the Society’s activities. As I have no driving licence, I depend on a friend who lives in Nova Gorica – if she doesn’t go I can’t go either. There are no other obstacles. I don’t think I’m too old to understand lectures.”

Some foreign researchers (Formosa 2012, p. 287) find likewise that life in rural regions presents a considerable problem concerning access to the supply of education, particularly for older adults with no driving licence or without a car. Education providers frequently fail to see how important it is – particularly for socially more endangered older adults who sometimes have no money to pay even for public transportation – to provide educational activities close to the homes of participants. Authors report about, in connection with older adults, situation-related as well as institutional and dispositional obstacles (Findsen and Formosa, 2011, p. 123; McGivney 1999, p. 70). Many of such obstacles can be successfully addressed by educators themselves, but some of them need action on the level of the community and state, particularly those concerning the policy of education (of older adults) to promote the participation of older adults in education (in terms of contents and organization, diverse supply, a network of different providers, information and consulting activities, well-qualified personnel, and free-of-charge supply).

It can be ascertained that the municipality of Nova Gorica, which is ranked highly among well-being municipalities, has in principle an extensive supply of education for older adults that is very good in the city in particular, while this cannot be said about the supply in rural settlements. The inhabitants of some settlements in this municipality mention inaccessibility of supply and lack of incentive for their participation in education.

Žiri

The municipality of Žiri is a part of the Gorenjska statistical region comprising 18 settlements, and approximately 4,900 inhabitants in 2009¹⁵. The average age of citizens was 39.9 years, and so lower than the average age of Slovenian population (41.4 years). The number of the oldest inhabitants of this municipality equalled the number of the youngest – which is characteristic for only few Slovenian municipalities.¹⁶ According to the classification of municipalities by Rován et al. (2009), the Žiri municipality is ranked in the group of balanced well-being municipalities comprising 56 Slovenian municipalities (39.8% of the Slovenian territory) with 22.4% of the Slovenian population. Access to public municipal infrastructure is favourable, and most of the values of economic indices and standard of living indices are above average (most attractive living conditions)¹⁷. The level of education is above average, but lower than that of the first group.¹⁸ The inhabitants of these municipalities live longer, on average, than other inhabitants of Slovenia (Rován et al. 2009, p. 82).

Educational and other leisure activities for older adults in the rural municipality of Žiri are organized by the 15 societies existing in the municipality. Senior citizens represent a minority in most societies, but they prevail in the Society of Retired Persons. The Society organizes various sport activities, excursions, cultural events, and they also have their own choir. They organize payable courses of English and German (exclusively women aged between 60 and 65 years), and with the aid of the EU funds they hold computer courses, which are free of charge for the participants (of both sexes), and communications for volunteers in the “Older people for older people” project¹⁹ (women prevail). The attendance of older adults at lectures, study circles, and

¹⁵ Approximately 100 people lived on a square kilometre of the territory of this municipality, hence the population density here was lower than in Slovenia as a whole (101 inhabitant per km²). In 2009, the natural population growth per 1,000 inhabitants in the municipality was positive, amounting to 6.1 (total Slovenia 1.5) (Slovenian municipalities in numbers 2011).

¹⁶ For every 100 persons aged 0–14 years there lived 143 persons aged 65 years or over; the data show that the value of the ageing index for this municipality was lower than the value of this index for Slovenia as a whole (this value was 118), and it also indicates that the average age of inhabitants in this municipality is increasing more slowly on average than that of the total Slovenia (Slovenian municipalities in numbers 2011).

¹⁷ The group of balanced well-being municipalities is characterized by the highest population growth rates, and the lowest rates of registered unemployment and social assistance recipients.

¹⁸ However, this does not apply to the Žiri municipality since according to the last population census of 2002 the attained level of education of this municipality's population aged 15 years or over was somewhat lower than the national average (Population 2003). There were 33.5% of inhabitants with finished or unfinished primary school (Slovenia: 33.0%), secondary school: 57.0% (Slovenia: 54.0%), and 9.5% inhabitants with completed post-secondary or higher education (Slovenia: 13.0%).

¹⁹ On the initiative of the Slovenian Association of Societies of Retired Persons, the “Older people for older people” project has been implemented since 2011 by 221 Societies of Retired Persons in 161 municipalities (Slovenian Association of Societies, etc.).

workshops in individual municipal societies is notably distributed by gender; thus it is for instance only women who take part in the activities of the Farm Women's Society, and men for instance only in the Firemen and Beekeeper Societies. Educational activities for adults (including older adults) in the form of professional lectures, literary evenings, and creative workshops are provided by the Ivan Tavčar Library (the more educated attendees prevail). Two self-help groups (exclusively women aged 70 to 95 years) deal with the affairs of older people.

The feminization of the education of older adults has been noticed in many countries (Formosa 2005; Finsden 2005; Golding et al. 2008; and others.); Withnall finds that there are more women among older people, they are more successful in their learning careers and influential in defining the contents of education, but at the same time less influential in the education process (in mixed-gender groups of learners) (Withnall 2010, p. 33).

When the "Older people for older people" project manager of the Žiri municipality's Society for Retired People was interviewed about how well older adults were informed of educational programmes, she was convinced that older adults knew about the educational programmes since they were being informed by means of the local radio, bulleting board of the Cooperative Hall (Village hall) and individually at home, "from mouth to mouth." The respondent states that the older adults' needs for and interests in education are not specifically investigated, and there are no plans to expand the supply of education. She is convinced that older persons in the local community have enough opportunities for education, socializing, and satisfying various interests, and according to her the reason for low attendance is their "narrow-mindedness".

However, a 69 year-old retired woman with 3-year vocational education, a member of the Society for Retired People, in the framework of which she takes part in organized excursions and gymnastics, does not agree with this opinion that the supply for older adults is sufficient. She is informed about the available programmes, but she does not take part in them because she does not like lectures and learning where she, with her knowledge, would lag behind other people. She is much more interested in workshops on herbs, healthy nutrition for older persons, or the making of advent wreaths, but there are no such workshops available. She replies that she has no opportunity to influence the creation of the contents and implementation of educational supply for older people. She says:

"There is not enough supply in Žiri, you cannot choose what you want, and we only have computer and English courses. The neighbouring municipality has a better supply, but it is too far, you need transportation."

Although Žiri is a balanced well-being municipality with favourable features concerning the living of its inhabitants it can be concluded that the supply is quite monotonous, gender-segregated, not meeting the needs of older adults (because the needs are not being found out), and uncoordinated educational activities (organizations within local communities do not bond and in most cases do not cooperate).

Krško

The municipality of Krško is a part of the Spodnjeposavska statistical region with 158 settlements (the most among Slovenian municipalities). In 2009, this municipality had

approximately 25,700 inhabitants²⁰ of the average age of 41.1 years. The number of the oldest inhabitants of this municipality was greater than the number of the youngest²¹. According to the classification of municipalities by Rován et al. (2009), the Krško municipality is ranked in the group of moderate well-being municipalities. This group comprises 70 municipalities (covering 35.9% of Slovenian territory; 33.5% of the entire population), and it is characterised by moderate economic circumstances, the standard of living being slightly under average²². An average municipality of this group has the youngest population of all groups (Rován et al. 2009, p. 82), and the attained level of education of population aged 15 years and over is somewhat lower than the national average (Population 2003).²³

The UTA operating in the Adult Education Centre offers the most extensive range of education of older adults in the Krško municipality. Older adults can take part in seven free-of-charge study circles (computer, film, reading, art, digital photography, organic gardening, and medicinal herbs), and four payable courses of foreign languages (the price of a course is 120 EUR). The majority of participants are female (80-90%), aged between 50 and 64 years (60%), with completed secondary or vocational school; there are practically no participants with finished primary school. Older adults can also attend short workshops (e.g., cooking, healthy nutrition, clay), foreign language courses (prices from 280 to 375 EUR), and visit the “Open Learning Centre” (access to the Internet) at the AEC. The AEC publishes information about their programmes on their website, in announcements in the local newspaper, by means of flyers in schools, libraries, the Counselling and guidance centre for adults²⁴, Healthcare Centre, and by posters. A free-of-charge individual computer course for older adults is offered by the town library (both men and women aged 65 years on average). The library for the residents of the Home for Senior Citizens organizes free-of-charge “Book-Reading Meetings” (exclusively women – 70 to 75 years). In addition, the library organizes literary evenings, exhibitions, various lectures, and numerous creative workshops. The Home for Senior Citizens offers lectures on health and nutrition issues, films, excursions, and visits to exhibitions, and self-help groups. Numerous events,

²⁰ Approximately 90 people lived on a square kilometre of the territory of this municipality; hence the population density here was lower than in Slovenia as a whole (101 inhabitant per km²). In 2009, the natural population growth per 1,000 inhabitants in the municipality was positive, amounting to 1.8 (Slovenia 1.5).

²¹ For every 100 persons aged 0–14 years 112 persons aged 65 years or over lived there. This indicates that the value of the ageing index for this municipality was lower than the value of this index for Slovenia as a whole (this value was 118), and it also indicates that the average age of inhabitants in this municipality is increasing more slowly on average than that of the total Slovenia (Slovenian municipalities in numbers 2011).

²² The values of most variables are around the average, the lowest being the surface area of residential units and the percentage of owner occupied housing per inhabitant.

²³ Thus, 38.7% of inhabitants finished primary school or less (Slovenia: 33.0%), 51.9% finished secondary school (Slovenia: 54.0%), and 9.4% of inhabitants attained post-secondary or higher education degree (Slovenia: 13.0%).

²⁴ The Guidance and Counselling Centre is intended for adults in the Posavska region; of all the people coming to the Centre in 2011 as many as 25.9% were aged more than 50 years, and 20.7% were retired persons (Data from the application ...2011).

workshops, and intergenerational activities take place in the Home in collaboration with schools, kindergartens, school centre, cultural, and other societies (e.g., *Tačke pomagačke* Society, *Ozare* Society etc.), youth centre, and independent performers and groups.

The Krško municipality has four Societies of Retired Persons with similar programmes of activities (periodical lectures, workshops, sport and cultural activities, handicraft, various meetings, excursions, and holidays). The members are informed about all activities by a printed programme of activities and through field promotion. The Krško Society of Retired Persons also participates in the “Older people for older people” social programme, which is financed from the EU funds.²⁵ Some retired specialists and managers are the members of the Posavje Society of Senior Managers and Experts, which organizes lectures, professional discussions for the public, professional excursions, and conferences on current issues concerning the region and its development. Older adults can attend free-of-charge workshops and lectures on health issues organized by the Krško Healthcare Centre, and the self-help groups of older adults (participants aged 65 years and over) at the Social Work centre. The Krško Friends of Youth Association has a programme for older people called ‘Individual Partnership’ (young volunteers meeting older people over 60 years of age). The Lukec dance Club offers payable customized training course of ballroom dances for retired persons.

We discussed the educational offer for older adults with the programme organizer of the UTA. Although they advertise their programmes in the local newspaper, on the Internet, by personal letters, and posters, she finds that the most effective form is personal communication (by word of mouth). She notes that workshops in lectures have the highest attendance, as opposed to considerably lower attendance in more demanding forms of education and longer programmes. The participants are predominantly women (more than 80%), while only rarely do men decide to take up computer and digital photography courses. Most of participants are aged from 50 to 64 years, and their education level is at least secondary school. The programmes are financed from the national funds, approximately 10% is contributed by the municipality, and approximately 85% of the programmes for older adults are free-of-charge. The needs for education and interests of older adults are ascertained by means of evaluation questionnaires at the end of educational programme (only active participants are questioned) and through mentors, but no special analyses of the needs and interests of older people are performed in the local environment.

When asked whether any attempts were made to cooperate with other organizations within their local environment in the planning, organization, and implementation of educational programmes the respondent replied:

“We tried to establish cooperation with local communities but they were not interested in being our partner. We encountered no positive response from societies either. The reason is that everyone seeks financial support rather than programmes.”

The organizers of education for older people are aware that they lack programmes which would be more attractive for older people, but they in fact do not know what else

²⁵ Volunteers are educated on how to approach older people in the field, how to consider the anonymity of people, and how to complete questionnaires and conduct interviews.

is of interest to these people since no such information reaches them. According to them, the main obstacles preventing older people from deciding to participate in education are their low level of education (they are frequently ashamed, afraid, etc.), money, transportation (inadequate public transportation links with settlements), and personal reasons (e.g., almost everybody has a garden, some of them have vineyards and small farms, and because of this work they have no time for other activities from April on).

Interviewing an active participant of education, a 65 year-old retired clerk with a vocational secondary school education we learnt that in the course of last year she had taken part in seven educational activities organized by the AEC and the town library. In her opinion, the educational offer for older adults in Krško is very diverse, meeting her needs and interests. She considers education important because of the fast pace of life, incessant novelties, and updating of communications.

Although this is a municipality of moderate well-being, the supply of education for older adults is good. This is an urban municipality with quite a range of institutional supply of education for older adults (UTA and AEC), as well as a number of other community organizations offering opportunities for education and leisure activities. Our presumption that municipalities with a relatively lower (moderate) well-being the supply of education for older adults is of a smaller scale, has not been confirmed in the case of the Krško municipality.

Žetale

The municipality of Žetale is a part of the Podravska statistical region and has only five settlements. In 2009, this municipality has approximately 1,300 inhabitants²⁶ aged 41.5 years on average. The number of the oldest inhabitants of this municipality was greater than the number of the youngest ones.²⁷ According to the classification by Rován et al. (2009), the municipality is ranked in the group of low well-being municipalities. This group includes 52 municipalities (17.3% of Slovenian territory and 7.6% of its population). A municipality in this group has only 2,946 inhabitants on average,²⁸ it is underdeveloped in economic terms, predominantly rural with an above-average number of social assistance recipients, a high registered unemployment rate, and the lowest degree of education of the population.²⁹ Low well-being municipalities also have the highest number of suicides and abortions, and at the same time the lowest rate of divorces and crime (Rován et al. 2009, p. 83).

²⁶ 35 people on average lived in a square kilometre of the territory of this municipality, hence the population density here was lower than in Slovenia as a whole (101 inhabitant per km²). In 2009, the natural population growth per 1,000 inhabitants in the municipality was negative, amounting to -8.2 (Slovenia: 1.5) (Slovenian municipalities in numbers 2011).

²⁷ These data show that the average age of population in this municipality increases generally faster than that of Slovenia as a whole (Slovenian municipalities in numbers 2011).

²⁸ In terms of size, the municipalities of this group generally do not meet legislative conditions required for establishment of municipalities.

²⁹ Following the last population census of 2002 the attained degree of education of population in this municipality aged 15 years and over was notably lower than the national average (Population 2003). Thus only 61.6% of inhabitants finished primary school or less (Slovenia: 33.0%), 35.0% finished secondary school (Slovenia: 54.0%), and 3.4% of inhabitants attained post-secondary or higher education degree.

The Žetale municipality, a rural settlement, has no supply of formal education for older adults. Older people participate only in individual societies within the community. Some older persons take part in various actions which periodically take place in Žetale, such as “Let’s Clean Slovenia in One Day,” learning to use computers in the scope of the “Symbiosis” project, various cultural events such as lectures about travels, exhibitions, general meetings, competitions (e.g., forestry competition), cultural events, etc. The majority of older citizens are members of the Society for Retired Persons, which organizes no education but primarily excursions, intergenerational activities in collaboration with primary school, while informal and incidental learning takes place during visits to museums and Slovenian farms. The management of the Society also informed the members about the “Older people for older people” programme (volunteers provide help to older persons at their homes), but nobody decided to take part in the programme. A few senior citizens are members of the male and female choruses and theatre group within the Cultural & Educational Society. The Žetalanec Mechanical Society organizes lectures (e.g., about safe use of tools and machinery, energy saving in farming, feeding of animals, etc.), a beginners’ computer course, and gymnastics. Men prevail among older participants. In addition, the Society organizes professional excursions (about 15% older persons participate), cleaning actions, blood-donation actions, exhibitions on the occasion of municipal holiday, mutual aid between neighbours, etc. The Rural Women’s Society organizes culinary courses, dress-making courses, gymnastics, participation in intergenerational activities, and in *ad hoc* events in the municipality, as well as various circles (handicraft, card-making, soap-making). Only few female members aged 65 years or over attend individual courses now and then. For the Žetale villagers the nearest Guidance and counselling centre is in Ptuj, which is approximately 25 km away or half an hour’s drive by car.³⁰

The supply of education for the older adults in the municipality was discussed with a person with a master’s degree in economics who conducts an English language course in the Tourist Society. A free-of-charge course (the EU funds) intended for all adult population of this village has been organized for the first time in this year upon the incentive being the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity. The course leader believes that there would have been no participants if the course had cost money. The most of participants are women; only one of them is aged more than 65 years. The course leader explains a decline in attendance as follows:

“Not everyone found this interesting, they tried but could not follow. I think that as a matter of fact they did not realize that they also had to study at home. Another problem is that in spring and summer the days are longer and the participants cannot afford to stop working in the field or vineyard and leave early to attend the course.”

According to the education provider, older people do not decide for education because of the lack of time and willpower, but she sees the main reason in their fear of educational process. Many of them are turned away by mere information that it is a course, because they cannot believe that they could still learn something. People in this region are used to physical work, and they do not recognize a need in themselves to try something else. She estimates the supply of education and socializing for older people in the community as modest. Perhaps older people could be motivated by inviting them to teach others, or share their knowledge and experiences. Transportation should also be

³⁰ In the Guidance and counselling centre for adults in Ptuj, all persons seeking consultation included 5.4% of retired persons among, or by age, 7.8% of persons aged 50 years or over (Data from the application ...2011).

provided for older people – picking them up at home and taking them back at the end of the activity

Žetale is a low well-being municipality, and at the same time a small rural community. There is little education for older people available in Žetale, and it is associated primarily with the contents of activities of societies.

Conclusions

Based on field analyses and case studies in the four selected municipalities, the following conclusions can be made regarding the educational offer for older people in Slovenia.

- Based on field work and interviews, the presumption that municipalities with high well-being have a richer and more diverse supply of education for older people than municipalities with moderate and low well-being cannot be confirmed. The level of well-being in a municipality says nothing about the supply of education for older people in the community;
- The supply of education for older adults depends more on the degree of urbanization and individual factors such as the size of the place, the existence of the UTA or AEC in that place, the number of volunteers, and nongovernmental organizations, etc.;
- In urban settlements, the supply of education for older adults is more diverse, but the more organized and long-term forms of education are attended primarily by women (from 80 to 90%) and older people with higher degree of education (at least secondary school and over), aged from 50 to 65 years;
- In rural municipalities with no providers of formal or informal adult education, there is a considerable number of interest-oriented societies, many of which are intergenerational as well. These societies are where informal and incidental learning frequently takes place, and research shows that this can have a significant influence on the well-being of particularly those older persons who do not participate in more formalized education. The societies and their activities also attract less educated older people who did not educate themselves very much in the past, they may have bad experience with education, and they are often socially and economically endangered to a higher degree. Education in these community organizations is more action-oriented, situated (Wenger 2009), informal (Lave 2009), and problem-oriented, taking place simultaneously with socializing and conversation;
- The supply of education in many municipalities does not respond to different needs of older people, it is stereotypical and excluding, limited to a small share of older people who are socially and educationally privileged. It was found that middle-class older persons more frequently participate in various political cultural, historical, and particularly educational organizations;
- The majority of education for older people is free-of-charge, and therefore the reason for low attendance must be other obstacles. In the investigated municipalities, we noticed no in-depth consideration of education organizers of how to attract older non-participants;
- Particularly in Slovenian rural municipalities there is notable gender segregation in the membership and participation of older people in educational activities of particular societies;

- It is all the more probable for older people to take part in a form of community activities if the opportunities are accessible, near, and adapted to the needs of older people;
- Older people are the members of the Societies of Retired Persons in particular,³¹ and other societies relating to health and care issues, providing good opportunities for supporting educational and learning activities which will consequently also influence the well-being and the quality of living of older people. Research shows that in many European countries the participation in community organizations decreases with age³² (Peeters, Bouwman and Knipscheer 2005, p. 205), but there are also exceptions such as Sweden or Great Britain (Andersson 2005, p. 224; Walker and Walker 2005, p. 237).
- The providers of education for older people or community organizations in Slovenia are not very well connected which results in imbalance and lack of coordination between the supply of education for older people and financial and spatial problems related to the provision of education. Researchers (McGivney 1999; Findsen 2005) stress that networking and establishing of partnerships between various institutions at the community level is the key factor in the provision of well-being in the community.
- The analysed municipalities provide mostly the supply of education to occupy leisure time of older people, but we found no education raising awareness of the stereotype conceptions about older people and old age, and inequality in the access to education (depending on gender, age, degree of education, ethnicity, etc.). In Slovenia, it will be necessary to also promote the development of educational opportunities for the group of older adults in the fourth period of life including suitable training of those who will implement such education.

In Slovenia, it will thus be necessary to draw up appropriate local and national educational policies making the municipalities more responsible for the provision of different educational opportunities for older people (not only individual responsibility in line with the concepts of ‘active ageing’ and contemporary concepts of well-being (Field 2009, p. 15). It will also be necessary to encourage educated people to apply critical practices to create communities which are the place of learning for various groups of adults. Such education of older adults can be an influential factor in establishing the well-being of individuals, community, and state.

References

Brenk, E. (2012). Pregled ponudbe izobraževanja odraslih v Sloveniji 2011/2012. (Review of adult education offer in Slovenia 2011/2012). Ljubljana: Andragoški center Slovenije.

³¹ Similarly to other countries, retired people in Slovenia are also well organized; an umbrella organization, the Association of the Societies of Retired Persons has been active for more than 70 years which includes 504 local societies with 233,868 members (<http://www.zdus-zveza.si>). At the political level, the retired people have their Democratic party of retired Persons of Slovenia (DESUS), which is the “*jeziček na tehtnici*” decisive member in all governmental coalitions (<http://www.desus.si>).

³² Data for Netherlands show that participation decreases drastically after the 75th year of age when older people remain the members of societies ‘on paper’ (Peeters, Bouwman and Knipscheer 2005, p. 205, 206).

- Creswell, J. W. in Plano Clark, V. L. (2007, 2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Društvo UNITRI Univerza za tretje življenjsko obdobje Nova Gorica. Available at: <http://www.unitring.si/>. (15. 8. 2012)
- Field, J. (2009). *Well-being and Happiness*. IFLL Thematic Paper 4. Leicester: NIACE. Available at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/lifelonglearninginquiry/docs/IFLL-wellbeing.pdf> (20. 8. 2012)
- Findsen, Brian (2005). *Learning Later*. Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company.
- Findsen, B., Formosa, M. (2011). *Lifelong Learning in Later Life. A Handbook on Older Adult Learning*. Rotterdam, Boston, Taipei: Sense Publishers.
- Formosa, M. (2012). Lifelong education for older adults in Malta: Current trends and future visions. *International Review of Education*, Vol 58, 2, p. 271-292.
- Formosa, M. (2005). *Feminism and Critical Educational Gerontology: An Agenda for good Practice*. *Ageing International*, vol. 30, No. 4, p. 396-411.
- Golding, B. G. (2011). Social, Local and Situated: Recent Findings About the Affectiveness of Older Men's Informal Learning in Community Contexts. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 6(2), p. 103-120.
- Golding, B., Kimberly, H., Foley, A. in Brown, M. (2008). Houses and sheds in Australia: an exploration of the genesis and growth of neighbourhood houses and men's sheds in community settings. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 48, 2, p. 237-261.
- Holland, J. and Campell, J. (2005), *Methods in development research: combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*, Rugby: ITDG Publishing
- Lave, J. (2009). *The practice of learning*. . V: Illeris, K. (ur.). *Contemporary Theories of Learning*. London, New York: Routledge, p. 200-208.
- McGivney, Veronica (1999). *Informal learning in the community. A trigger for change and development*. Leicester: NIACE.
- Newman, S., Hatton-Yeo, A. (2008). *Intergenerational Learning and the Contributions of Older People*. *Ageing Horizons*, No. 8, p. 31-39.
- Peeters, A., Bouwman, B. in Knipscheer, K. (2005). *The Netherlands: quality of life in old age II*. V: Walker, Alan (ur.). *Growing Older in Europe*. New York: Open University Press, pp. 201-218.
- Podatki iz aplikacije za spremljanje delovanja svetovalnih središč. (2011) Ljubljana: Andragoški center RS.
- Prebivalstvo (2003). *Popis 2002, Statistične informacije št. 93*. Ljubljana: Statistični urad Republike Slovenije.
- Prebivalstvo Slovenije danes in jutri, 2008-2060. *Projekcije prebivalstva EUROPOP2008 za Slovenijo* (2009). Ljubljana: Statistični urad R Slovenije. Available at: <http://www.stat.si/doc/pub/prebivalstvo2009.pdf>

- Rovan, J., Malešič, K., Bregar, L. (2009). Blaginja občin v Sloveniji (Well-being of the municipalities in Slovenia). *Geodetski vestnik*, št. 53, pp. 70-91.
- Slovene municipalities in numbers 2011, Ljubljana: Statistični urad Republike Slovenije. Available on: <http://www.stat.si/ObcineVStevilkah/Default.aspx?leto=2011&lang=eng>
- Šantej, Alijana (2009). Razvoj in poslanstvo slovenske univerze za tretje življenjsko obdobje. *Andragoška spoznanja*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, pp. 22-30.
- Univerza za tretje življenjsko obdobje. <http://www.univerzazatrejeobd-drustvo.si> (15. 7. 2012)
- Walker, A., Walker, C. (2005). The UK: quality of life in old age II. V: Walker, Alan (ur.). *Growing Older in Europe*. New York: Open University Press, p. 233-247.
- Wenger, E. (2009). A social theory of learning. V: Illeris, K. (ur.). *Contemporary Theories of Learning*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 209-218.
- Withnall, A. (2010). *Improving Learning in Later Life*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Zveza društev upokojencev Slovenije <http://www.zdus-zveza.si> (15. 7. 2012)
- Demokratska stranka upokojencev Slovenije. Available at: <http://www.desus.si> (20. 8. 2012)