

## Supporting the Development of New Learning Pathways for Adults

### **New trends in raising the demand for learning among adults facing the risk of exclusion**

#### **Latvian case study**

##### *Background*

Case study: project "Building learning and social integration pathways for excluded youth and young adults".

Places for project implementation were in 6 municipalities from Madona district and 1 municipality from Aizkraukle district of Latvia.

Project started in October 2001.

**The aim** of the project was: to prepare the programme for creation of personal development plans for youth (young people in age group 15-25). They can use the personal development plans in their continuing education, employment and social integration. As a result of successful implementation of this project these young adults expanded their competencies and integrated in the process of social and economic activities of life continuing their education perspective.

**The task** of this project was:

To promote development of a cooperation network of governmental and municipal institutions (local municipalities, State Employment Service, the Professional Career Choice Centre, evening secondary schools, establishments of vocational education, coordinators of youth work), the private sector and non-governmental organisations that would help the young adults to integrate into society, to find suitable job opportunities and to integrate into the labour market.

**The project idea** developed from the previous work, projects and other activities implemented by the Latvia Adult Education Association (LAEA). Taking into consideration that it is difficult to compare adult education opportunities in Riga and in most of other parts of Latvia, LAEA paid its main attention to promotion of adult education development in the regions and local municipalities of Latvia.

In 1999/2000 the LAEA in cooperation with Madona District Council implemented the project "Creation of Regional Adult Education Strategy". As a result of the project implementation detailed analysis in the field of adult education on the district level took place in interaction with social and economical issues. The prepared strategy for development of adult education system in the region generated serious interest from other regional local governments and similar type of strategies were created in 11 other regions of Latvia during 2001. At the same time the prepared strategy has become a real basis for certain directions of further activities and projects in Madona district.

**Target group:** young people (age group 15 - 25), mainly with primary education, who are living in local rural municipalities and are neither involved in any level schooling/ studies nor have any permanent work.

**Main activities** were:

- Introduction seminars;
- Elaboration of a booklet for inviting young adults to take part in this project and sending out these booklets to coordinators in the municipalities;
- Choice of 70 young adults, appraisal through questionnaire and interviewing. Summarising of questionnaires and analyses;
- Meeting of work groups. Seminar for youth coordinators in municipalities "How to Work with Youth?";
- 7 seminars for young adults "Professional Career Test" in 7 municipalities, 10 participants in each municipality;
- Preparing of seminars for youth. Selection of trainers/seminar leaders. Creating trainers data base, multiplications seminar for trainers;
- Booklet creation and send out to young adults with invitation to take part in the activity where they will be acquainted with work of different institution (library, police station, State Employment Service and others);
- Conclusions and summarising of results.

This project elaborated an innovative methodology of working with young adults at risk of exclusion (or already excluded): what kind of activities and in what sequence should be implemented in order to inform, raise interest and motivation, and create personal development plans.

New complex approach involved different actors in the development of cooperation network of governmental and municipal institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organisations, which helped integrate these young adults into society, to find suitable job opportunities and to integrate into labour market.

## ***People***

Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA) managed this project. Project leader, steering group (4 persons) and project youth co-coordinators (7 persons) in municipalities worked together.

Main cooperation partners were: The Madona district Adult Education Centre and Professional Career Guidance Centre.

Already during the project planning period significant emphasis was laid on promotion of development of a cooperation network among regional governmental and municipal institutions (regional and municipal local governments, regional branches of State Employment Service, Professional Career Guidance Centre, vocational education establishments, libraries, youth workers, evening (night) school and private / non-governmental institutions and organisations (NGOs, private enterprises). The aim of such a network was to assist the project target group to integrate into society, to find relevant opportunities and to enter the labour market.

## ***Needs***

As a result of the implemented surveys and needs' analyses numerous most topical problems related to social and educational fields were concretized. Among other most painful issues the situation of numerous young people (age group 15-25) who are living in local rural municipalities and are neither involved in any level of schooling/studies nor have any permanent work arose.

At present a large part of young people in Latvia are active in using the present possibilities in competitive education both in Latvia and abroad, professional career opportunities, proper wage, high self-confidence, purposefulness, who have parents and relatives, supporting and understanding them, wide range of friends and acquaintances, opportunities of travelling abroad etc.

At the same time numerous young people in Latvia are facing an absolutely different situation. The school has been left some time ago (most of them have not completed secondary or secondary vocational education, or even primary). In rural areas with high unemployment rate it is almost impossible for such persons to find any permanent salaried job. It is also not possible for such persons to apply to the State Employment Service, if they do not have

any previous work place. Many of them are suffering from inferiority complex; have a feeling that nobody is interested in their situation. Reasons of their present situation are very different – starting from financial situation of their parents to negative learning experience.

During project activities the participants mentioned illegitimate facts from their job experiences - lower payment than the minimum wage, duration of working day up to 16 hours, work without any contract, illegal forms of payment and others. Crucial issue was the consideration that young adults usually are not sufficiently informed about their labour rights and are not able to defend themselves. At the same time many young persons who start their work life, leave education behind. Consequently, their skills and knowledge lack the necessary level of quality and are not relevant for contemporary demands of the labour market. Thereby early entering in the labour market as a role does not promote development of education level of a particular person and his/her abilities to work.

In order to promote an economical growth and sustainable development of Latvia it is an urgent need to reduce possible growing of the number of persons who depend on social allowance and are unable to participate in the social and civil life. Governmental institutions are not active enough in seeking complex ways for solution of the mentioned complex of problems.

### ***Funding and evaluation***

Mainly EU Programme Phare Access funded the project.

Project team, participants and external evaluators made evaluation of the project.

### ***The future***

The aim of the implemented project was not to create new work places or to link and take participants to school.

As a result of this project a methodology was worked out - what kind of activities and in what sequence should be implemented in order to inform, raise interest and motivation.

At the end of the project the participants finished writing their individual development plans. Already during the project implementation 18% of participants started to work, 55% planned to continue their studies in the next autumn.

Project participants investigated themselves, their own capacities and possibilities in their professional development and continuation of education.

During the implementation of tests the participants discovered a lot of interesting and significant things about themselves, thereby finding out the necessity to pay regard to their own development and accomplishments.

Participation in seminars raised their self-awareness and provided courage to express and present their own opinion and conclusions learned to motivate their opinion. They obtained courage and wish to make changes in their lives, opportunities to meet persons, equals in age, thereby having possibilities to share their opinions, to find new friends, not only to learn, but also to relax.

Project motivated participants to reconsider aims and values of their lives, their own place in it.

Participants from Sarkani municipality obtained basic skills in computer literacy during the project implementation.

Participants obtained the confidence that alongside are people who can advice, consult and teach. They established friendly relations with youth from other municipalities in Madona district. Participants found out about qualified job seeking opportunities in Madona district.

During project implementation a number of its participants already made serious changes in their lives. For example, Kaspars found a new job, Alona has started studies in Faculty of History and Philosophy (University of Latvia, correspondence course) and L. preceded studies in Berzaune primary school. Different changes have begun also in the lives of other participants.

LAEA is planning to create and implement a new project on sharing of the obtained experience with other districts of Latvia.