

Seminar: Adult Education in Germany and Europe

The seminar “Adult Education in Germany and Europe” was organized within the project “Strengthening capacities in the field of adult education” with the aim to offer opportunity to adult educators and adult education experts from Serbia to become familiar with the various institutions for adult education in Germany and Europe, to look at different ways of delivering educational programs, to develop understanding of political education in EU, to implement acquired knowledge in the related areas of work and to disseminate acquired knowledge latter on. The program was developed and realized through the cooperation of three different organizations: the State Office for Political Education of Baden-Württemberg (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg), Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V., DVV), International Forum Burg Liebenzell and Adult Education Society Belgrade.

The seminar took place from 9th to 16th May 2010, mainly in Burg Liebenzell, the place owned by the organization International Forum in Bad Liebenzell, Germany. It was attended by 36 participants from different fields of expertise in adult education who work in various institutions and organizations, such as: Ministry of Education, Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Training Centres, The Centre for Vocational Education and Adult Education, higher educational institutions, the National Employment Service, schools, educational providers, etc. The seminar was the continuation of the existing cooperation with the European and German organizations through the different educational programs. The good communication between Serbian Ministry of Education and European and German institutions and organizations is of extreme importance, as well as the creation of possibilities for the cooperation in future projects.

The program begun on 10th May in the premises of the International Forum Burg Liebenzell. The hosts Gertrud Gandenberger (International Forum) and Karlheinz Dürr (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg) presented their organizations and the areas of work. At the very beginning of the day, the group cohesion was developed by using sociometry. It was also interesting for the participants to become acquainted with methods for creating the

group at the seminars for political education and civic education. Further one, Mr. Kälberer, representative of the “Service Point for Eastern Europe”/Baden-Württemberg-Foundation (Baden-Württemberg-Stiftung), gave the presentation of the programs for Eastern Europe, highlighting Danube strategy and the possibilities for projects in Serbia. Dr. Aleksandra Pejatović gave presentation on the organization and activities of the Institute for Andragogy and Pedagogy, and Aleksandar Bulajić presented the activities of the Adult education Society in Serbia.

During the first day afternoon, participants and their hosts visited VHS (Folk High School) in Calw, the municipality in the middle of Baden-Württemberg in the south of Germany. The town’s history has begun in 11th century and it is nowadays known as a place where Herman Hesse spent his youth. Today, there is a well known Herman Hesse museum.

In VHS in Calw, Mr. Hutter, the deputy director, gave the presentation on the organization and educational program of VHS. It was very interesting to hear that the school is financed almost 20% from tailor made trainings that educators and trainers deliver to the companies. Participants were very keen to find out more about the programs regarding vocational education and about the competences of teachers in adult education and their qualifications.

At the end of the day, participants were welcomed at the City house of Bad Liebenzell by Mr. Komenda, the head of the office. He presented the history and development of Bad Liebenzell, “the city of health”, as he said. Bad Liebenzell is well known in Germany by its thermal springs and spa culture. It is the place in the Black forest surrounded by mountains.

On the 11th May participants were exploring the topic of European integrations through the presentations and group simulation. Christian Rapp and Gertrud Gandenberger introduced participants to the EU establishment and further development. The aim of the role play and simulation was to learn and to understand the process of adoption of the laws at the EU level. By going through the all steps of adoption of the laws, participants had opportunity to become aware of the relationships and the balance of power existing between different institutions of the European Union. Afterward, the facilitators presented some interesting interactive methods they have created to work on topics about European integrations, which were found very useful by adult educators in the group.

On the 12th May the group went to Strasbourg, France, to visit the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. First, they visited the plenary room at the Council of Europe and heard general information about the founding and the aims of work of this European institution. Later on, they were welcomed by Tanja Radušić Hadžić, who presented the work of Council of Europe, particularly regarding the area of education. She also explained to the participants the aims

and process of work of European Court of Human Rights and its relation to the Council of Europe in seeking the development of common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights throughout Europe.

Following the visit to the Council of Europe, the group visited the European Parliament, one of the most important institutions of the European Union. Participants had the opportunity to see the main hall and latter on to hear about the European Parliament, its members, the way decisions are being made and about the process of accession to EU. Participants have found the visits of these two institutions extremely significant and very informative. It was a great privilege to visit the institution that adopted The European Convention on Human Rights, "the jewel in the crown" of the Council of Europe. Participants expressed high motivation to organize different projects and programs regarding the education for human rights after they return to Serbia.

The next day, 13th May, participants spent again in Burg Liebenzell. Professor Dieter Wolf from the University of Bremen gave a very inspiring lecture on significance of education for European integration. The group was very active and responsive to the questions that professor raised regarding education, democracy and the European Union. He also talked about different perspectives of educational policy in the EU which was very stimulating for the participants.

Afterwards, Christian Roth gave an overview of EU educational programs and possibilities for Serbia. It was quite important for the adult educators to understand the opportunities and think about possible projects that they can organize through the different EU programs.

Gertrud Gandenberger introduced the participants to the Association of German Educational Organizations (Der Arbeitskreis deutscher Bildungsstätten) and to the DARE (Democracy and Human Rights Education) network.

On the 14th May the group visited VHS in Stuttgart (www.vhs-bw.de), one of the biggest of that kind. Andrea Bernet-Burkle and Andrea Wacker gave a very informative presentation on the organization and program of the VHS. It was impressive for the participants to hear about the number of people who attend various educational programs, and it was extremely useful to find out about the different projects of the organization such as *Bildungsnetz* with KMU (Development from the education provider to a service provider) and Xpert Business (Modular course and certification system for commercial and professional subjects).

In Stuttgart participants visited also Europe Centre Baden-Württemberg (Europa Zentrum Baden-Württemberg), non-partisan, independent, non-profit institution of the European-oriented political communication since 1976, working as the Institute and Academy for European issues. **Florian Setzen**, the director, explained the methods of working in the field of education regarding various

European issues (youth and adult education through seminars, study tours, panel discussions, presentations and e-learning courses, but also the forms such as scientific symposia, conferences and publication projects of the Institute, where the scientific knowledge is as useful as the communication of scientific findings to the wider population in Baden-Württemberg).

On the last day of the seminar 15th May, Ralph Schneider presented the Centre for General Scientific Continuing Education at the University of Ulm (Universität Ulm). The target group of the centre are people over 50, who are particularly interested in the courses of “third age education”. He informed the participants about different projects of the centre focusing on the on line learning designed for the elderly people. He gave some inspiring examples of successfully realized projects and suggested further cooperation.

During the afternoon the participants went to the astonishing university town Tübingen where they had opportunity to hear about the history of this place, especially regarding many well-known personalities and scholars who have resided in Tübingen over the past few centuries (poets Friedrich Hölderlin and Eduard Mörike, Alois Alzheimer from whom Alzheimer’s disease takes its name, German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, one of the creators of German Idealism, famous composer Friedrich Schiller, Primož Trubar, who published the first two books in the Slovene language *Catechismus* and *Abecedarium* in Tübingen in 1550).

After return to Burg Liebenzell, participants had the opportunity to express, write down and present to the group and organizers their ideas about future projects as the way of the continuation of collaboration. They presented some very interesting topics for the future projects: improvement of methods for political education, understanding of different countries position within the EU, quality assurance of civic education, education for tolerance and human rights, students and teachers mobility, creation the network for exchanging experience, etc.

After the successful visit of multipliers from Serbia to the EU and German institutions the intention for the continuation of the cooperation was expressed. It is very important for Serbian experts in adult education to become familiar with the European Union institutions and the methods in education for the European integration so they can use the other countries’ experiences and create and implement their own ideas. The participants highly evaluated the study trip and estimated that it would have a great impact on their activities and would improve their practical work in adult education. According to the evaluation, the trip was very important for the better understanding of European institutions and whole European Union, its organization, work and ways the citizens of EU can participate in the decision making process.

Maja Maksimović