

Involving outstanding learners in learning promotion – the case of Slovenia

1) Does your organisation recognise outstanding learners in any way? If yes, please specify how.

Yes, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) started to present awards for exceptional achievements in adult education and learning in 1997. The **SIAE Awards** actually became one of the main features of our learning festival, i.e. the Slovenian Lifelong Learning Week (LLW). Until 2008, a maximum of 15 awards were given away annually either to

- individuals and groups for exceptional learning results and enrichment of their own knowledge or to
- individuals, groups, institutions, enterprises and local communities for exceptional professional or promotional achievements in the process of enriching the knowledge of others.

In 2009, the concept was changed to the so called '**SIAE awards for the promotion of learning and knowledge**'. Since then, up to 10 awards have been presented annually.

The annual call for nominations is open between 15 September and 14 October of the current year. The selection of winners is performed by the Awards Committee nominated by SIAE and according to special Standing Orders.

In the period 1997–2010, we have given away **174 SIAE awards**, 50 to outstanding individuals, 37 to groups and 87 to professionals (individuals, groups, institutions). They are presented on the LLW website (<http://llw.acs.si/awards/winners/>); since 1999, short, approx. 3-minute videos have been produced to present their life histories.

In 2007, the institute of SIAE Awards was upgraded by the '**The Power of Example**' campaign. Video-portraits have been filtered according to target groups and topics, similar ones have been combined and complemented, thus creating constituents of a new promotion and mobilisation campaign. The resulting DVD collections are available free of charge at SIAE (see <http://llw.acs.si/learners/>):

- The Power of Example 1-3: With lifelong learning to equal opportunities for all (in Slovenian)
- The Power of Example 4: Towards your goals I, Early career (in Slovenian)
- The Power of Example 5: Towards your goals II, Middle career (in Slovenian)
- The Power of Example 6: Towards your goals III, Mature career (in Slovenian)
- The Power of Example 7&7a: Richness in Diversity (English subtitles)
- The Power of Example 8 Learning - Doorway to the World of New Opportunities (English subtitles)
- The Power of Example 9 Third age lucky (English subtitles)

In 2011 we have started with our YouTube Channel, which offers our, mentioned and other, videos to the widest public (see <http://www.youtube.com/user/AndragoskiCenter>).

2) Is the recognition necessary and useful? Please explain.

In our opinion, the recognition of outstanding learners is definitely necessary and useful because it has proven that these people are the best advocates for and ambassadors of adult education and lifelong learning. They are examples of individuals who have invested their resources in learning, have overcome many different obstacles and yield admirable results. In this process, they have experienced personal growth, improved their working and social status and have influenced their environments – family, neighbourhood, community and society at large. They can definitely serve as role models for people who are non-participants or would-be participants in adult education.

3) How has the learning experience/journey (of the outstanding learners) been shared and disseminated? What has worked especially well in this respect?

Traditionally, awards are presented to the award winners at the national LLW opening ceremony which is the most attractive part of the event. Before the LLW opening, award winners are introduced to the media at the press conference and through a press release. After the LLW opening, winners are presented to the widest public via different media (newspapers and magazines, national and local TV, radio, internet, Facebook and YouTube).

SIAE cooperates in this process with LLW coordinators who are able to establish better links with local media. In addition, LLW providers of events all over Slovenia invite award winners, i.e. examples of good practice in lifelong learning, to take part in their workshops, round tables, media events, celebrations etc.

In the dissemination of the Power of Example videos, the National Employment Office as well as other players have taken part. In 2011 we made a major breakthrough by starting the cooperation with the national TV station – they are co-producers of the video and will take care of its broadcast at this level.

4. Do the people, that are willing to share their learning experience, need support/special training? If yes, what kind of support/training? How should it be done?

We have not been involved in the training of learners for advocacy purposes because we did not succeed in setting up a learners' forum yet.

As a result of activities in the IntALWinE Grundtvig project (<http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/InternationalALW/IntALWinE/1.htm>), the establishment of a 'learners' forum' was supposed to be a new step in the development of the Slovenian LLW. The forum would present a platform for people committed to lifelong learning to get together, exchange their viewpoints and enrich each other. However, their mingling was envisaged to have larger goals, i.e. to make the voice of learners known and influential in the widest public as well as with professionals, in practice as well as in adult education policy. The first Slovenian learners' forum was organized in 2005 within the framework of the 10th LLW. Participants, mainly SIAE award winners in the period 1997–2005, did express their inclination and willingness to contribute to the activities of the forum to the best of their abilities and in accordance with their primary fields of work. In their opinion, the role of the learners' forum would have to be defined in greater detail therefore they entrusted SIAE with the task to lay professional grounds of the forum and carry out some preliminary activities such as: formulate the mission statement and the forum's strategy, assure adequate funding as well as training. However, we did not gain the moral and financial support by the ministries in charge of our work therefore we were not able to make any progress in this field until now. Maybe a new EU project could be designed to make some progress regarding the learners' forum by exchanging experiences with countries which did succeed (e.g. Estonia)?

Nevertheless, we strongly believe that training of learners is necessary and SIAE would be able to design an adequate programme and provide support for learners to acquire the necessary skills (mainly communicational) provided that adequate funds are earmarked for these purposes.

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