

REPORT FROM THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION ON BALKANS

Sarajevo, September 20th and 21st 2007

Introduction

The Civil Society Promotion Center (CSPC), a BiH non-government organization with its headquarter in Sarajevo, has been active for eleven years now on the territory of entire BiH, with its mission to promote and develop open and democratic society. In January 2006, CSPC established a Resource center of civil society in BiH, with the intention to support development of the civil society in BiH and region of Western Balkans.

By recognizing the need for a regional approach to the issue of development and connection of active participants of civil society in the region on Western Balkans, CSPC initiated this project, linking resource centers of NGO sector, as well as organizations that have developed organizational structure and strong information links within their countries.

Balkan Forum, as a network of NGO Resource Centers of Western Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro) was formed in Sarajevo, on June 22nd and 23rd 2006, at a regional conference "Resource centers of NGO sector - experiences and perspectives", organized by CSPC. The goals of such a Forum is:

1. To coordinate efforts in various countries in order to increase overall effects to the development of society and democracy,
2. To use resources of civil society in the region more rationally, to promote European values and standards,
3. To develop relations with European institutions and donors that are active in the region, to develop regional project ideas, recommendations for partners from the region for multilateral projects
4. As well as to achieve stronger overall impact of civil society to developments and situation in the region.

Balkan Forum members:

1. *Civil Society Promotion Centre (CSPC) Bosnia and Herzegovina*
2. *CRNVO (Center for Development of NGOs), Montenegro*
3. *Civic Initiatives, Serbia*
4. *CRNPS (Centre for Development of Non-profit Sector), Serbia*
5. *Centre for information service, co-operation and development of NGOs – CNVOS, Slovenia*
6. *Center for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights, Croatia*
7. *Center for Development of NGOs (CERANEEO), Croatia*
8. *ICVA BiH, Bosnia and Herzegovina*
9. *Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation, Macedonia*

The Donor of this regional cooperation project are the OPA (Office of Public Affairs), of the US Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Conference

On September 20th and 21st 2007 a regional conference on "Non-Formal Education on Balkans" was held in Sarajevo, with 47 participants from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Importance of this topic can be seen from two quotes:

Viviane Reding, the Commissioner responsible for education, said: "*Last year, less than 10% of Europeans of working age have undertaken any training. This is manifestly not enough, and if we do nothing about it the Europeans will find it difficult to become part of an international economy and societies in which knowledge and skills are becoming obsolete ever more quickly. The time has come to act and not just think about it. Today's Communication provides the Member States and other economic and social players, with the tools to invest more effectively in people and consequently in sustainable prosperity. One of the next steps could be to develop trans-Europe networks of knowledge and science in order to enhance the competitiveness of our human resources*".

Anna Diamantopoulou, Commissioner responsible for employment and social affairs, said: "*Skill and competence enhancement in the new economy in Europe requires that the policy emphasis be shifted towards increasing investment in human capital and in raising participation in education and training throughout ones vocational life. To keep pace with developments in technology, globalization, population ageing and new business practices, particular attention should be given to workplace training – an important dimension of our strategy for lifelong learning.*"

Goals of the conference:

To foster cooperation in the field of non-formal education in Western Balkans

1. To provide definitions
2. To analyze situation (status) in countries of this region
3. To present good practices from other countries/regions and EU
4. To initiate discussions on certifications and standards
5. To establish exchange of information among participating countries
6. To encourage development of new regional projects

Participants:

Representatives of NGO sector, leaders in providing non-formal education in the region:

- Slovenia (6 organizations)
- Croatia (5 organizations)
- Serbia (3 organizations)
- Montenegro (3 organization)
- Macedonia (3 organization)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (12 organizations)

Beside representatives of non-government sector, the conference was attended by the representatives of the authorities:

Ministry of Public Administration of Slovenia,
Center for professional education, Republic of Macedonia
Council of Ministers, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Please find the complete list of participants including their contacts attached to this Report.

First day of the Conference

At the beginning of the conference the attendees were addressed by Mr. Fadil Šero, CSPC Director and Aida Daguda, Balkan Forum Coordinator, the Conference Moderator.

Representatives of each country presented to their colleagues situation of non-formal education in each of

their countries:

- Slovenia (Alenka Blazinšek i Rafo Pinoso, Mladinski ceh)
- Croatia (Gordana Forčić, SMART)
- Serbia (Radmila Radić Dudić, Civic Initiatives)
- Montenegro (Ljiljana Garić, Center for Professional Education)
- Macedonia (Fatmir Bitiqi, MCIC)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dženana Aladuz, Infohouse)

Expert Rahela Džidić, from CIVITAS BiH, held a lecture with topic: “Definition and significance of non-formal education; needs and opportunities; influence on society and *vice versa*”.

Five good practices have been presented:

1. Training for local development, Lidija Pavić-Rogošić, ODRAZ, Croatia
2. Promotion and use of life-long learning concept in BiH, Selma Aličić, Amica Educa, Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. Non-formal education of elderly people, Alenka Hebar, The Third Age University of Slovenia
4. Education of Roma people, Aleksandar Saša Zeković, Roma Scholarship Foundation, Montenegro
5. Non-formal education – successful story from Macedonia, Fatmir Bitiqi, MCIC, Macedonia

The sessions has contributed to better overall understanding of civil society’s position in the region and observing possibilities for exchange of experiences and some common initiatives.

Second day of the Conference

On the second day the conference was devoted to the parallel working in three groups, with the following topics:

1. Standards of non-formal education
2. Certification/regional acknowledgment
3. Legal environment

Detailed reports of the facilitators’ of each group are at the end of this report.

Final session of the Conference was devoted to drafting conclusions and recommendations.

General conclusions with recommendations for further activities:

Main feature of the conference was readiness and interest of all participants to operate and to initiate regional initiatives with a variety of presented ideas and plans.

Conclusions:

1. All participants of the Conference are confirming their commitment to further development of non-formal education in Western Balkan region;
2. It is necessary to promote and establish standards in non-formal education (NFE);
3. Certification is needed as well, but there is a need for preserving flexibility and creativity as most important attributes of non-formal educational concept in relation to formal education;
4. There is a extensive pool of NFE knowledge and experience in the region of the Western Balkans, but it should be compiled and made accessible to the public;
5. NFE actors need establishing of working partnership, not only between decision-making levels (e.g. national, regional and local) but also between public authorities and education service providers (schools, universities, etc.), the business sector and the social partners, local associations, vocational guidance services, research centers, etc;
6. Balkan Forum activities should be complementary to the activities of other NFE actors in Western Balkans countries.
7. There is a need for exploration of possibilities for regional verification of certificates for NFE programs and models, and possibilities for regional education of trainers
8. Some legal regulations exist in some of the Balkan countries (Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro), and they should be a source of support and good practices for other Balkan countries which are in need for such kind of initiatives.

Recommendations:

1. Balkan Forum needs to promote non-formal education concept in form of regional campaign and to connect Western Balkans NFE actors through special section on NFE on the web site, organizing think-tank groups per countries and conduct study visits in countries of this region;
2. To establish a regional consultancy group with two levels: expert and policy level, dealing with EU regulations related to non-formal education;
3. To use good practices in recording and certification of non-formal education (Europass i Youthpass on EU level, NEFIX Slovenia)
4. To form coalitions or partnership in some of the countries in order to contribute to legal regulations of NFE.

LIFE LONG LEARNING

***"When planning for a year, plant corn.
When planning for a decade, plant trees.
When planning for life, train and educate people."
Chinese proverb: Guanzi (c. 645BC)***

Work group 1: Non-Formal Education (NFE) Standards

Facilitator Joze Gornik, Slovenia

Goals:

- Definition of standards and exchange experiences from the region
- Standards description
- Reasons for standardization
- Make directions for future work

The **standards** represent minimum requirements which non-formal education has to satisfy.

NFO standards are related to set of requirements which education providers, educators, participants and NFE program are facing with, which will make possible a quality development of individuals as person, professional employee and active citizen.

The standards give guidelines for education providers, educators, and participants.

Example 1: Organization

To regulate a minimum of material and technical conditions which enabling:

- ⇒ *undisturbed work,*
- ⇒ *efficient work ,*
- ⇒ *accessibility;*
- ⇒ *work goals,*
- ⇒ *etc*

Example 2: Educator

It is necessary to define a base, which define a following criterion:

- ⇒ *knowledge about topic of the education seminar*
- ⇒ *competence for learning others*
- ⇒ *knowing of work methods*
- ⇒ *etc*

The already existing standards for non/formal education:

- 2003 – »Policy paper« prepared by EU - which is a guideline for development of non-formal education
- 2000 – EC received »Memorandum for life-long learning«, which provided first standards on non-formal education in Europe.
- TREF (Forum of Trainers) in Croatia created Ethical Code of Conduct of civil society development trainers

The standards from other fields:

- Foreign languages standards - portfolio provided by Council of Europe
- ICT standards – ECDL (European Computer Driving License)
- ISO standards
- Work standards for small organizations SOKNO (Croatia 2003), coming out of quality insurance system PQASSO (UK). This system is without external revision (it is based on self-assessment of each organization).

Importance of standardization: The use of standards in an organization's work becomes an important criteria for getting funds for different project applications. Also, implementation of standards makes the positioning of organization on the market easier, as professional and responsible organization.

Conclusions:

- The Balkan Forum website, which will be promoted in all of Western Balkans countries, a special section on "non-formal education" with all relevant information and documents dealing with NFE should be created:
 - policy papers
 - books
 - analyses
 - case studies
 - law regulations
 - directory of main actors
- Mini promotional campaigns should be conducted in all countries of the region, to contribute to the image of NFE concept, which is necessary for success.
- Balkan Forum needs to promote this concept and contribute to connection of all local actors in each country (meetings, joint work platforms, mailing lists etc)
- It would be useful to organize a regional advisory group which would deal with EU regulations from NFE area, and which would be organized on two levels:
 1. Expert level: (analyses, mapping of NFE actors, etc)
 2. Policy level (policy on the EU level: how to implement it and how to achieve a bigger influence to Western Balkans countries).
- Organize NFE think-tank groups in each country, and connect them
- Organize study visits throughout Western Balkans (WB) , for NGOs and authorities
- Analysis of case studies from WB countries and comparing it with EU examples.

Work group 2: Certification – Regional recognition of non-formal education programs

The process of EU accession, beside other things, implies implementation of standards in numerous areas of societal functioning. Developing of all forms of education, including non-formal education in process of life-long learning also implies standard quality definition and introduction of certifications for different programs of NFE. There is concern that introduction of harsh criteria, procedures and certifications would lead toward formalization of NFE. Therefore, NFE educators have the responsibility to prevent unnecessary bureaucracy.

Definition of certification/regional recognition is needed in order to make communication with other non-formal education actors easier, especially with beneficiaries of NFE programs.

Conclusions:

Certification standards mean defining of certain preconditions:

- NFE implementation standards are a precondition for definition of standards and processes of NFE program certification
- Improvement of work quality standards of non-formal education providers on organization and individual level (for each trainer) is a contribution to competitiveness on the market, using some of already existing models (i.e. SOKNO Croatia, PQASSO England, international ISO standards etc)
- Prevention of over defining NFE standards – there is a “soft border” and difference in relation to formal education.

Promotion, campaigns and advocacy:

- Conduct joint/regional campaign – NFE concept promotion, specificities and benefits from it.
- Clearly define benefits of non-formal education for beneficiaries - what does the certificate mean to them, types of certificates (confirmation of participation for personal development, confirmation on adopted skills needed for employment etc)
- Use good practice examples in NFE recording and certification process – non-formal index (i.e. Europass and Youthpass on EU level; NEFIX in Slovenia)

The structure and content depends of certificate type:

- confirmation of participation (possible content):
 - subject
 - number of hours/days
 - educators/trainers
 - literature
 - organization/education provider
- confirmation of learned knowledge and skills
 - all mentioned above, plus
 - gained competences – areas, subjects, skills, knowledge
 - level of success

Regional networking

- To establish a focal point on the regional level, with a data base about non-formal education providers, collection of relevant information, and development of joint projects
- To make connection between NFE actors
- To form a subgroup in Balkan Forum, dealing with non-formal education
- To explore possibilities for regional verification of NFE programs certificates
- To explore possibilities for regional specializing programs available for trainers/educators
- To explore the need for actions against misuse of certification issuing

Work group 3: Legal framework

Facilitator: Anton Vidas, Croatia

Goals:

- To analyze NFE in the region of Western Balkans, particularly in countries that adopted law on adult education
- To define guidelines for starting an initiative aimed at adopting a law on education for adults in Western Balkans countries for those countries that does not have this kind of regulation yet.

Legal regulation of non-formal education in the Western Balkans region

Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro have legal (legislative) regulations of non-formal education, in form of a law on education of adults. B&H, Serbia and Macedonia are in the preparing process or initiation for adopting of that kind of law.

Most specific situation is in B&H, which has a complicated government structure, with 14 government levels regulating education field (ten cantons, Brcko District, Federation of B&H, Republic of Srpska, and state level).

Based on an analysis of non-formal education in the Western Balkans countries, it is possible to conclude that situation differs from country to country. There are different ways of solving this problem, depending on specificities of each country and the level of awareness of relevant stakeholders, as well as the power of NGO sector to enforce regulation of this educational component by law.

Why non-formal education needs to be regulated by law?

The Working group emphasized argumentation for the need of NFE sector regulation by law, in three different aspects: business, public and civil sector. The List of arguments is not final, and it can serve as a basis for further development.

Legalization of non-formal education provide a legal foundation for implementation of life-long learning system, which is an answer to the rapidly growing needs of communities, caused by development of new technologies and generally the modern way of life.

„Adoption of long-life learning concept as a base of national strategy for education development, presumes re-conceptualization of all education segments, including education of adults. It represents the most extensive phase in life-long learning system, and therefore, it's very important to interpret adult education properly. Life-long concept connecting specific segments (grades) of education, as well as specific methods of education (formal, non-formal and informal education) into unique system. This means, that life-long education is not just mechanical extension of education into adult age, it is rather a creation of systematic approach to education of children, youth and adults.” (White document on Croatian educational system, created by Croatian Government).

Business Sector Aspect

- o Formal education can not properly answer the demands of fast-growing business sector in providing specific education services;
- o Non-formal education can help in solving problems related to prequalification and specialization, caused by transitional processes in Western Balkan countries.

NGO Sector Aspect

Non-formal education system is able to satisfy NGO's educational needs, at least for now. Civil society organizations have developed a lot of educational programs, providing basic knowledge for work of this sector, especially in following areas:

- Development of personal competences;
- Sustainability of civil society organizations;
- Development of civil society;
- Meet the beneficiaries' needs;
- Voluntarism development.

Public Sector Aspect

- Solving illiteracy problem;
- Strengthening of functionality and operational skills of employees in public sector, through additional educational programs that are not offered through formal education;
- Overcoming of old working methods in public administration;
- Strengthening of national economy competitiveness.

Assessment of potentials for legal regulation of NFE

The working group has concluded that NGO sector alone is not strong enough to force relevant government bodies to start with the process of NFE legal regulation. However, NGO sector through civil society organizations and civic initiatives is already strongly present in non-formal education process, and it is reasonable to believe that NGO sector can be recognized by government as a reliable partner.

Guidelines for Further Activities

○ **Mapping of key stakeholders**

When talking about key stakeholders, it is important to think about two main types of stakeholders. The first group includes stakeholders who are involved in process of bringing a law, which means relevant authorities who are making decisions and adopting laws, while the second group consists of all stakeholders that are potential partners for starting an initiative for law adoption. (NGOs, academic community, relevant individuals, non-formal educators etc). It is important to say that, depending on democracy level and level of civil society consciousness, both types of stakeholders, mentioned above, can be partners and/or initiators.

○ **Activities**

- Balkan Forum will provide space for further exchange of experience, and support to initiatives for NFE legal regulation in countries that still don't have a legal framework for this type of education;
- Resource centers in some of WB countries will continue with coordination and gathering of relevant partners who will make a critical mass for starting the initiative for legal regulation of NFE
- Balkan Forum web-site should provide collection of documents, examples of good practices, and directory of institutions and individuals who could help in this process.