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LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAP 2004-2006

Third report on Slovenia

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Introduction

The third report in 2005 is focusing on the implementation of NAP/inclusion in five local areas. The National action plan for social inclusion (NAP/inclusion) was adopted in Slovenia in July 2004, and in the same year three independent reports were written. The main critiques related to the implementation were:

- In the NAP/inclusion, we can find just one short paragraph on the implementation and monitoring: “For the requirements of an effective monitoring of the implementation of the NAP/inclusion, a special working group will be created (representatives of the Government, local communities, social partners and NGOs). On the basis of reports received and bilateral meetings with those responsible for tasks, the group will verify the implementation of planned actions and the achievement of objectives, and in respect of its findings it will produce annual report and submit these to the ESS¹ and the Government.”
- Speaking with all involved ministries or other bodies responsible for the implementation, we have concluded that in most cases there are no specific plans regarding the implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Because the majority of them don't think that the process should be regulated and controlled, we can expect major difficulties concerning all three dimensions of the process.
- There are 26 objectives in the NAP (of 76 altogether) without any measures for implementation. Therefore, for around 1/3 of the objectives, there are no any ideas of how to reach them. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MLFSA) is responsible for the implementation of 27 objectives and 42 measures; the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy for 4 objectives and 5 measures; the Ministry of Health for 4 objectives and 18 measures; the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS) for 22 objectives and 28 measures; the Ministry of Justice for 4 objectives and 9 measures; the Ministry of Information Society for 4 objectives and 7 measures; and there is no responsibility for at least 3 objectives and 1 measure. The majority of work will be on the MLFSA and MESS.
- The chapter on vulnerable groups is weak regarding objectives and especially corresponding measures. Not just that the objectives are not accompanied by measures, but they also lack the responsible institution that will be in charge of the implementation. Some of the objectives in that group direct the reader to other chapters where pertinent measures should be, but a look at these shows that they do not correspond at all.
- There are no persons inside the ministries appointed as responsible for the process of implementation.
- In the majority of cases, the money for the implementation was not allocated, so the implementation depends on future available resources.

¹ Economic and social council.

- Quite some objectives are very abstract and so broad that they allow very different interpretations. It is even possible to interpret them as encouraging new exclusions and the (re)production of prejudices and discrimination.
- The Ministry of Culture has not formulated a single measure for achieving the set objectives. Again the majority of work on discrimination is on them. If we take into account that discrimination is at least half of the problem of exclusion, the lack of anti-discrimination policy is a serious obstacle for the policy of inclusion.

There have been no changes of the NAP after it was submitted to the EC in July 2004 although the Government changed in December 2004 after the last national elections.

Current plans for the implementation of the NAP

On the 21st of January 2005 a special committee was founded at the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MLFSA) for monitoring the NAP implementation process. The committee has a chair person and 8 members. Members are:

- three representatives of the MLFSA, including chair person,
- one member form the Centre of Non-Governmental organisations,
- one member of the Independent Trade Union of Slovenia,
- one member of the Council of Municipalities of Slovenia,
- one member of the Free Trade Union of Slovenia,
- one member of the Statistical Office of Slovenia
- one member of the Governmental Institute for Macroeconomic Analyses and Development

The group has to report once a year to the Government on the implementation of the NAP. So far, they have prepared questionnaires for each ministry that is involved in the implementation process and they organised a seminar on the NAP for the organisations that offer services and programs in the field of social inclusion. The seminar was held in Maribor on the 6th of June. The group already received fulfilled questionnaires from almost all ministries except from the Ministry of Health, and they are now preparing the first report.

No other actions have been taken to promote the NAP, especially not inside the ministries.

Structure of the report

We have decided to structure our report from the “bottom up” perspective because we could not trace the implementation of particular objectives set in the NAP/inclusion. We tried to find implementation plans of objectives and measures that can be followed from the “top down” perspective (for example to find program of reduction of homelessness or enabling gender equality and similar) but we were not successful in our efforts. Therefore we decided to identify local situations (social problems that need to be addressed) and existing resources that can provide the bases for actions at the local level. We believe that such information can be valuable for national agencies that are responsible for the implementation of the NAP and can contribute to better understanding of processes at the local level. We also tried to identify how much local authorities know about the NAP and what they find the most helpful for themselves. We believe that with such approach we contributed to the better understanding of the NAP on the local level and also provided state agencies with useful information.

To provide the readers of this report with basic understanding of local areas we focused first on general data on demography, education and employment, than on the governmental and non-governmental organisations that are important at the local level and could be a useful source for the implementation of the NAP and at the end we emphasised social problems that should be addressed. We relied on publicly accessible data from the agencies on the national level and also on data available at the local level. Not all of local communities have data published on their web pages nor they collect them systematically. It was difficult to find information on local NGOs and also to get local authorities view on the existing problems that should be addressed or the groups that are excluded and need special attention when the inclusion into the society is concerned.

In the conclusion we listed some of the issues that need to be addressed to improve or to enable the implementation of the NAP.

Five geographical cases of implementation

Slovenia, having a little less than 2.000.000 inhabitants and covering an area of 20.256 m² is considered a small country. Geographically, it is a mixture of Alpine and Mediterranean; one part of it is very hilly and the other very flat. The living conditions of people differ throughout the country and local developments are also very specific. The country is divided into 58 administrative units and 193 municipalities. An administrative unit can cover just one municipality with surrounding villages, or several municipalities. Slovenia has 9 regions traditionally, but there is no regional administration. Criteria for the selection of the local areas were: 1. different parts of the country; 2. rural and urban places; 3. different social problems and 4. different kinds of exclusion. The local areas are as follows:

1. Jesenice (Zgornja Gorenjska Region): a local community with a high share of population from previous Yugoslavia and Muslims who claim to be victimized and denied rights. It is close to Ljubljana and has natural resources for tourism development.
2. Trbovlje (Zasavje Region): coal mining area, high unemployment, no industry, high level of drug abuse and unemployed youth with low education.
3. Novo mesto (Dolenjska Region): the area with a large Roma population – some municipalities deny their rights to political participation. They are a group with low education, low employment rate and very poor settlements (no water, no electricity, no sewage system etc.). The Government is paying special attention to these problems trying to encourage the social inclusion of the Roma people. They accepted a program to integrate Roma children into the educational system, and they also improved the possibilities for the Roma to participate in the political life of the municipality. Some parallels with the situation in the Prekmurje region (another area with a large Roma population) will be drawn in this report, especially regarding a possible transfer of good practices from one region to the other.
4. Haloze (Štajerska Region): rural and traditionally poor part of the country with high level of unemployment (especially among women), troubles with alcohol, very weak accessibility of the services (health, social), low level of education and also very difficult terrain for farming (hilly and steep)
5. Bovec (Zgornje Posočje Region): very closed and narrow valley; it was struck by several earthquakes that seriously damaged houses – people are living in caravans and have problems with accessibility to services. There is a problem with old people, because younger are leaving the area. The living conditions in this area are a priority for the state.

Case 1. Jesenice (Zgornja Gorenjska Region)

The municipality of Jesenice, situated at the foot of the Alps, is the centre of the Gorenjska region. Jesenice is also the administrative unit for the municipalities of Kranjska Gora and Žirovnica.

Demography

The number of inhabitants in Jesenice is on the decline². In 2002, its population was 21620 – 10686 men and 10934 women³. The average size of the household in 2002 was 2.7, and the number of families was 6197. Migration in 2003 was negative. There were 152 immigrants from other municipalities in Slovenia, and 72 immigrants from abroad (total 224). On the other hand, 200 people emigrated to other municipalities in Slovenia, and 87 went abroad (total 287). Net migration was -63⁴. There is a large percentage of people from ex-Yugoslavia in Jesenice who immigrated in the 1970s because of good job opportunities.

Education

The population of Jesenice aged 15 years and over is 18431⁵. In terms of educational attainment, 199 persons are without any education, 1368 have incomplete basic education, 4976 have completed basic education, and there are 10364 inhabitants with upper secondary (vocational or general) education. Others have higher or university education. At the beginning of the school year 2003/04, there were 6 kindergartens in Jesenice with 489 children and 60 staff. There were 4 elementary schools with 1817 pupils. There were 1219 pupils enrolled in upper secondary schools, and 830 university students⁶.

Employment

The transitional period after Slovenia gained independence caused many problems in Jesenice, especially regarding employment. Most of the labour active inhabitants were employed in heavy industry that was the worst hit, so hundreds of people lost jobs. In the period from 1995 to 1999, 655 people lost their jobs. In 2001, the unemployment rate in Jesenice was 15.5%, while the national average was 11.8%⁷. It is also significant that the unemployment rate for women is much above the national average – 57% in 2002,

² Web page of the Municipality of Jesenice: www.jesenice.si 15. 8. 2005

³ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population by sex, households, families and dwellings, 2002 census*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-03-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

⁴ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *migration by sex, 2003*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-08-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

⁵ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population aged 15 years and over by educational attainment, census 2002*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-04-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

⁶ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *education, beginning of the school year 2003/04*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-09-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

⁷ EUROSTAT data on national unemployment rate for the year 2001 is 5,8%. Data published on the web page of the municipality of Jesenice is on the registered unemployment.

compared to 50.4% national average. Also, the share of unemployed disabled people is growing. Since 1995, when 172 disabled persons were unemployed, their number rose to 352 in 2002, meaning that it is much above the national average. Slightly under national average (19.1%) is the share of unemployed young people before the first employment (17.3% of all unemployed in Jesenice), but the share of the unemployed age 40-50 (25.7%) is above the national average (23.7%). The share of long-term unemployed in Jesenice is 52.4%⁸.

Voluntary associations

There are 128 voluntary associations registered in Jesenice. Around 30% of these are various sports associations (mountaineering, karate, extreme bicycling, hockey, chess etc.); 15% are cultural associations (singing, amateur theatre, antiques, photography etc.); finally, there are ecological groups, voluntary fire-fighters, youth clubs and associations (one of them is called the Association of the Youth of Jesenice for the promotion of ideas and values of social justice, democracy, freedom, solidarity and human rights). We can also find a philosophical association, an association of senior catholic scouts, retired people's associations, a women's countryside club, an astronomy association, the association for Gnosticism and anthropology etc.

There are also some ethnic minority associations: the Macedonian cultural association Ilinden; the cultural and sports association of Bosnians called Biser; the cultural association of emigrants from Croatia, and the Association of the Sinti people.

Some of the associations offer welfare services to their members or the general public. Red Cross is working with people who live in poverty; Friends of Youth (a national organization that existed already in the previous political system and used the same name) is working with deprived children, organizing holidays and various activities during the year. There are several disability associations – for people with learning disabilities, for people with mental health problems, for physically handicapped, for cerebral palsy sufferers and similar⁹. One organization is working with drug users.

Some of these disability organizations are funded by their parent organizations with the money mostly coming from the Lottery and two associations are funded by the state (the youth club by the Ministry of Education and Sport, and the organization that is working with drug users by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs)¹⁰. Other organizations are financially supported by local authorities, but they only provide minor sums of money.

There are two organizations that have been jointly founded by several municipalities. One is a crisis centre for youth and the other is a shelter for battered women and children. They are not located in Jesenice, but both are offering services to the local population. Both are

⁸ Web-page of the Municipality of Jesenice: www.jesenice.si 15. 8. 2005

⁹ Web-page of the Administrative Unit of Jesenice: <http://upravneenote.gov.si/upravneenote/uradneure.u> 20. 8. 2005

¹⁰ Because there are no special grants for programs on social inclusion at the MOLSA or at the other ministries we can not know if NGOs are funded to support the implementation of the NAP. Web-page of MOLSA: www.sigov.si/mdds/z/?PID=95&PHPSESSID=f77baa5230b012c641d41fb19a712e6e 24. 8. 2005

also funded by the municipality and the MOLFSA. There are two NGOs that offer services to people with mental health problems and one for the victims of crime and violence. The three organizations last mentioned are funded by MOLFSA and are organized nationally.

Public institutions

Since Jesenice is the administrative unit of Zgornja Gorenjska, it has all major institutions: a hospital, a health centre, two high schools (one general and one vocational), a centre for social work (social services), a residential home for elderly people and a day care service for people with learning disabilities. The residential home for the elderly also offers distant help and help at home. Social services organize voluntary work with children; they run a group with foster parents, they have a group for people who want to adopt a child and a group for parents of drug users.

Current issues

Local authorities are in the process of adopting the developmental strategy for Jesenice. There are several issues that need to be addressed in the future:¹¹

- High level of unemployment.
- Motivation of long-term unemployed to seek the job.
- Low education of the unemployed.
- An increasing number of people entitled to social benefits.
- Aging population.
- Young and educated moving out of Jesenice.
- An increasing number of drug and alcohol users.
- People who need long term care.
- An increasing number of mental health problems, e.g. depressions.
- An increasing number of cases of domestic violence and child abuse.
- Lack of beds in hospitals and residential homes for the elderly.
- Need for more focused social programs geared for various groups of people.
- Care for people with learning difficulties after the death of their parents.
- Rehabilitation centers for drug users.
- Counselling service for families, parents and children.
- Home care for the elderly.

Social workers from social services assess that the major problem in Jesenice is housing. No new flats have been built in Jesenice since Slovenia gained independence (15 years ago), and there is a growing need for housing. Approximately 150 families are without proper housing¹². They stay either with parents or with friends. In addition, there are not enough flats for rent. During the last few years, the municipality evicted large number of families because they did not pay the rent. There is no data on the status of the evicted. Social services have no influence on the housing policy of the municipality and they cannot do anything to influence decisions on evictions. At the same time, they also have no resources to help families to find another place for living.

¹¹ A Summary of the annual report of the Centre of social work Jesenice for the year 2005.

¹² An interview with social workers at the Centre of social work Jesenice; 25. 8. 2005

Although there is no data on families after the eviction, social services presume that they stay in a hostel in Jesenice. This hostel was built at the time of the former Yugoslavia, for workers from other Yugoslav republics who came to work in Jesenice. It had just single rooms with common kitchen and toilettes and shower for the whole floor. Because of the collapse of the heavy industry, there is no need any more for such building and the local authorities have transformed it into a hostel. The building now houses families who live in one room (even families with several children). They share one kitchen and other facilities on the floor. Two types of families are housed in the hostel: those that were evicted and single mothers with children. Most of these single mothers moved out of their flats because of domestic violence or divorce. Currently they have no prospects for proper housing. Many of them are unemployed and live on social benefits. There is also a raising number of homeless people in Jesenice. There are no plans or programs for solving these problems.

Ethnic minorities

Jesenice is a multicultural town, with one quarter of its population coming from previous Yugoslav republics, i.e. Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia. The population of Jesenice is 21620 and 13038 have declared themselves as Slovenes, 5845 stated other nationalities, 976 did not want to answer this question, 685 did not want to declare their nationality.¹³ There are 8087 Catholics, 1723 Eastern Orthodox Christians and 3885 Muslims.¹⁴

There are also three extended Sinti families in Jesenice. Most ethnic minorities founded nongovernmental organizations to preserve their cultural origins and strengthen their national identities.

It is difficult to find data on the status of ethnic minorities in Jesenice. We could not find any data on minorities' access to education and employment, but we know that nationalist tendencies¹⁵ are largely present in everyday life. There is no such data available at all. Apparently, this data is not available. There is also no data on how many people from ex-Yugoslav republics receive social benefits and what their housing conditions are. We can just summarize the opinion of social workers that there is a strong division of Slovene and other children in primary schools and that ethnic minorities live in bad housing conditions.¹⁶

We found just one article, in the Mladina journal, describing the situation of Sinti in Jesenice¹⁷. Most of them experience discrimination in everyday life. They can not find the job and they live in very poor housing conditions. They are experiencing assimilation – most of them accepted catholic religion (one of the Sinti is a catholic priest) and in the 2002 census they declared themselves as Slovenes. A few years ago they founded a Sinti

¹³ Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2002 census:
http://www.stat.si/popis2002/si/rezultati_html/OBC_T_02SLO.htm 2.9.2005

¹⁴ Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2002 census:
http://www.stat.si/popis2002/si/rezultati_html/OBC_T_06SLO.htm 2.9.2005

¹⁵ We wrote about it in the first report on the NAP/inclusion in 2004. We described what was happening to Muslim women who wore head scarves.

¹⁶ An interview with social workers from social services Jesenice, 25. 8. 2005

¹⁷ Ksenja Hanonina: Krivica posploševanja (Unjust generalisation) *Mladina*, 8. 11. 2004

association, but they have no funds. The local community does not support them and also they do not receive funds from the state.

Case 2. Trbovlje (Zasavje Region)

Trbovlje is a municipality and also an administrative unit that covers 13 surrounding villages. Traditionally, it is an industrial town with one of the largest coal-mines in Slovenia that is now closing down. It is situated in a very narrow and closed valley along the Sava river and is surrounded with hills. The main and the easiest transport is railway and there is a large daily migration to Ljubljana either because of work or because of education.

Demography

The population of Trbovlje is 18248,¹⁸ of these 9100 are men and 9324 are women. The number of households is 5921 and the average size is 3.1 persons. The number of families is 4965. Migration in 2003 was negative. The number of immigrants in 2003 was 197 altogether – 92 moved in from other municipalities in Slovenia and 105 from abroad. In the same year, 282 persons emigrated, 196 to other municipalities in Slovenia and 86 went abroad. The net migration was –85.¹⁹ Social workers²⁰ at the Trbovlje center for social work (social services) claim that there is a new group of people moving into Trbovlje. This is a result of the political changes at the beginning of the nineties in Slovenia, when people who rented public flats were given the opportunity to buy them for very low prices, so even people with lower incomes could afford them. Because of various reasons (high expenses in larger cities, unemployment etc.) they are now selling their flats in bigger cities and buying cheaper ones in the deprived parts of the country.

Education

The population aged 15 years and over in Trbovlje numbers 15825.²¹ Their structure by educational attainment is as follows: 75 are without any education, 812 have incomplete basic education, 4194 have completed basic education and there are 9054 inhabitants with upper secondary (vocational or general) education. The rest of the population completed higher or university education. At the beginning of the school year 2003/04, there were 5 kindergartens in Trbovlje with 314 children and 31 staff. There were 5 elementary schools with 1424 pupils. The number of students enrolled in upper secondary schools was 984, and there were 764 university students²².

¹⁸ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population by sex, households, families and dwellings, 2002 census*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-03-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

¹⁹ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *migration by sex, 2003*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-08-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

²⁰ Interview with the director of social services Trbovlje, 24. 8. 2005.

²¹ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population aged 15 years and over by educational attainment, census 2002*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-04-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

²² Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *education, beginning of the school year 2003/04*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-09-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

Employment

Trbovlje also experienced the collapse of heavy industry after Slovenia gained independence. The coal-mines in the whole of Zasavje closed down. There were 1307 unemployed people in Trbovlje in June 2005, slightly less than the month before.²³

Voluntary associations

There are around 30²⁴ non-governmental organizations registered in Trbovlje. Most of them are ecological and tourist organizations, fire brigades and some others. The most important organizations that are working in the field of social welfare are the Red Cross, providing services for the people who live in poverty, and the local office of the Friends of Youth that provides services for children and youth from poor families. They organize summer and winter vacations, they have workshops for children and they also organize aid to the families in need. In addition, they offer educative lectures to parents.

Very active is an association of retired people that organizes different activities for the elderly. They also visit ill and disabled old people once or twice a year, especially before Christmas or New Year. Another organization concerned with the elderly is coming from the Trstenjak Institute. They run self-help groups in the residential homes for the elderly. Similarly active is an association of disabled people. One of the most important organizations is Šent – it offers services for people with mental health problems. They run a day care centre (drop-in), and they offer counselling and advocacy if needed.

The Youth Club, founded by the municipality, organizes various activities for young people. They offer social skills training, assertiveness training and some other activities (language courses, computer courses, day activities etc.) Local NGOs are not funded by the state, but they receive some funds from the local authorities.

Public institutions

There is a regional developmental office that is located in Zagorje (the neighbouring municipality) and it also covers the territory of Trbovlje. They help in developing new employment initiatives and give information about the national and European funds and programs. The Employment Service of Slovenia co-finances two organizations that are developing programs for the unemployed. They mostly help people to write job applications and they also organize certain types of training.

There is a residential care home for the elderly and a care centre for people with learning difficulties. Furthermore, there is a center for social work (social services) that, in addition to other services, also organizes preventative programs for various groups of people. They run²⁵:

²³ <http://e-uprava.gov.si/ispo/brezposelnost/zacetna.ispo> 24. 8. 2005

²⁴ It was not possible to find exact number of non-governmental organisations in Trbovlje. We will describe just those organisations that were listed at the official web page of the municipality of Trbovlje: <http://ww.trbovlje.si/?stran=108>

²⁵ Annual report for the year 2004.

- home care service for people with long term problems (the elderly and the disabled);
- a club for the children with special needs and their carers;
- a self-help group for families that care for adult persons with special needs, and
- psychosocial help to children.

They also cooperate with non-governmental organizations, especially Šent (mental health) and Sožitje (learning difficulties).

Current issues

The problems that need to be addressed immediately are the following:²⁶

- Social and economic degradation of the whole area. This previously well developed industrial town with large coal-mines attracted workers from various parts of the country. It was a traditional industry of the area for centuries. Most of the population was socialized into the profession of coal-miners. There were also some other industrial factories that employed a large number of people. As a result, people mostly engaged in the hire labour relationship. There were almost no small enterprises or family businesses. There is no tradition of self-initiative. The other consequence of such kind of economy was a low educational level of most of the inhabitants of Trbovlje. They were never encouraged to educate. After the collapse of the heavy industry, it can't be expected that people will develop their own employment initiatives and develop their own businesses. There are a few new companies that were established by young educated people, but they do not employ locals.
- The resources that are allocated by the state to support development in Trbovlje are inadequately spent. Instead of supporting a concrete person in his/her efforts to create a small business (with documents, accountancy etc.), they give money to organizations that offer various seminars and very general information.
- The major problem is unemployment, especially unemployment of low-educated young people. More than one thousand people lost their jobs in the last ten years.
- Because of the weak job prospects and unsupportive surroundings, young and educated are leaving Trbovlje and seek job elsewhere.
- There is a massive daily migration from Trbovlje to other towns. Most of the people travel to work every day. This also causes financial problems for the municipalities. Since there are no jobs in Trbovlje, the municipality collects less taxes.
- We have already mentioned that people have been moving to Trbovlje because it is cheaper than elsewhere. Most of them are unemployed and live on social benefits. Some of them lost their jobs because they moved to Trbovlje and had no resources for transport. During the period 1994-2000, the number of people receiving social benefits rose by 100% each year. At the moment, this increase is 10% annually.
- Almost half of the people that receive social benefits are young people up to 24 years of age.

²⁶ An interview with the director of the social services Trbovlje; 24. 8. 2005.

- Problems have changed in recent years. There are more mental illnesses and other mental problems. The social services have noticed a development of the “culture” of poverty. Long term deprivation already has its effect on the motivation of people to improve their position. They see no future for them and their children. They cannot afford to pay for their children’s vacations, so children practically never leave their community. There are no programs addressing these problems.
- There is also a rising number of young people on drugs.

Unemployment and poverty

It looks that poverty has been concentrating in Trbovlje. Educated young people are moving out and the unemployed and unskilled middle-aged people are moving in. The number of people on social benefits is high and is still growing by approximately 10% a year. The major increase was recorded from 1995-2000 when the number of recipients rose by 100% per year.

Long-term unemployment had many effects on the physical and mental health of people. The suicide rate in this area is the highest in Slovenia, mental illnesses and mental distress are increasingly more frequent, and many women are on different medications to reduce neuroses.²⁷ People are experiencing apathy, they lost hope that they will find another job. Children that are growing in families where both parents are unemployed have lower aspirations than other children. Owing to poverty, they stay in Trbovlje during holidays as well.

But traditionally, Trbovlje was a socialist town with strong labour movement. They have the tradition of fighting for their rights. There are two initiatives by the unemployed that should be mentioned. One is a foundation of the new trade union of the unemployed. Some of its members are also the members of the European Social Forum. The second one is a collective of women that worked in the shoe factory Peko that went bankrupt. They had not received their salaries for a whole year even before the bankruptcy, although they worked. There were also some illegal actions on the part of the owners that resulted in the loss of all rights from social and health insurance. The workers (almost all women) were not entitled to any financial aid from the state and they also had no opportunity to get the already earned salaries. Some of them were given jobs again when the factory changed the owner, but they lasted only one year. The new owner received financial support from the state – subsidies for new employments – but closed down the factory when this support stopped. Women workers have created a collective that is fighting for their rights, but they are not very successful. Meanwhile they are in very serious life situation – they are without anything, and many of them are also single mothers, who have no support from their previous partners.

There is not a lot of sympathy for their campaign. They have almost no support except from the trade union we already mentioned.

²⁷ An interview with the director of the Centre for social work Trbovlje; 24. 8. 2005

Case 3. Novo mesto (Dolenjska Region)

Novo mesto is the center of the Dolenjska region with many natural resources and easy access to all parts of the country. It is also an administrative unit for the surrounding municipalities. It is an industrial city. Important economic branches are the manufacturing of vehicles and boats, the production of chemicals, trade, construction and textile industry. The most important agricultural branches are cattle breeding, grain and wine and fruit growing. Below are the shares of the population with access to:²⁸

- Drinking water – 93%
- Sewage system – 60%
- Waste removal – 100%
- Gas supply – 30%

Demography

The population of Novo mesto is 40925,²⁹ of these 20017 are men and 20908 are women. The number of households is 13796 and the average size is 2.9 persons. The number of families is 11408. Migration in 2003 was positive. The number of immigrants was 569 – 283 persons moved in from other municipalities of Slovenia and 286 from abroad. In the same year, there were 481 emigrants, 297 to other municipalities of Slovenia and 184 to abroad. The net migration was 88³⁰.

Education

The population of Novo mesto aged 15 years and over is 33960.³¹ Its structure by educational attainment is as follows: 341 are without any education, 2545 have incomplete basic education, 8596 have completed basic education, and there are 17569 habitants with upper secondary (vocational or general) education. The rest of the population completed higher or university education. In the beginning of the school year 2003/04, there were 18 kindergartens in Novo mesto with 1419 children and 168 staff, and 14 elementary schools with 4080 pupils. There were 2422 students enrolled in upper secondary schools and 2073 university students³².

Employment

The number of the unemployed in Novo mesto in June 2005 was 1366, slightly less than the month before. Novo mesto has not experienced massive unemployment.³³ The

²⁸ Official web page of Novo mesto: <http://www.novomesto.si/en/etc/tisk/>

²⁹ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population by sex, households, families and dwellings, 2002 census*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-03-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

³⁰ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *migration by sex, 2003*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-08-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

³¹ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population aged 15 years and over by educational attainment, census 2002*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-04-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

³² Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *education, beginning of the school year 2003/04*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-09-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

³³ <http://e-uprava.gov.si/ispo/brezposelnost/zacetna.ispo> 24. 8. 2005

economic branch that experienced the greatest problems was textile industry with predominantly female workers.

Voluntary associations

In Novo mesto there are more than 150 non-governmental organizations (the precise number is not available). Approximately half of them are sports associations and one quarter are cultural associations; others are associations concerned with tourism, ecology and animal protection, fire brigades, youth clubs, students' associations etc. In the field of social welfare, there are disability associations, retired people associations, a society for voluntary work, another one for "the soft landing," and some others. There are also offices of national organizations dealing with the issues of mental health and learning disabilities.

The Red Cross and the Caritas organize aid (food, cloth) for people who live in poverty. They also organize vacations for children from poor families, as does the association of the Friends of Youth that also organizes workshops and daily activities during holidays for children.

The Youth Club organizes various workshops and trainings for youth. They have a day centre with a computer room and they also have programs for enabling participation of young people in the public life. The most active is the association for voluntary work that organizes different programs for children and youth; they also worked with refugees and the Roma. Another organization working with the Roma is an association for the "soft landing". They are politically active and advocate for the rights of the Roma. They organize activities for children and adults in the Roma settlements.

Public institutions

There is a regional developmental office that offers information on access to the structural funds and other resources; they help with applications and organize seminars. There are also primary and secondary schools, a hospital and a health centre. Novo mesto is a very accessible town with good public transport.

There are several welfare institutions in Novo mesto. There is a centre of social work, a residential care home for the elderly, a care centre for people with learning disabilities. They also have home care centre for people with long term problems (the elderly, disabled). There is a safe house for women and children who experienced domestic violence.

The Centre for Social Work organizes programs for various groups of people. They organize:³⁴

- Voluntary work with children and youth,
- 10-days summer camp for children,
- workshops in one of the primary schools,
- crisis centre for families,
- regular meetings with foster parents,
- group work with foster children,

³⁴ The annual report for the year 2004.

- primary education for adult Roma,
- workshops in primary schools for promoting tolerance towards the Roma.

They also cooperate with the non-governmental organization called Association for Voluntary Work that run a crisis centre for children and youth. The center is funded by the state.

Current issues

Novo mesto did not experience a massive collapse of industry, although there were some firms – mostly textile – that were closed down or they had to shed workers. Mostly women lost their jobs. There are still some companies that employ hundreds of people, mostly with low education (vehicle industry). There is also a pharmaceutical firm that employs people with secondary or higher education. Economy in Novo mesto is well developed; there are also many small businesses in the field of agriculture.

Problems that need to be addressed are the following³⁵:

- Retired people, who immigrated from previous Yugoslav republics and live in rented housing. Most of them have no education and they worked in low paid industrial branches, so they have very low pensions. Rented housing in Novo mesto is expensive and they can not afford it. During their working years they invested mainly into the property in places from which they come, but after the war in the Balkans most of them lost everything. They have no savings and no resources. Although they have pensions, they are insufficient to cover basic existential needs. They receive housing subsidies and live in poverty.
- There is also a broad population of army officers that were the employees of the Yugoslav Army and served in Slovenia. They came to Slovenia with their families and stayed after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Because of the war in Slovenia they were seen as the enemies, and many people were of the opinion that they should have been forced to leave. There is not so much pressure on them any more, but they are still isolated. They do not have their social networks and they have very weak family ties (most of their relatives live abroad). A lot of them experience one or another kind of mental health problems, such as depression, loneliness and similar.
- Unemployment among women that were employed in the textile industry is also a problem. Many have low education and are without their own financial resources. They are over 40 and live on social benefits. They find jobs only with difficulty, and because they are long-term unemployed they also experience deprivation. They see no future for themselves and have no motivation to improve their situation. Even if they actively seek job, they can not find it. They are often single mothers with children. Being workers from previous Yugoslavia, they receive housing subsidies. The only difference is that they have some sort of the social networks and they have relatives near them, but they can not rely on them endlessly.
- The major problem with youth is the first employment. They have difficulties finding a permanent job. They are usually on short-term contracts that do not provide safety needed to start their own households. They live with their parents till late twenties or even thirties. Even those with higher levels of education have difficulties finding a job.

³⁵ An interview with the deputy director of the Centre for social work.

*Roma children*³⁶

In Slovenia, there is approximately 6000 Roma, i.e. 0.3% of the population. Most are settled in Prekmurje where they have very good living conditions, attain good education and high level of employment. Traditionally they live in good relationship with their neighbours. Some live in Dolenjska Region where they live in very poor conditions, attain only low level of education, can not get employment and are in constant conflict with the Slovene population. There are several Roma settlements around Novo mesto. There is also a lot of hatred towards the Roma. Recently, there were leaflets found on the streets of Novo mesto that called for the vigilante attacks on Roma settlements and there were three bomb attacks in which two Roma women were killed. The investigation is not finished yet and it is not possible to say if the attacks were racially motivated or not. At the end of the previous school year, Slovene parents of children attending a school with a particularly large share of Roma children protested demanding that Roma children should be evenly distributed across the schools in the area. They also claimed that the quality of education offered by this particular school was lower than elsewhere because of such a large number of Roma children³⁷. However, since the displacement of Roma children would be against the law, the government decided to separate Roma inside the school, but this caused protests of Roma parents and one part of the general public. The main argument against such division was that, in effect, it is the policy of Roma segregation. The government then decided not to segregate children according to nationality but according to knowledge. But on the other hand, it is a fact that most of the Roma children will be in one group.³⁸ But even with this knowledge-based segregation, most of the Roma children will end in a lower-knowledge group.

There are also some positive programs that are focusing on the social inclusion of the Roma. A new primary-school position, the Roma mentor, has been created with the aim of facilitating the situation of the Roma children, helping them with information, and assisting in learning and understanding. This mentor should also be a “bridge” between the Roma and others, should help them with resolving misunderstandings and conflicts. There is also a new curriculum for kindergartens where Roma children are present. There is a new project on the development of an educational model and training to improve the employment prospects for the Roma.³⁹ In Prekmurje, the Roma educational centre has been opened, co-funded by the Equal. Some of the voluntary organizations from Novo mesto have projects geared for Roma children and youth. They also raise awareness and tolerance of the general public⁴⁰.

³⁶ For the purpose to solve the current issues and to avoid the conflicts between Roma and non-Roma people in the Dolenjska region MOLFSa accepted different measures in 2004: the additional employment of 5 workers at the Social Work Centres in this region (Novo mesto, Metlika, Trebnje, Črnomelj, Kočevje); the additional employment of 9 workers through public work in the area of Dolenjska, Bela krajina and Posavje to establish the programmes of socialization of Roma and to improve the relations with Roma community. This programme is carried out also in 2005. The 3rd measure is the employment of Roma assistant at the Regional Employment Offices (Novo mesto in Murska Sobota).

³⁷ POP TV News, 31. 8. 2005; commentary at the beginning of the new school year.

³⁸ An interview with Janez Krek, the leader of a project on the standardization of the Roma language in Slovenia and inclusion of Roma culture into the education. *Mladina*, 35/05, pp.35-38.

³⁹ http://www.inv.si/p_vk.htm

⁴⁰ <http://evropa.gov.si/za-nevladne/2003-seznam/50/>

Case 4: Haloze

Haloze is located along the eastern Slovenia–Croatia border. It is a rural hilly area. Because of the terrain the land is difficult for farming. Most of the hills are covered with vineyards. It is a beautiful countryside for tourism development, but difficult to live in. Traditionally, it was one of the poorest regions of the country with massive emigration before and after the Second World War. The situation changed in the last few decades. Many people moved out and sold their properties to people who now use these as country cottages. Some of the emigrants returned back once they retired. There are 6 municipalities in Haloze: Zavrč, Gorišnica (Cirkolane), Videm, Podlehnik, Žetale and Majšperk.

Recently, most of these municipalities have been investing into the basic infrastructure. Haloze was the area without water supply, sewage system and electricity. The roads were bad, narrow and dangerous. With the change of the population structure, new roads were built, but it is very difficult to maintain them because of the very steep terrain; almost all houses have water supply (although some parts of Haloze are still without it); the whole area is electrified. However, there are still no telephone connections, but some overcome this obstacle with the help of mobile phones. One reason for a great interest in buying land in Haloze is the low prices.

Demography

The population of Haloze (all 6 municipalities) is 19632⁴¹, of these 9728 are men and 9904 women. The number of households is 6466, and the average size is 3.1 persons. The number of families is 5464. Migration in 2003 was positive. The number of immigrants was 312 – 285 persons came from other municipalities in Slovenia and 27 from abroad. In the same year 245 people emigrated, 208 moved to other municipalities in Slovenia and 37 moved abroad. The net migration was 67⁴².

Education

The population of Haloze aged 15 years and over is 16427⁴³. The structure of the population by educational attainment is as follows: 84 are without any education, 1556 have incomplete basic education, 5881 have completed basic education and there are 7951 persons with upper secondary (vocational or general) education. The rest of the population completed higher or university education. At the beginning of the school year 2003/04, there were 3 kindergartens in Haloze (3 municipalities do not have kindergarten) with 140 children and 14 staff, and 11 elementary schools with 1899 pupils. There were 1124 students enrolled in upper secondary schools and 714 university students⁴⁴.

⁴¹ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population by sex, households, families and dwellings, 2002 census*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-03-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

⁴² Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *migration by sex, 2003*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-08-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

⁴³ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population aged 15 years and over by educational attainment, census 2002*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-04-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

⁴⁴ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *education, beginning of the school year 2003/04*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-09-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

Employment

In June 2003,⁴⁵ there were 288 unemployed persons in Gorišnica (population 5822); 220 in Majšperk (population 4005); 94 in Podlehnik (population 1820); 254 in Videm (population 5283); 78 in Zavrč (population 1338) and 58 in Žetale (population 1364). Altogether, there were 992 unemployed persons in Haloze. Most of the unemployed people have their own property where they grow vegetables, while some also raise animals, in recent years mostly sheep and goats.

Voluntary associations

There is a long tradition in Haloze of various voluntary associations and groups. There are several very active tourist associations that promote the region very well. They create various programs to enable people to engage in some kind of tourist services and activities. They promote Haloze as a land of vine, because in recent decades they have started to grow very good sorts of grapes, so the products are of much better quality than they used to be.⁴⁶ Farm tourism with an offering of good food and the option of walks in nature has also been on the rise.

There are many voluntary cultural organizations in Haloze. Some of them strive to preserve the tradition, so they organize various festivals and fairs. Last year they organized a puppet festival and public literature-reading across Haloze. They attracted poets and writers to come to Haloze and read their literature. Several books by local writers on the history of Haloze have been published⁴⁷.

There are also sports associations, fire brigades, retired people associations and some others. We could not find any voluntary association offering any kind of welfare services.

There are some private firms that are running various developmental programs. They offer advice and information and organize seminars and training. They also offer information on the structural fund and help people to develop programs.

Public institutions

Apart from the primary schools, an outpatient clinic and the local administration, there are no other public institutions in Haloze. All important services are located in Ptuj, including the Center for Social Work, a health centre, a residential care home for the elderly, a day center for people with learning difficulties etc.

The Center for Social Work in Ptuj has no special programs for Haloze, because the municipalities are not willing to fund them.⁴⁸ However, they have very good cooperation

⁴⁵ <http://e-uprava.gov.si/ispo/brezposelnost/zacetna.ispo> 24. 8. 2005

⁴⁶ The change in the vine sorts also reduced the rate of alcoholism in Haloze which was one of the major problems in the past. People did not have water, but they had vine. They grew sorts with the high level of methyl alcohol that is very damaging for health. The best known such sort is "Šmarnica".

⁴⁷ Web pages of the municipalities Podlehnik, Žetale, Majšperk, Videm and Zavrč.

⁴⁸ An interview with the deputy director of the Centre of social work Ptuj.

with primary schools in all Haloze municipalities. Primary schools are also very important for every local community, because of the space they can offer and because of the human resources. Teachers are well educated and often very important people in the community who dedicate their voluntary work to the common interest. The following programs for pupils and their parents are offered by schools.

- Social skills training.
- All equal – all different – a campaign for the integration of disabled children into regular schools
- Lectures for parents.
- Workshops.

Programs that social services are also run in Haloze:

- Home care for the elderly and the disabled.
- Workshops for youth at schools.
- Summer camp for children (some of the children come from Haloze).

Current issues

Despite some differences between municipalities in Haloze, there are some common problems that need to be addressed.⁴⁹

- Alcoholism in some parts of Haloze – although this is not as big a problem as it used to be, it still needs attention.
- Poverty of old people – a lot of older people live alone, because their children moved to urban areas or even out of the country. They are without resources and unable to run their farms. Most have very low pensions, and cannot afford to pay for home care. They usually live in isolated and hard to reach parts of Haloze.
- Poverty of large families – although the fertility rate is low in Slovenia, several families in Haloze have more than 4 children. Often one or both parents are unemployed and live just off the produce they grow on their land. Children have fewer opportunities for further education.
- Since in the past most of the new public housing was built in Ptuj (the administrative unit), many people moved there from rural places. Now they are without jobs and without land. They can not move back because there are no flats available.
- There should be more programs during holidays for children and youth from Haloze. Although there is not so much poverty as in the past, most of the families can not afford to go to summer or winter vacations. Children stay all the time in the same area.

⁴⁹ Sources: an interview with a social worker from the Centre for social work Ptuj; a written report by a social worker at the primary school Cirkulane and Žetale.

Old people and poverty

Haloze is a very different area than it used to be. During the last decades, the basic infrastructure was built, roads were repaired, the population changed and a number of new programs were developed. There are several reasons for that:

- The poor moved out of Haloze, while wealthier people moved in and started to buy property – mostly to build weekend cottages and holiday homes.
- There was a change in agriculture – almost no cattle is raised any more and there are many new vineyards with quality sorts of grape.
- Developing tourism.
- several new municipalities were established, which contributed to the improvement of the local situation”
- There are a few new firms that train and give information on structural funds and also help with program development.

But there is also another side of Haloze that is often ignored. Because of the overall prospects and because the local authorities want to present the area as attractive for tourists and new buyers, they do not pay attention to those that are still cut off from the world – people who live in distant places, have no water yet, no telephone and the like. The social services have pointed out that old people are isolated, almost forgotten. There were four infanticides in very short time and no special attention was dedicated to it. There is no support for these women and everything was “forgotten” very soon. School social workers are reporting about children who live in extreme poverty or both parents are alcoholics.

It is obvious that there are two very different faces of Haloze. In order to develop more accurate programs, needs must be assessed not just on the grounds of the institutional view, but in-depth research has to be done.

Case 5: Posočje - Bovec

Posočje is located in the western part of the country along the border with Italy. It is a very narrow valley alongside the river Soča and is surrounded by high mountains. The central town for upper Posočje is Bovec. A significant feature of this area is that there are just 3183⁵⁰ habitants living on the 367 square kilometres of the territory. To put this into perspective, we can give the example of Trbovlje, where 18248 people live on the 57km².

The valley is one of the most beautiful parts of Slovenia with many natural resources and it is a traditional tourist destination. During summers and springs there is the offering of all kinds of river sports (rafting, canoeing, canyoning), then mountaineering, parachuting etc. There are also skiing terrains that attract tourist during the winter season. Many inhabitants live of tourism but this is almost the only economy in the valley. Apart from tourism and farming, there are almost no other jobs. The valley, although very attractive for tourists, is extremely difficult to live in. It is an earthquake zone and in the last decades there were three major earthquakes (two of them recently) that damaged or totally destroyed almost all houses in the area. The last one was in 2004. After the first earthquake in 1998, everything had to be rebuilt and people lived in caravans for years. Soon after they moved into their new homes another earthquake struck, followed by a landslide after a heavy rain that buried underneath part of the village of Log pod Mangartom and several people died.

Another problem becomes acute during the winter season when the valley is almost completely cut off from the rest of the country, because the heavy snow and narrow roads between the mountains make travelling difficult.

Demography

The population of Bovec is 3183⁵¹, 1517 men and 1621 women. The number of households is 1233 and the average size is 2.5 persons. The number of families is 868. Migration in 2003 was positive. The number of immigrants was 58 – 22 persons moved in from other municipalities of Slovenia and 36 came from abroad. In the same year, there were 44 emigrants, 10 to other municipalities of Slovenia and 34 to abroad. The net migration was 14.⁵²

Education

The population of Bovec aged 15 years and over is 2706.⁵³ The structure of the population by educational attainment is as follows: 16 persons do not have any education, 367 have incomplete basic education, 782 have completed basic education and there are 1314 habitants with upper secondary (vocational or general) education. The rest of the

⁵⁰ Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia.

⁵¹ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population by sex, households, families and dwellings, 2002 census*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-03-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

⁵² Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *migration by sex, 2003*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-08-04.htm?jezik=en 20. 8. 2005

⁵³ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *population aged 15 years and over by educational attainment, census 2002*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-04-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

population completed higher or university courses. At the beginning of the school year 2003/04, there were 2 kindergartens in Bovec with 53 children and 7 staff, and 3 elementary schools with 256 pupils. There were 152 students enrolled in upper secondary schools, and 127 university students⁵⁴.

Employment

In June 2003,⁵⁵ there were 93 persons registered unemployed in Bovec. There are no employment opportunities because economically Posočje is an undeveloped part of the country. There are no opportunities for young educated people to employ in the area, this being the major reason for youth to move out of Posočje. Many local inhabitants were employed in Italy (Bovec is situated near the border with Italy and access to there is easier than to inner Slovenia) but one of the companies was just closed and they lost their jobs.

Voluntary associations

There are quite a number of voluntary associations, given the fact that Bovec is one of the smallest communities. There are 5 tourist organizations, 14 cultural and 11 sports associations, 4 fire-fighters societies, several associations of hunters and one civil initiative that were founded after the earthquake in 2004 because people from the valley were extremely dissatisfied with the governmental plans for the reconstruction of the area.⁵⁶ There are also humanitarian associations like the Red Cross, Caritas and a women's association.

Public institutions

There are almost no other public institutions apart from the municipal administration in Bovec. There is a dentist and an outpatient clinic. A major problem is public transport. Buses are rare and there is no train. Some parts of the municipality are not served by public transport at all.

The Posočje developmental centre is an important institution that also covers the territory of Bovec although there is no local office there. It is placed in Kobarid, nearly 30 km from Bovec. They use structural funds for their programs and they also promote and inform about the European resources. They carry out various programs. The most important for Bovec are the following⁵⁷:

- Life-long learning.
- Trainings and programs for raising the culture of long-life learning.
- Promoting education for professions that fail to attract interest of young people but have high job prospects.

⁵⁴ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: *education, beginning of the school year 2003/04*. www.stat.si/letopis/2004/34_04/34-09-04.htm?jezik=en 23. 8. 2005

⁵⁵ <http://e-uprava.gov.si/ispo/brezposelnost/zacetna.ispo> 24. 8. 2005

⁵⁶ Reconstruction after the earthquake in the municipality of Bovec. Material for the municipal council form 20. 6. 2005. <http://www.bovec.net/obcina/page.php?id=00038&podatek=00025> 31. 8. 2005

⁵⁷ Posočje developmental centre: <http://www.pososki-rc.si> 31.8.2005

- A path into the innovative region – promotion of the self-employment.

The Centre for Social Work⁵⁸ is located in Tolmin which is 50 km away from Bovec. Given the weak public transport system, it is very difficult for people to use its services. It is also difficult for social workers to reach some of the isolated and distant places. At the moment, they offer the following programs to the local community:⁵⁹

- Self-help group for the parents of young drug abusers.
- Groups for the elderly.

There is the need for an office or a department of social services in Bovec. There should be a full-time employee working in Bovec, who would organize various activities, be able to assess needs and find proper programs or projects to satisfy these. There is an agreement for such an office between social services in Tolmin and the municipality of Bovec, but because of the lack of funds they can not establish it. In Slovenia, Such services are funded by the state because of the centralized welfare system, but the MOLFSA has not responded to this need by now.

Current issues

The current issues do not differ much from those in the past. As far as the local community remembers, problems have always been the same and have never been solved. The result is that young people move away from Posočje, especially intellectuals, well educated young people. The main problems are:⁶⁰

- There are no investments into the local economy. The Government does not dedicate sufficient attention to Posočje. One of the reasons might as well be erroneous public opinion that tourism is a sufficient source of earnings for the locals. Because of the natural disasters in recent years, the number of tourists dropped and many people who invested in tourism lost large sums of money. There should be an investment into other branches of economy.
- Roads are bad and some of the people are cut off for months during winter. Even when there is no snow, people can not travel. It is extremely difficult for people to travel to a doctor or a dentist. Even though young people go to schools located not very far away, they have to stay in boarding schools because of the weak daily transport system.
- Salaries are on the average 20% lower than in the rest of the country. One form of aid that is quite substantial are emergency social benefits that people receive once a year for various purposes, for example to buy coal, oil or food for the winter.
- Many people fell into poverty after the earthquake demolished their homes. They had to take loans with high interest rates and they have difficulties with paying them off. Some of them lost their homes after the second earthquakes. In fact, even before they managed to pay off the first loan, they had to borrow another one,

⁵⁸ Social Work Centre of Tolmin which covers the area of Bovec with the worst damages due to earthquake and landslides 2 employment (full-time and for indefinite period) from the 1st September 2005 were approved to carry out the psycho-social help to people suffering from the outcomes of natural disasters.

⁵⁹ The annual report of the Centre of social work Tolmin for the year 2004.

⁶⁰ An interview with the director of social services Tolmin, 2. 9. 2005 and with the representative of the local authorities, 1. 9. 2005.

including loans for furniture and other such things. Even though they are employed, the monthly instalments are so high that they can hardly live off their salaries.

- Many people experienced some kind of psychological problems after natural disasters. They were afraid, anxious, depressed etc. They still have such problems and there is not enough support for them.
- There is also the need for the residential care home for the elderly in the area, because it is extremely difficult for old people to move far away from home. Such a facility should be in their local community, otherwise they would lose ties with their friends and relatives. Local inhabitants are also very attached to the environment and land.
- There should be more programs for various population groups, to help people to relax, associate and be creative. Social services, for example, organized two one-day bus tours to Bled and to Piran for old people. That was a big success and everyone enjoyed it. There should be more activities of this kind to take the burden off people for a while. There should be more workshops and opportunities for people to meet, enjoy themselves, talk and the like.

Accessibility of services

One of the major issues in Bovec is accessibility.⁶¹ By this we mean accessibility of the outside world by public transport and accessibility of services. The fact is that people in the villages around Bovec do not have access to the outside world. Another related fact that has to be taken into account is that young people are moving out because of the low job prospects and older people remain living alone in the valley. In some cases they have to hitchhike to get to a doctor. There is a school bus, but the driver is not allowed to take other people on the bus. And even if he breaks the rule, the bus arrives in Bovec too early, so people are forced to wait outside in the cold for the services to open. To improve accessibility, the road has to be built and public transport has to be established.

The other kind of accessibility is easy access to services. Most of the services are in Tolmin (the administrative unit) that is 50 km away. In Bovec, they need a health care centre (at the moment, in case of a medical emergency during the weekend, the patients have to be taken to Tolmin); a residential care home for the elderly (people in Posočje are very attached to their homes and land) has to be in Bovec, closer to their home, friends and relatives; home care service and social assistance for old and disabled have to be established and have to be accessible to poor people as well. There is a need for the department of the social services to be opened in Bovec, especially because people experience mental distress after so many natural disasters – they are depressed, disoriented, they experience apathy. Many of them also live in poverty. An additional employment of the community nurse is needed. Now there is just one who cannot cover all the needs. Community nurses are also very well accepted by the people.

Easy access to the valley is a precondition for the economic development. New services will also assure new working places. A new residential care centre alone would create 22 new jobs.

□ Jelka Škrjanc: Final report on the project Posočje 2004 with recommendations. Ljubljana: Faculty of social work.

Conclusion

Assessing the local implementation of the National plan for social inclusion 2004-2006 was a difficult task, mostly because almost none of the informers have ever heard of it. Two professionals from social services were the only persons that heard something about it, but never actually saw it. No one was familiar with the content and quite some of the informers were not familiar with the concept of social inclusion. The local authorities never got any information on the NAP, and they do not think they should do something about it.

The program that could be easily traced to the local level is the plan about the inclusion of the Roma in education, with the emphasis on Roma mentors. It is a successful program with some good results at the very beginning of its implementation. It was carefully planned and built on research findings through the cooperation of the government, university and one of the institutes. Also successful are the programs co-funded by the structural funds (majority of resources are from domestic sources), especially Equal. But there was just one such program in one of the municipalities, again targeted at the Roma population.

The following issues should be considered to improve the implementation of the NAP:

- In the process of collecting data for this report, most of the problems were related to the gathering of basic information about local areas. Some of the web pages offer quality information on the community, but the majority are very poor. Just one of the municipalities has posted on their website the data on unemployment and living conditions. Others focus on tourism, sport and culture and ignore social welfare. When speaking with the representatives of local authorities, we observed that they did not see themselves as qualified enough to speak about social problems that need to be addressed. It is obvious that they need professional support to assess the local situations and they need to be encouraged to develop local strategies for social inclusion.
- It is again obvious that the NAP was not promoted enough to be known and recognized. Even professionals have very weak knowledge of the document. We think that one of the obstacles is a too ambitious plan with weak implementation structure. It might be better if we were more modest in planning but more ambitious with implementation.
- At the local level, the most serious problems are not addressed sufficiently. For example, accessibility is a problem with three of five local communities, but there are no measures to improve it. In Posočje, this is the most important issue. Old people in isolated places are one of the most vulnerable groups. The problem is also insufficiently recognized.
- It is not possible to talk about the social inclusion of the minorities if there is no data. We actually don't know anything about their status in the country. For example, in Jesenice people are convinced that more than one half of the habitants come from the former Yugoslavia and that their social status than that of the Slovenes, which proved to be an erroneous opinion. The absence of data that would

present the real status of the minorities supports nationalist myths on the abused majority that needs to be protected from a foreign minority.

- Poverty is also not recognized enough as an important issue. Especially long-term unemployed live in very bad conditions. Their quality of life deteriorated enormously, as is obvious in Jesenice and especially in Trbovlje. Housing conditions of some of them are very bad and almost inhumane. Whole families live in one room and they share bathrooms and toilets. Roma settlements are without basic infrastructure. The number of homeless people has also been on the rise.

We are convinced that there are parts of the NAP that are successfully implemented but are not recognised as such at the local level. Those are mostly measures that can be implemented by the changes in legislation or new social benefits that are introduced by the NAP, as for example housing benefits. To prevent such misunderstandings it would be useful to promote those measures as part of the inclusion strategy.

It is also important to define the role of developmental offices⁶² that holds the resources for the implementation of the NAP because they are placed in local communities. Although there were some comments that they offered too many seminars and trainings and not enough support to concrete individuals, their services is recognised as important. With some improvements they could be an important resource for local communities.

It is important to built local networks of the organisations that can contribute to greater inclusion of the excluded groups and individuals. Those local communities that created their own local developmental strategies were far more capable to define problems and gaps that need to be addressed. Their data base is better and they already identify resources for improvements. It would be useful to encourage such strategies that will support the implementation of the NAP.

⁶² Local Development Agencies have important role in their areas. Among their main tasks is, e.g., coordination of preparation and of implementation of regional and local development plans. All plans include social inclusion aspects according to the needs of the concerned regional/local area.

Appendix: Methodology

Because there were no programs that would be implemented nationally, we decided to research local situation in five different areas. The research was conducted in July and August and written in September 2005.

We collected data from following sources:

- Internet resources (local communities, developmental offices, Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia, Employment office of the Republic of Slovenia, Governmental web-pages, non-governmental organisations)
- Contacts with local authorities
- Visits of local communities:
 - Interviews with local people
 - Interviews with representatives of social services
 - Interviews with local associations

We also used as a source different research reports, project reports and other materials of the organizations that work locally. All the sources are written in the footnotes.