

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AS PROMOTER OF LIFE QUALITY FOR RURAL WOMEN

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Abstract: One of European Union states imperatives in education is a society of knowledge; each man has to become a well-educated, harmonious and all-around developed member of society. To realize these aims, well-balanced development of education environment in cities as well as in rural areas has to be provided. In this aspect, it is relevant to solve problems of education quality of offer and demand of non-formal education activities which are especially current for rural people, accordingly to find solutions how to make non - formal education more available to rural people in order to improve their life quality. The aim of this work is to update and to deepen comprehension of non-formal education as promoter of life quality, to lay stress on necessity to provide adult non-formal education for rural woman.

Keywords: non-formal education, life quality, rural women.

Introduction

Nowadays life quality is not only the subject of philosophical discussions or someone's personal problem. More often life quality becomes in a centre of society attention in connection with development processes, tasks of economical growth and structure of politics. Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy till year 2030 defines rising of life quality and availability of qualitative education as one of priority directions for sustainable action (Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija, 2008).

Education has to ensure conditions and has to give opportunities to each people bar none to perfect own talents, to implement potencies of creation, including responsibility of own life and consummation of personal aims, as well as future of society (Delor, 1996). In 21st century in the world, also in Latvia occur so fast changes in technologies' development and modernization that there causes necessity to improve and to develop peoples' own knowledge and skills in non-stop regime. Education system and its availability has big role in the development of people knowledge. Formal education not always are able to satisfy individual desires and needs as well as to react rapidly to changes of technologies and social skills, therefore people more often achieve necessary knowledge and skills out of formal education by attending different courses, seminars, conferences. In non-stop process of life-long learning non-formal education gets greater role.

The aim of this work is to update and to deepen comprehension of non-formal education as promoter of life quality, to lay stress on necessity to provide adult non-formal education for rural woman.

The aim of this article is concretized in following tasks:

- to clarify importance of education to promote life quality;
- to find out availability of non-formal education related with interests to rural woman in Zemgale region;
- to give suggestions for persons involved in non-formal education.

Materials and methods

Theoretical basis of work is formed on cognitions of foreign and Latvian researchers about interpretations of conception *life quality* (Ness, Pridāne, Tisenkopfs, Tavior, Oertl, Petersen, Calvert, Henderson, Bullinger, Batzdorfer, Subetto, and Ohlsen etc.) and potentialities and individualities of non-formal education for adults (La Belle, Coombs, Ahmed, Jarvis, Kravale, Knowles, Rogers). Results of other researches *Life quality in Latvia* (Dzīves kvalitāte Latvijā, 2005) and *Access to lifelong learning and opportunities to educate in Latvia* (Mūžizglītības pieejamība un iespējas izglītoties Latvijā, 2006) are used and analyzed in this research.

In practical research about different aspects of life quality and non-formal education inquiry was used, experience analyzes in project ECOART, reflection of authors' individual experience and mathematic data processing.

Project "ECOART- a creative, ecological use of natural resources for decoration of the closest environment", implemented by financing of Latvia-Lithuania cross border cooperation program 2007-2013, between Latvia University of Agriculture and Lithuania Siauliai University. Project is directed to availability of culture and education of interests for rural people of Zemgale region as well as improvement of their life quality. In the frames of this project practical seminars are organized that encourage people on creative action and ecological usage of resources to decorate closest environment (for example, psychology of colors, creative work of paper and leather, sand compositions, flower carpets and nature object etc.).

Questionnaire was carried out in the project seminar groups without limits of time in attendance of research authors to provide correct understanding of questions. Time for this questionnaire was during May till November 2011.

88 respondents of Zemgale rural regions and 28 respondents of Lithuania Radivilski and Siauliai rural regions took part in research; they all were participants of the project ECOART seminar groups - women in the age of 20-76. Main spheres of occupation are cleaner, tailor, teacher, nanny, seller, secretary, housewife etc.

Since seminar participants from Latvia part represented rural areas of Jelgava territory, information about offer of non-formal education activities was gained from those municipals.

Results and discussion

Conception *life quality* is researched and defined by different authors and from different points of view. It is difficult to give one definition.

F.Taylor considers that life quality is connected only with health problems (by Pridāne, 2007) or, it can't be measured, but only evaluated when person is sick (Oertl, 2003). C.Petersen (Bullinger M., Schmidt S., Petersen C., 2002) agree that it isn't measurable, but it can be affected by factors: health, social activities and mode of life, equality of possibilities and possibilities to educate, employment and environment.

B.Calvert and H.Henderson (Henderson H., Lickerman J., Flynn P. 2000) are worked out criteria of life quality; they are called *Quality of life Indicators*, which contains factors mentioned above plus spheres of safety and law.

M.Bullinger (Bullinger, Kirhberger, Steinbüchel, 1993) defined life quality as construction, which includes the psychical feeling of comfort, mood, social relations and ability to functionate in daily life.

A. Ness (Ness, 1999) believes that life quality express how a person evaluates his life, how feels and perceives world around him. There is an opinion in the literature that person's life quality is defined by his likeness, because it has essential importance in private life and in search for employment (Batzdorfer, Klippel, Sörensen, 2004).

Life quality in sociology means "...straight non-measurable level of person's satisfaction of needs, especially of health, situation of environment, possibilities to educate, level of democratization and social protect ability" (Socioloģijas skaidrojošā vārdnīca, 1997, 44).

After results of theoretical research by pedagogical doctor A.Pridane (Pridāne, 2007) *life quality* can be expressed with following criteria's:

1. economical indicators, which characterizes level of life and provides concrete person's material needs;
2. social and cultural needs directed to person's development;
3. system of mental values which's forms basics of personality's life (target, significance).

In the frames of this research most preferable is characteristic by A.Subetto (Cyberro, 1994) life quality as system of mental, material, social-cultural, ecological and demographic life components, which includes quality of person, quality of education, quality of culture and quality of life

environment (ecology), social, economical and political organization of society. In this system level of person's innate power realization expresses, his creative significance of life.

Life quality depends of person's creative approach to life, legal capacity and practical action. Legal capacity has substantially effect on education, social derivation and upbringing. It changes in process of life and it is affected on person's experience. Important role in realization of legal capacity takes person's self-confidence, reflection and willpower (Tisenkopfs, 2006).

After analyze of scientific literature authors were developed following figure (Figure 1) of life quality criteria where criteria are grouped in three basic groups- welfare, security and sustainability. These criteria were on base of this research questionnaire to clear up respondents understanding about life quality and education as promoter of life quality.

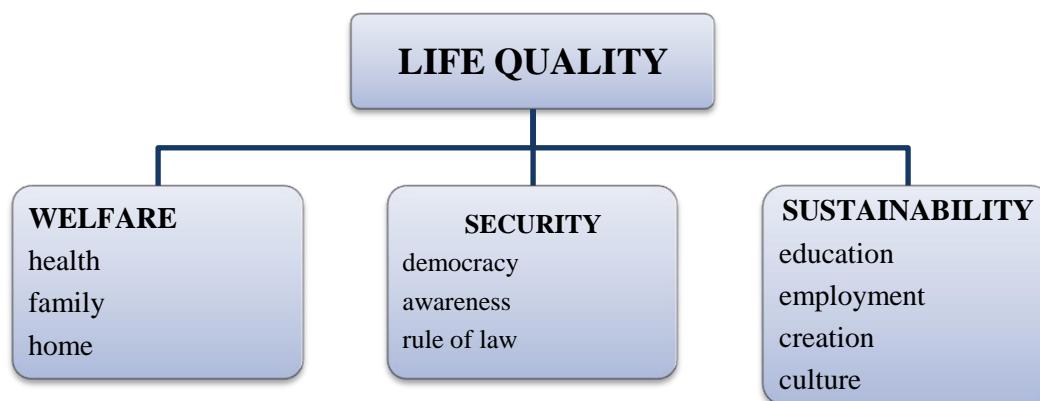


Figure 1. Criteria and indexes of life quality

There is cleared up that answers of respondents in this practical research didn't give unitary explanation, but largely they have something in common to Subetto definition. The respondent's answers were "life quality is...- "...person's satisfaction with self and others", "persons' own needs for life, hobby and good job", "acquirement of new skills", "job, health, money", "satisfaction of persons' skills, abilities and own interests", "good relations in family, private house, job that affords pleasure, one rule for all", "mental, social and economical welfare", "arranged environment, health, job and family".

Most of life quality researchers (Petersen, Pridāne, Calvert, Henderson, Subetto and Tisenkopfs etc.) stress education or possibilities to educate as one of the most essential indicator of life quality. Education is such human activity sphere, which straight effects life quality and it is considered as process and tool to personality's development. Promoting of every person's different aspects of life quality is brought toward as aim of the development in the long-term conceptual document "Latvian development model: Man of the first place". It is achievable with active usage of obtained knowledge potential of population. Basic resource to gain life quality level of developed states is **people knowledge and wisdom**, skilled and purposeful usage of them (Latvijas izaugsmes modelis, 2005).

The same conclusion appears more than once in the results of strategic plans and analyzes of Latvia development: knowledge is significant resource of Latvia to gain high and sustainable results of life quality development (Karnītis, 2004).

B. Calvert and H. Henderson (Henderson, Lickerman, Flynn, 2000) accentuates that knowledge is wide approved as notable factor of economical production and it is a ground of people rights.

On education as a significant indicator of life quality indicates consideration that education level is one of the criteria in methodic to define the human development index, which is researched by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and which defines level of life quality of world's nations (Latvijas izaugsmes modelis, 2005).

It is researched there that people with higher education level in majority states of European Union (EU) are more pleased with life (Bela, 2006). One of the reasons can be that better education gives better opportunity to find well-paid job. The other reason, probably, more educated people are able to use their skills and potentialities more efficiently to administer progression of their lives.

In this research there was to clarified importance of 10 different indicators of life quality in personal life of respondents. The gained results indicate that in the view of respondents all indicators are important for life quality, but by rank amount (where number 1 has the highest estimation) education is only on 5th place for Latvians and 6th place for Lithuanian respondents. Also by research of Strategic Analysis Commission (SAK) (Latvijas izaugsmes modelis, 2005) in 2004 education as priority in Latvia was only for 8% of people.

Table 1

Importance of life quality indicators for Latvian and Lithuanian respondents' point of view

respondents in Jelgava region			respondents in Siauliai and Radviliski regions		
spheres	rank amount	place	spheres	rank amount	place
home	207	3	home	57	5
family	172	1	family	41	1
health	189	2	health	46	2
education	230	5	education	60	6
culture	219	4	culture	50	4
employment	239	6	employment	47	3
creation	265	8	creation	69	8
democracy	269	10	democracy	74	9
rule of law	253	7	rule of law	66	7
awarness	263	9	awarness	75	10

Rural people as important indicators of their life quality mentioned family (1st place), health (2nd place), home and culture (3rd place) in the frames of this research. Also the research *Life quality in Latvia* (Dzīves kvalitāte Latvijā, 2005) displays those basic spheres were people are satisfied- family, health, educational and home; spheres which they feel to be able to affect (Bela, 2006).

In nowadays in education environment is accepted to divide formal, non-formal and informal education. The object of this research is role of non-formal education in the promotion of life quality; therefore all attention in this research is devoted to interpretations of non-formal education.

Non-formal education is instrument for person's non-stop improvement and development, where education activities are organized out of formal education system, which works as vision enlargement of target group; is more objective and directed to individual's education, attached to specific situation and environment (A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2000).

In international environment rising of non-formal education conception is connected with alternative offer of education- education programs, which is less volume, realized in shorter time and costs are lower (Tight, 2003). At first, term *non-formal education* mostly was used in the context of adult education to accentuate education process in which adults can participate out of formal education system (La Belle, 1982; Jarvis, 2002). In the long run target group of non-formal education becomes people in every age in the context of lifelong learning. Non-formal education is "...any organized, systematic educated action, which occurs out of formal education system to provide diversity of education and availability to different groups of people, int.al. adults and children" (Coombs, Ahmed, 1974, 8). In nowadays non-formal education is referable to all age groups- it's aims, content and process results from needs and interests of each target group. In dictionary of pedagogic terms it is defined as "out of formal education system organized educated action; interest related education, courses, as well as professional perfection without achieving new grade of education. In these actions are not put forward formal requirements" (Pedagoģijas terminu vārdnīca, 2000, 178).

Non-formal education is dynamic, varied educated system, which hasn't regulative department from state (Kravale, 2006). The main features are:

- ability to adapt and flexibility in relation to participants, process, methods, content, aim and tasks- all those can be changed that depends on learners demands, motivation and set targets;

- availability- closeness to work place or home and possibility to act immediately, it means, ability to use gained knowledge with less resources.

In non-formal education have to stress that it is based on individual experience, self- activity and gives possibilities to gain knowledge and skills which can't be accessed in the frames of formal education- activities are more extensive than in formal education.

Non-formal education provides:

- useful and thoughtful spend of free time;
- creative self-expression, development of talents, self-development;
- socialization;
- acquirement of professional skills;
- career planning;
- supplementing of knowledge and skills gained in formal education.

These achievements in non-formal education are related to indicators of life quality mentioned by C.Petersen (Bullinger, Schmidt, Petersen, 2002). He admits that life quality can't be measured directly, but indicators have most important meaning in it, for example:

- possibility to participate in different activities;
- equality of potentialities and possibilities to get educated;
- labour service and labour safety;
- freedom of persons development;
- possibilities to spend free time;
- condition of environment;
- and others.

Part of non-formal education which in past were called as interest related education for adults are discussed in this article. Term *interest related education* is explained as “*implementation of persons individual education needs and desires on owns age and gained education*” (Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2007.-2013.gadam). Interest related education also is possibilities thoughtfully to spend a free time when each can improve their own interests- learn dancing or singing, to play some instrument, to paint, to engage in sport or something else. Activities of non-formal education can be different hobby groups, interest related clubs, elective courses or courses/seminars in the frames of project etc. It is related to Ohlsen (by Pridāne, 2007), that life quality embraces persons desire to participate in social life as individuality.

Traditionally interest related education in Latvia is related to education of children and youth, less to education of adults. In researches and documents about adult education following terms are used “non-formal education” and “with job related non-formal education”, which indicates that there exist non-formal education which is not related with job but in which interest related education for adults could fit in. This part of adults' non-formal education which is object of this research; authors called as *interest related non-formal education*.

In 2007 in non-formal education in Latvia 30.7 % population were involved, comparatively in formal education 5.4%, which is almost 6 times less. In non-formal education participate in total 369.6 thousand of population, 227.8 thousands of it were women (36.2 % of all woman). If from this amount take away 186.8 thousand of women which were involved with job related non-formal education, we can suppose that 41 thousand of women were involved in interest related education (Pieaugušo izglītība - 2007.gada apsekojuma dati).

Partly the structure of non-formal education is planned and fitted accordingly to states national requirements, because non-formal education has to be most flexible system of education, which is able to offer maximal advantage to each individual. From other side, education programs or learning themes participants form themselves accordingly to their own aims and needs. Adults are advanced on life problems and motivated to learn, if they think that education in short time can solve real needs of life (Knowles, 1990).

Adult education at one time was based on this principle - adults choose what they want to learn, so that the curriculum is built by each learning group and around their particular interests. The outcomes were not pre-set but chosen by the participants, and the evaluation was made by the

participants in terms of their personal satisfaction with their individual needs at the time. This is flexible training - the standardized elements common to all such learning groups are clearly training but the participatory elements mean that the training is made flexible to the local group concerned (Rogers, 2004).

The results of this research indicates that for Jelgava region rural women participation in interest related education is one of the ways how to gain knowledge and skills useful in daily life- it is proved by 23% of respondents. 20% are participated in non-formal education to gain knowledge and skills in which they are interested, 17% to raise self-confidence and 11%- to improve possibilities of career. Learning for adults can be directed to gain specific skills, if they have necessity to gain new or improve existent skills to be more competent or to solve problems in work or in personal life or center on problem or concrete task. An adult gives priority to action with problem that is essential and known to him or expected in real life (Knowles, 1990). Researches by B.Ananjev (Ананьев, 2001) proved that adult' cognitive development changes in impression of education, the structure of mind improve becomes more integrative and wherewithal person's skills of adaptation grow.

17% of respondents are participated in interest related education to meet new people. V.Sibajev (Šibajevs, 2002) about youth in interest related education stresses, that people has a necessity to act, to develop their interests and to be together with equals in age. Learning in groups expands mutual contacts and enriches life experience. Authors experience is indicative that Sibajev point of view can be assigned to adults as well.

It is possible to conclude that non-formal education promotes acquirement of new knowledge and skills, possibility to participate in different activities, to meet new people thereby to lessen social castaway, which isn't occasional in rural areas. Often learning is related to such factors as better employment and, positive communication, it affects self-esteem, self-assessment, and self-confidence and as a result life quality increases. Also A.Rogers (Rogers, 2005) stresses signification of non-formal education in the development of human resources in rural areas.

Women participation in activities of non-formal education in project ECOART, which were related to handicrafts (historically formed woman trade), design and gardening, means that they still have interest to gain new knowledge and skills about it. It is possible to forecast that these skills will be used not only for improving closest environment (in clothing and home), but it can be the beginning of business to create new products.

In this research there were cleared up obstructions what prevent rural women to involve in activities of non-formal education. Responses allow conclude that important obstruction is lack of time (36% of respondents). This can be explained with fact, that rural women in free time of paid employment are working at own household.

Second essential obstruction is lack of money (18% of respondents). Adult non-formal education mostly is paid activity, although part of it financing are from government and budget of local government or private enterprises and organizations. In 2009 29 069 adults were financed from local government for education (frequent courses were ICT, languages, business, handicrafts and psychology) and it covers only 0.02% of all Latvian adult population proportion (Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādņu... 2011). About 55% of Latvia local governments give a financial support to adult non-formal education in own area. It means that financial support in government level is trivial. Among population of rural areas problem of unemployment is widespread and incomes are low- wherewithal they chances to involve in non-formal education are less. In the research of Baltic institute of social sciences in 2006 "Access to lifelong learning and opportunities to educate in Latvia" (total respondents in research = 928) were cleared up, that people involved in interest related education mostly are with larger incomes, but 52% of respondents couldn't afford to pay for non-formal education (Mūžizglītības pieejamība un iespējas izglītoties Latvijā, 2006).

In this research cleared up that 57% of Jelgava region respondents are ready to spend money amount from 1-3 Ls per activity, while 15% of respondents say that money does not matter, 11% are ready to spend 3-5 Ls, 9% - 5-10 Ls and 6% - 0 Ls.

It means that lack of financing is serious restrictive factor to education availability. People and local government understanding about acquisitions gained from non-formal education is not enough.

The role of interest related education has not been evaluated in the development of social skills, in keeping and perfection of cultural heritage and traditions and in career growth.

68 % of respondents hold a view that possibilities of non-formal education in cities and in rural are in disparity- in rural they are less, 11% maintain that there are difficulties to get to the municipality centre to courses. 9% of respondents maintain that in rural unemployment is greater, 6% notice that in rural areas there is no one who wants to take responsibility to organize such activities of non-formal education.

The vast majority (92%) of respondents holds a view that possibilities to attend activities in non-formal education is broad only in cities not in rural area; and only 6% see possibilities as equal. The result of Baltic institute of social sciences research resembles broad possibilities of interest and hobby related education is in the capital of Latvia- Riga (73% of 4012) (Mūzizglītības pieejamība un iespējas izglīties Latvijā, 2006).

Also the obstructive factor is insufficient information about possibilities to learn, 13 % of respondents mentioned it.

Table 2

The offer of adult non-formal education activities in Jelgava region municipalities

Spheres	Municipalities offer in Jelgava region (amount)													People attend	People wish to attend
	Eleja	Glūda	Jaunsvirlauka	Kalnietis	Lielplatone	Līvberze	Sesava	Svēte	Valgunde	Vilce	Zaļenieki	Vīrcava	Platone		
Gardening, landscape designing															50 (18%)
Handicrafts (knitting, weaving, beading, wadding, silk paitning etc.)		1	1			1	3				2			43 (41%)	65 (24%)
Floristic														8 (8%)	45 (16%)
Cultural education (dance art, music- choir, ensemble, folk music, visual art, theatre, photo art etc,	1	4	2	2	4	5	3	5	5	3	3	3	4	28 (27%)	18 (7%)
Clubs, groups of interests, societies			2	2			4						1		5 (2%)
Sport (sopr dances, chess, aerobics, orientation, tourism etc.			1				1		1						8 (3%)
Others (journalistic, art of style, languages, literature creation, line dancing belly dances etc.)		1	3	1			2		1		1	1	1	20 (19%)	13 (5%)
Cooking															25 (9%)
Healthy life style (bathing, ecocosmetics etc.)														5 (5%)	45 (16%)

Interest related non-formal education has old roots and strong traditions in Latvia as well as in cities or rural areas, for example different groups of applied art (knitting, weaving, wood technology etc.) and cultural education (dancing, choir, music, and theater etc.), courses and studios are still working. Frequently in those participate several generations of one family.

By research in Jelgava region 13 municipals and after results of questionnaire there is worked out survey table (Table 2) of offer and demand of non-formal education activities in Jelgava region. In table there is also included an information about respondents attended activities of non-formal education in last three years.

Broader offer of interest related non-formal education activities in Jelgava region is in the sphere of cultural education. Historically rural people often were active participants in such activities as choirs, nonprofessional theater, folk groups, dancing collectives, in such way they were involved in social life activities, educated and self-actualized. The vast majority of respondents (41%) attended seminars and courses of handicrafts (knitting, weaving, beading, sewing and wadding etc.); next sphere by 27% are- cultural education (dance art, music, visual art, theatre etc.); 19%-other (computer sciences, languages, art of style, journalistic etc.) in last three years, that witnesses about demand of non-formal education and peoples' active participation in it. Less activity was shown in spheres of floristic and healthy life style. As questionnaire was done in the seminars of the project ECOART, it means at least once each participant was involved in non-formal activities.

The result of Baltic institute of social sciences research in 2006 displays that most popular directions in non-formal education were computer sciences, languages and project management; still actual were courses for development of personality: psychology, music and visual arts, but in this research respondents were both- women and men, therefore results by the side of authors research are different. However in the research of Baltic institute of social sciences were accented that women involve in non-formal activities more (28%) than men (18%) (Mūžizglītības pieejamība un iespējas izglītoties Latvijā, 2006).

Gained results in this research indicates that women in rural in non-formal education are more interested in handicrafts 24%, gardening 18%, floristic 16%, healthy life style 16% and cooking 9%. Less interest is about cultural education 7%, sports, club and interest groups and other spheres. Respondents more are interested in knowledge which is practically usable. Separate spheres (gardening, cooking, healthy life style, and floristics) weren't offered by municipalities at all; however people are looking for possibilities they are interested in participating in projects, master classes, creative workshops, individual learning etc. The field of offer and demand in interest related education and needs of different social groups are not investigated enough from municipalities.

Conclusions

Life quality is multidimensional conception which is developed in the frames of various sciences. Between researchers of life quality there isn't a broad consensus about universal and comprehensive definition of life quality, however education is one of the important indicators of life quality. Research displays that rural women didn't mentioned education as priority of life quality.

Evaluation of theoretical and practical researches and analyzes of experience in project ECOART displays that people have wide interest in activities which develops practical skills non theoretical knowledge's. Practical action stimulates people in rural area to active involving, promotes to learn new knowledge and skills which would be used in everyday life or are interesting to participants. It raises self-esteem and gives opportunity to meet and communicate with people- thereby arise new actions to improve themselves and their lives as well as to participate in different social activities.

Participating of rural women in non-formal educational activities (handicrafts, visual and applied art, healthy life style, gardening and designing) initiates creativity, thereby to promote improvement and development of their life environment, as well as to encourage to create new products and to start private business. Thereby non-formal education can promote life quality of rural women and in perspective to stimulate economical development. 77% of respondents are ready to involve in non-formal education activities in the future. It means that rural women have an interest and necessity to improve themselves.

Undeniably there is observed another tendency- some rural people are with less social activity, lack of initiative, are inert and don't want to be get involve in non-formal education activities. Probably they don't understand or don't distinguish significance of education in development of their life quality.

Most important obstructions to participate in adult non-formal education in Jelgava region is lack of time, lack of money for education services, insufficient financial support from state, government and other organizations; availability of studies nearby the home or work place, unequal provision of interest related education in rural and cities and lack of information about learning possibilities.

For better motivation of rural people to act in non-formal education there have to provide offer appropriate to demand, it characterizes with short time of learning, multiplicity, minimum finances and different forms of action. One of the possibilities to obtain all of it in at present is projects with EU financial support. In projects which are international or organized for various social groups, participants have a possibility to communicate and to exchange experience with others.

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