WEBINARS

AN EMERGING OPPORTUNITY IN ADULT EDUCATION

Research on the use of webinars in adult education in Southeast Europe

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Introduction

In the era of the "learning society", there is an ever-increasing demand for more effective methods and tools for learning. For some, the notion of the information society implies nothing less than "a fundamental transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based learning society, with a need for education throughout the life-course predicated upon the unstoppable juggernaut of contemporary patterns of economic and social change" (Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong, 2006, p. 5). To this end, new and emerging technologies are offering alternative ways of conceptualizing education and thus contribute to the revolution of how students engage, work and gain knowledge.

New technologies are purportedly ushering in a new age of lifelong learning, which can be centered on the individual learner while remaining cost-effective for the educational provider (Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong, 2006). In this way, technology is becoming a crucial part of the teaching-learning process as new technological advancements provide new horizons in the field of education. Furthermore, these new technological developments

are at the forefront of the processes of democratization of the education and act as moving forces of the globalization of the latest trends in education.

Not so long ago, geographic distances between learning institutions and learners often created barriers in the pursuit of quality education, especially among learners struggling to balance their pursuit of education with their professions. On the other hand, the changing of the social space we inhabit is considerably under the influence of the fast-paced technological development, and the traditional classroom setting is struggling to sustain the learners' attention and motivation. There is growing belief that "traditional education is faced with difficulties with regards to connecting learners to their coursework" (Jozwiak, 2014).

Today, digital technologies are available to learners from all parts of the world. These new technologies "have the potential to fundamentally transform how and what people learn throughout their lives" (Kidd & Keengwe, 2010, p. xvi).The introduction of digital technologies in universities and other educational programs has changed the means and the levels of access to education, so that they could be reached by motivated learners in distant and diverse locations. This trend is becoming even more evident in the field of adult education. Adult learners are faced with an even greater challenges as digital technology becomes more ubiquitous since "adult teaching and learning in the digital age is moving away from the passive acquiring of factual information towards a more active application of knowledge" (Kidd & Keengwe, 2010, p. xvi). Furthermore, current trends in pedagogy put a strong emphasis on interaction between educators and students and among students themselves, as a fundamental contributor to quality education. To this end, "designing a space that allows for effective learning and teaching constitutes more than just assigning a physical space, but, rather identifying one that eases the process of exchange between learners and teachers" (Jozwiak, 2014) .

The computer has changed the essence and perspective on adult learning[1]. In addition, by the Internet, the term online learning offers new orientation for teachers and learners. While it retains many of the characteristics of the earlier forms of learning, it offers more

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[1] Adult learning refers to the range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities – both general and vocational – undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.

sophisticated media tools that act as integral components to the learning process (Ely, 2003).

These advancements in the digital era have enriched the learning process and facilitated higher levels of learner interactions thus making the educational process more meaningful and overcoming the insufficiencies of rote learning.

The new technological developments are at the forefront of the processes of democratization of the education and act as moving forces of the globalization of the latest trends in education.

Educators today are encouraged to move beyond the conventional teacher-centered approach towards a student-centered learning approach with technology-backed learning environment, which can better motivate students to participate and interact with others in the learning process (Leow & Neo, 2014).

The contribution of these developments can be observed in any form of education, be it formal, non-formal or informal education. Motivated individuals today can enroll in courses taught by highly qualified experts from the most prominent educational institutions all around the globe for small or no cost at all. In this sense, webinars represent one of the latest technological developments aimed at democratizing education and knowledge. This is a highly interactive form of education, where learners can take part in lectures, receive course materials, and have an active part in the educational process through various tools.

The primary focus of this study are webinars, one of the latest tools for computer-mediated communication in education. The following chapters will present various aspects of computer-mediated communication in education, and more precisely webinar-based learning, the opportunities webinars provide in adult education, as well as an assessment of the presence of this type of education in the countries of Southeast Europe (SEE). In addition, the study will also strive to provide findings on the effectiveness of webinars as an educational tool.

The research on the use of webinars in the countries of Southeast Europe is a pioneering attempt in the region. The study provides an overview of the most prominent educational institutions in the SEE that include webinars as part of the educational process. It also includes analysis on the tradition in adult and distance education and current legislative framework on adult education in the countries of Southeast Europe (Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo). For the purposes of the research, the experiences of different webinar providers in formal and non-formal education were noted through interviews. Some of the insights from the inquiry are structured as case studies featuring organizations involved in the organization and delivering of webinars. The different case studies indicate that webinar-based education is an emerging field in adult education in the region, which nonetheless has started to receive wider acceptance in the recent years.

Part 1 of the study examines the application of computer-mediated communication tools, and more particularly webinars, in education. Part 2 is focused on the review of the adult learning and distance learning traditions and policies in the countries of Southeast Europe. Part 3 reveals the findings of the research on webinar providers in different countries of the region. Part 4 features case studies on webinar providers in adult education in SEE.

The Use of Computer-mediated Communication in Education

Recent decades were marked by the trend of diversification of learning contexts. Many learners use the Internet as a tool for promoting their interests, for immediate interaction with other learners and educators with similar interests, as well as a space for more effective knowledge building and development. The rapid expansion of online learning can be attributed to the interplay of several factors (Gao & Lehman, 2003):

1. Proliferation of low-cost personal computers and the availability of high speed Internet connections;

2. Availability of on-line systems that provide asynchronous and synchronous access to course content;

3. Rise in the number of students and educators interested in this form of education.

Scientific inquiries in different models of learning indicate that "the effectiveness of the traditional model of classroom education depends mostly on the teaching methods of the educator, and the provision of face-to-face contact and timely and immediate feedback" (Jozwiak, 2014). For this purpose, distance learning through computer-mediated communication tools is made more effective through the combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning[2].

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) systems have been an important support to online learning (Wang & Hsu, 2008, p. 175). On a more basic level, the different forms of CMC can be grouped in two categories: asynchronous and real-time communication. The categories are defined according to the type of interactivity that is supported. Namely,

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[2] Synchronous learning refers to a learning process in which groups of individuals are engaged in learning at the same time. Asynchronous learning, on the other hand, relates to forms of education, interaction, and learning which do not occur at the same place or at the same time.

asynchronous CMC takes place in delayed time, i.e. interaction is based on tools, which do not require the simultaneous presence of the educator and the learner – e-mails, blogs, bulletin boards etc. Synchronous CMC tools, which are mainly based on voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP), video conferencing and instant messaging, provide a more direct interaction between the participants in the educational process. The webinar (web seminar) tool is one of the most advanced synchronous CMC systems (Ibid.).

Asynchronous instruction occurs in delayed time, and does not require the simultaneous participation of students and teacher (Johnson, 2006). Since learning is not synchronized in time and space, it is thus independently experienced by both students and educators. Asynchronous instruction has roots in early forms of distance education, such as correspondence schools, where communication was truly asynchronous because of postal delays (Ibid.). Many asynchronous CMC tools have been widely adopted in higher education. These tools support online learning in a variety of ways: they facilitate flexibility in learning time; they provide students with more time to read, reflect, and respond to educational content; as well as facilitate structured discussion (Wang & Hsu, 2008). Concerning grading, Johnson indicates that:

> *"Asynchronous discussion facilitates student learning and higher-level thinking skills, perhaps due to the cognitive processing required in writing, time to reflect upon posted messages and consider written responses, and the public and permanent nature of online postings. Structured and mandated asynchronous discussion is associated with better cognitive outcomes than non-structured and optional discussion. Student characteristics influence the nature of asynchronous online interaction. Implementation and evaluation of structured asynchronous discussion in a range of learning contexts, for various subject matter and for diverse learners is warranted."*
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> **(Johnson, 2006, p. 51)**

However, relevant research on the effectiveness of on-line learning indicate the need for the development of learning tools that facilitate more synchronous interaction. Although asynchronous CMC tools have been the cornerstone of on-line learning, these tools can be very limiting in certain situations when immediate feedback is essential (Gao & Lehman, 2003).

In view of this, the rapid expansion and prevalence of Broadband Internet access has enabled educators and trainers to adopt more technologies to support synchronous online learning (Wang & Hsu, 2008). Synchronous instruction requires simultaneous real-time participation from both the educator and the students.
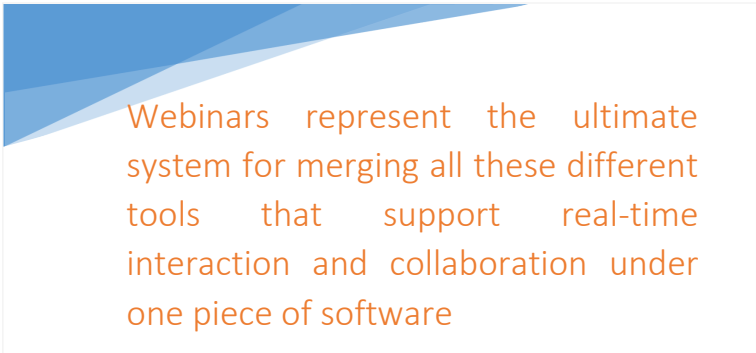
The history of synchronous education goes back to the 1940s, and the use of close-circuit television on university campuses. By the 1980s, interactive television and video-conferencing were already available to connect remote classrooms, and allow students to follow courses held elsewhere, to discuss and pose questions. Despite the fact that synchronous discussions are more difficult to implement than asynchronous discussions, their advantage lies in providing a greater sense of presence and facilitating spontaneity between the participants in the educational process (Johnson, 2006).

The key asset of synchronized CMC tools is the provision of more immediate interaction and feedback (Gao & Lehman, 2003) and the involvement of greater social presence (Stodel, Thompson & Mac Donald as cited in Wang & Hui-Yin, 2008) among learners. A less recent research by Branon and Essex (2001) on the aspects of involvement of educators using both synchronous and asynchronous CMC tools indicated that instructors used synchronized tools mainly to hold virtual office hours, to facilitate team decision-making, to engage in community building and to deal with technical issues; instructors used asynchronous learning tools to facilitate in-depth and ongoing discussion. According to the research results, online discussion was reportedly useful for "encouraging in-depth, more thoughtful discussion; communicating with temporarily diverse students; holding ongoing discussions where archiving is required; and allowing all students to respond to a topic" (Branon & Essex, 2001, p. 36).

Another survey on student preferences conducted by Dede and Kramer (as cited in Johnson, 2006, p. 4) concluded that although asynchronous discussion provided "richer, more inclusive types of interchange", it required more time and provided less social interaction for the participants compared to synchronous chat. However, this research does cover the latest developments in synchronous CMC tools, such as webinars and massive open online courses (MOOCs).

Geneviève Johnson makes a thorough review of the scientific literature regarding asynchronous and synchronous forms of CMC and concludes that "students in synchronous discussion produce a greater volume of communication than students in asynchronous discussion, but asynchronous discussion is equal to or better than synchronous discussion in terms of student satisfaction of course requirements" (Johnson, 2006, p. 51).

However, based on the review of the research in the field, it is recommended combining synchronous and asynchronous online discussion, which, as research results indicate, provides higher satisfaction and

Webinars represent the ultimate system for merging all these different tools that support real-time interaction and collaboration under one piece of software

mastery of course requirements among learners, than the implementation of either mode in isolation (Ibid.). According to a research conducted by Ohlund, Yu, Jannssch-Pennel and Digangi (2000) individuals who used both synchronous and asynchronous forms of online discussion were the most likely to complete the required course activities. Apparently, combined synchronous and asynchronous online discussion maximized personal engagement of the participants in the learning process (Johnson, 2006, p. 50).

The extensive research insights on the specific outcomes in the use of synchronous and asynchronous CMC tools in education indicate that there is growing evidence that CMC tools represent a fertile ground for the development of collaborative learning methods, which tend to encourage construction of knowledge, 'deeper' understanding and greater skill development by their ability to engage students dynamically in the learning process and stimulate them to move beyond the role of mere spectators in the classroom. Collaborative learning, thus, "has an important social dimension as it gives rise to other positive outcomes which are not usually considered academic, such as self-assurance and personal insight" (Marjanovic, 1999, p. 129).

Collaborative learning depends mostly on the type and levels of interaction achieved between the participants in the educational process. To this end, interaction in the

educational process is always two-fold. Gao and Lehman (2003) distinguish three types of interaction involved in the process of learning:

a) interaction with content;

b) interaction with the instructor;

c) interaction with other students.

Most asynchronous and synchronous CMC tools are aimed at supporting learning, rather than substituting traditional forms of education. However, although methodologies common to all teaching practice are allowed to function using new technologies, the optimal effects on learning can be achieved through developing new processes and teaching styles specific to the new technologies (Zieliński, et al., 2013).

Taking in regard the possibilities of synchronous CMC tools (real-time audio and video communication, polling tools, messaging, file/application sharing) webinars represent the ultimate system for merging all these different tools that support real-time interaction and collaboration under one piece of software.

Webinars are powerful software-based tools that facilitate the educational process through the possibility to transmit video, audio and images, sharing applications and use of whiteboard with the objective to exchange information in multiple formats. They create additional opportunities for educators and learners to experience various levels of on-line interaction, which are essentially different from other forms of communication, such as discussion-board postings and e-mails.

Consequently, webinars represent an educational tool that makes optimal use of both synchronous and asynchronous forms of interaction and learning:

1. They are conducted in real-time using audio-visual contact between the participants;
2. Lecturers are able to give presentations in real-time and be involved in every stage of the learning process;
3. Learners can establish immediate interaction with the educator and their peers, provide feedback on their progress through the use of various tools (ex. polling

4. Most webinars provide the possibility of maintaining asynchronous interaction with the lecturer (additional consultation through e-mails);

5. Provision of course materials is possible, providing learners with flexibility in the learning process;

6. Webinars can be recorded and made available online for participants who were not able to attend.

Webinars are the result of the decades-long effort to ensure synchronized and enhanced communication, and increase in the number and quality of tools for distance learning. The first attempts to overcome the highly impersonal and alienating method of studying through correspondence letters was through the introduction of audio or video tapes, telephone contact between student and instructor, and organizing students in groups and conducting discussions through telelecture equipment (Davie, 1988). Distance learning has been evolving through different formats, starting from correspondence courses, audio courses, one-way video, two-way video, to the World Wide Web (Gao & Lehman, 2003, p. 368).
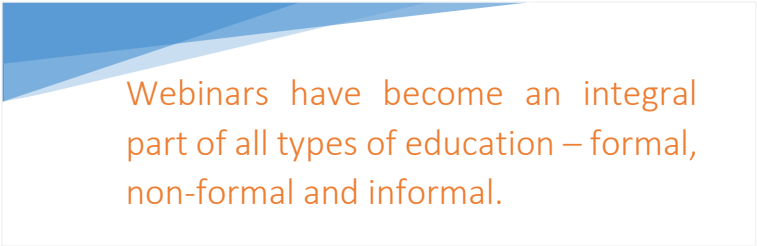
The first video conferencing system, PicturePhone, was implemented by AT&T in the 1960s (Grant & Cheon, 2007). Real-time text chat facilities, such as IRC appeared in the late 1980s. Web-based chat and instant messaging appeared in the mid-1990s. The first conferencing tool appeared in the late 1990s by Starlight Networks (Zieliński, et al., 2013). All these technological innovations provided a solid base for the introduction of a tool that makes optimal use of the various interactional advantages provided by its predecessors – the webinar.

Today, webinars have become an integral part of all types of education – formal, non-formal and informal. Furthermore, the success of delivering distance education through integrative CMC tools has resulted in the introduction of attempts to incite high quality education and learning on a mass scale with the creation of massive open online courses (MOOCs). However, it is necessary to emphasize that the terminological differences are not related to crucial differences of the overall design of the tools, and are generally

related to less important features in their use, while the approach and methods remain essentially the same.

Both webinars and MOOCs incite the same types of synchronous and asynchronous modes of interaction and collaboration in the learning process; the key difference lies in the type of use: MOOCs are generally related to higher education and the transfer of "traditional" university courses on-line; they are also organized in a series of on-line classes, and supported by multiple asynchronous CMC tools. Webinars, however, have much wider applicability, from a web-conferencing tool, to branding of companies, training of employees, as well as in institutions involved in formal or non-formal education. Although follow-up webinars are not uncommon, webinars are not necessarily tied to the educational content exclusive for MOOCs, and therefore are commonly designed as a single event, with the possibility to continue the learning process via asynchronous CMC tools.

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Webinars: A General Overview

A webinar is a tool that provides computer-mediated communication (Melnikova & Zaščerinska, 2015). Throughout the years, webinars have evolved from basic videoconferencing software to a powerful educational tool, which can be accessed from any portable device through the Internet. Due to their beneficial effects on the lowering of costs for travelling and saving travel time, webinars have been widely adopted by companies, which utilize them for a wide variety of purposes: from on-line meetings, engaging with customers and selling, to training of employees.

Webinars today are also used for promotional purposes, i.e. promotion of a product to the customers, with the possibility of showing or testing the product during the event; introducing a brand, building up of business contacts and staying ahead of competition, which can help an industry grow and gain global presence. Webinars are also widely used for training and learning purposes – they present a time-efficient and cost-saving tool that requires only a personal computer and Internet connection (Skrivanko, 2015).

The first public access web-conferencing became available in 1996 with NetMeeting (Skrivanko, 2015). This software provided users with the possibility to communicate with international clients in real-time, offering at the same time data-conferencing capabilities and multiuser application sharing.

The first software designed specifically for webinars was PlaceWare, which was introduced the same year (Skrivanko, 2015). The software allowed one or more users to

give a presentation that could be attended by hundreds or even thousands of participants all around the world at the same time.

While webinars are widely used in corporations, due to the lowering costs for travel expenses and travel time, they are a novelty in online learning and need more thorough approach in research of webinar-related pedagogies. Despite the long use of various CMC tools in educational purposes, the use of webinars in their present form is still considered to be in its beginnings. Nonetheless, the proven benefits of this type of learning have facilitated a rapid expansion of their use in educational institutions around the globe. Many educational providers have incorporated webinars as a supplemental method to the "traditional" educational process.

As the use of technology in education finds new ways of implementation, webinars have been considered as major contributors to the trend of "blended learning", which is primarily concerned with the use of "new and innovative technologies in conjunction with more traditional teaching methods practiced in the conference room to deliver their training" (Zieliński, et al., 2013, p. 7). Target audiences do not need to be geographically defined: webinar audiences are composed of people from different time zones and geographic location connected through the Internet. In the sphere of adult learning, webinars are relatively new educational tools, and there are specific challenges concerning their effective integration in the educational process.

The term "webinar" is a contraction of the terms "web" and "seminar". The term" was coined in 1998 by Eric R. Kolb, who created the term to describe the online meeting service developed by his company. The development of webinars has evolved through various stages, and the attempts to make a precise distinction between webinars and other forms of CMC, such as webcasts, MOOCs, or web-conferencing are very fluid, due to the overlapping of functions and possibilities all of these tools offer. The main differences, again, are related to the areas or purposes of use, regardless of their crucial features, which are essentially very similar. Furthermore, the concept of webinar can be general in itself; its definition aims at summarizing all the features and possibilities this CMC tool provides, however, it does not (and cannot) refer to the numerous possibilities

for the use of this technology, which educational providers utilize and adapt in various ways to suit their needs.

Nevertheless, the attempt to make a basic distinction between webinars and webcasts reveals the more collaborative nature of webinars as opposed to webcasts. Webinars present a powerful tool that incorporates visual and audio elements combined with interaction between multiple participants. Webinars are interactive seminars conducted live over the Internet, following a pre-set agenda. With regards to the terminological confusion between webinars and video conferencing, the main differences between the two tools lie in the structure of the interaction, which is more a matter of convention than a technological barrier – video conferencing is most commonly used for conducting meetings where all attendees are given the chance to speak and provide visual presentations, while webinars usually consist of one head presenter delivering a lecture to the audience/participants. Webinars also include interaction in the form of questions, but this is most commonly set in a specific time-point of the session, usually at the end, when the main speaker has already delivered the presentation. The possibility to engage in interaction through polling and question and answer sessions provides the opportunity to achieve a higher quality participation between the audience and the presenter.

Webinars in Education

The organization and design of a webinar depends on the preferences, needs and priorities of the webinar provider and the nature of the content to be presented during the webinar. However, there are certain features that are common to most webinars (Zieliński, et al., 2013, p. 7):

- On-line environment;
- Use of software;
    - o Webinar providers require specific software;
    - o Participants must have Internet access;
- Live event (scheduled at a precise time);
- Participation by invitation only;

- Limited duration of 1-2 hours presentation of content (using audio, video, sharing screen, ppt presentations, etc.);

- Interaction with participants (audio, chat, quizzes, surveys, whiteboard, "hands up" button, etc.);

- Partial anonymity of participants;

- Giving authorizations: the person running the webinar may give different authorizations to the participants (e.g. make them presenters). It gives the participants more options (e.g. screen sharing, file sharing, etc.).

In the majority of cases, current conferencing technologies have incorporated the use of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), which facilitates completely web-based communication. In some instances, however, the

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presenter may speak over a standard telephone line, while the audience is able to participate/respond over their own telephones. The approaches in the design and organization of webinars depend on the needs and preferences of the different webinar providers; for instance, the webinar provider can opt for hidden or anonymous participation in the webinars session, thus making participants unaware of other learners in the same activity (Zieliński, et al., 2013). This is not only a technical decision, and can have different implications on the process of learning: from stimulating shy participants to take part in the class, to cases of misuse of anonymity and obstruction of the lecture or discussion.

Webinars are mostly delivered live, but they can be recorded and delivered "on demand", providing flexibility to the learner as an asynchronous CMC tool. In some cases, recorded webinars do not require download, like a video podcast, and instead they are made available through a progressive video stream onto the user's computer, so that there would be no need for hard drive space or dealing with the problem of leftover media files (Zieliński, et al., 2013).

The possibility of simultaneously recording webinars or uploading new webinars as supplemental course materials, which students can progress at their own pace, has contributed to the importance of webinars as an invaluable part of the learning process, as opposed to the traditional classroom, where students can spend considerable time scribbling notes, which can result in the loss of focus and understanding of the information that is being conveyed (Jozwiak, 2014).

What distinguishes a good webinar is the successful combination of the following elements: the possibility to provide, to receive and to discuss information. The learners have more engaging, proactive role in webinars, compared to more traditional means of distance learning, due to the possibility to submit information to the discussion (text, graphic or video) (Zieliński, et al., 2013). Today, webinars are available on wide range of platforms, and learners can take part in a webinar using any sort of portable technology: personal computers, laptops, tables and smartphones.

The truly numerous possibilities for the use of webinars in educational purposes are also evident when compared to one particular problem of traditional education – management

of discrepancies in learning performance among students. Educators today can design and create "custom made" webinars aimed at assisting students who have specific needs or encounter specific learning difficulties, and thus to help them keep up with the general course work (Jozwiak, 2014). These webinars can be focused on some aspects of the course, which has been proven to pose difficulties to learners, or to provide classes for advanced students i.e. webinars which address and seek to develop their specific interests in a field.

Furthermore, webinars can be organized to make optimal use of the available time and space for both teachers and students. Geographical and time differences can be effectively overcome to provide a space for quality learning, creating new educational horizons for individuals in remote parts of the world, faced with barriers of different sorts in the pursuit of quality education. On the other hand, visiting lecturers can deliver presentations without the need of their physical presence, which significantly reduces the costs for travelling and time spent travelling. Having this in mind, webinars represent one of the most cost effective CMC tools.

Many studies indicate the following advantages of webinars as learning tools (Wang & Hsu, 2008, p. 177):

1) affordability – they reduce the costs of physical participation, and students can participate with only a computer and a broadband network. Cost reduction usually refers to the following aspects:

   a. time commitment required by the trainees;
   b. travel and accommodation;
   c. training materials;
   d. evaluation of training;
   e. post-training materials preparation.

2) synchronous communication – webinars provide immediate communication and feedback between educators and learners;

3) real-time multimedia demonstrations – educators can deliver their presentations and share applications with multiple participants in real-time;

4) multi-level interaction – educators can give lectures and interact with the audience, facilitating group collaboration in real-time;

5) participants can archive seminar content for personal review or for people that missed the real-time session.

The on-demand ability to share and distribute recorded webinars via a portal or a database plays a vital role in the learning process. This content is fully available to the learners, who can stream it unlimited amount of times (Zieliński, et al., 2013). The point at which webinars surpass other tools for learning is the provision of full interactive communication in which participants are able to fully see and hear each other, and to exchange data. Taking this in consideration, there are three formats in webinar delivery (Wang & Hsu, 2008):

1) presenter vs. multiple participants from one site;

2) presenter vs. multiple participants from multiple sites;

3) multiple participants from one site vs. multiple participants from one or multiple sites.

For the purpose of attracting a wider span of participants, webinar software is usually compatible with the majority of computers in use. To view a webinar, the bare minimum is a personal computer with a broadband internet connection and current software updates of Java and Flash (Zieliński, et al., 2013). This allows the learner a minimal level of interaction. As the demands for interaction increase, the webinar becomes a more engaging experience for the learner. For example, the addition of simple accessories, like headphones or a microphone to the computer setup, provides the learner with a significantly fuller learning experience.

Many pieces of webinar software are web-based applications that do not require installation. Apart from the lack of installation, a further benefit is that the majority of webinar software works across multiple platforms and operating systems. Some software application also feature mobile versions (Zieliński, et al., 2013). These are some examples of webinar software:

- Elluminate
- Adobe Connect 8
- ClickWebinar
- GoToMeeting/GoToWebinar
- AnyMeeting
- BigBlueButton
- DimDim
- FastViewer conferred
- Fuze Meeting
- Spreed

- Mikogo
- TeamViewer 7
- Saba Webinar
- RHUB GoMeetNow 4.3
- ooVoo

The structure of webinars can vary significantly, and different webinar features, such as the plurality and levels of interaction, are dependent largely on the number of participants at the live webinar session. Consequently, we can distinguish between several types of webinars, according to the number of participants:

1. Webinars for up to 6 participants: These types of webinars provide high levels of interactivity, since the low number of participants allows dialogues between the participants and the educator, and in some cases (when the educator considers it desirable) interaction between the participants as well. The structure and the content of the webinar are much more flexible in this situation, and can be adapted to the special need or prior knowledge and specific interests of the participants.

2. Webinars for 7-20 participants: The structure and the content of this type of webinars is more rigid, although it allows a moderate degree of flexibility. Interactivity is also limited to a certain amount of audio/video responses (the educator can select who will be allowed to talk). There are special polling tools that can be used to boost feedback form the participants and to track the learning progress of the trainees. Polls, voting and "raising hands" tools greatly facilitate interactivity for these types of webinars.

3. Webinars for over 20 participants: The structure of the lecture is not flexible. Given the size of the audience, most of the participants in this type of webinar are likely to be anonymous. Thus, there is a strong assumption that they will not be able to follow the learning process as a group. The level of interactivity in this type of webinar depends mostly on the size of the webinar team. If the lecturer is on his/her own, only polls can be used to get feedback from the participants. If there is other personnel (moderator/other trainer) chat can be used, regarding that is pre-sorted

for the trainer (Zieliński, et al., 2013, p. 26). The specific possibilities also depend on the technology (webinar platform) which is used.
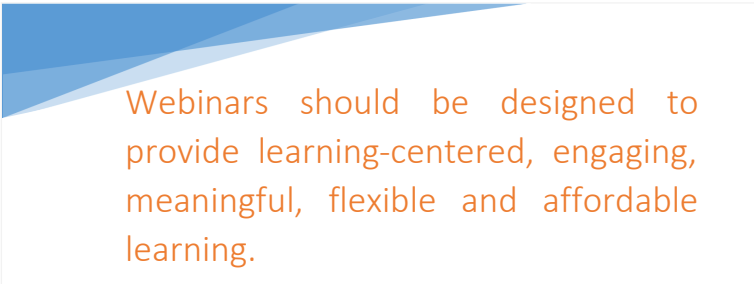
What Makes a Good Webinar?

Webinars should be designed to provide learning-centered, engaging, meaningful, flexible and affordable learning. However, the effectiveness of the webinar learning experience depends on a number of factors. Possible challenges for example include: lack of software proficiency of the lecturer and the participants; technical

problems/malfunctions; learners' (lack of) motivation; unstructured lecture; lack of interaction between the lecturer and the learners, leading to lack of feedback from the learners, as well as discrepancies in the learners' prior knowledge on the topic of the webinar. If these factors are not taken into account, and the possible risks are not properly analyzed and managed, they could result in an ineffective webinar.

Lecturers vary in teaching styles, strategies and experience. Delivering a webinar requires specific preparation in order to avoid experiencing a decline in the quality of the webinar presentation.

Webinars should be designed to provide learning-centered, engaging, meaningful, flexible and affordable learning.

The standard approach in the design of the presentation includes planning its objectives and content, which must be adjusted to the technological possibilities of the webinar platform, the webinar format and duration, as well as the type and size of the learner audience. To this end, creating a tightly scripted experience is an important step to presenting with confidence and appearing professional, but also providing sufficient time for interaction with learners and general discussion. The lecturer is supposed to be familiarized with the webinar software and its main tools prior to the design of the lecture. In this way, he/she can adapt the lecture to the software tools that are available. For educators that make regular use of webinars (or design courses that are strictly webinar-delivered), it is of crucial importance that they are well acquainted with the webinar platform tools. However, webinar presenters are often experts that give online presentations relatively infrequently. Due to this, it is recommended that the presenter is assisted by a moderator, a person responsible for the management of the technical aspects of the webinar lecture.

A common mistake is to construct the webinar lecture in the same fashion as traditional, face-to-face seminars. In the latter case, the mere presence of the presenter serves as the initial attention grabber. In the case of webinars, presenters must work on alternative ways of keeping the audience's attention, through the choice of words, the tone, etc. The presenter needs to have in mind that a key aspect of a successful webinar is keeping the

audience engaged, which can be facilitated through several short question-and-answer periods throughout the webinar session. Complementing the lecture with examples and engaging stories is another means to connect the participants and to provide a more effective learning in webinars.

The pace can also present another challenge for webinar presenters. If the presenter is focused on one presentation slide for a prolonged period, it poses the risk of waning attention on behalf of the audience. A presentation with more slides and less information per slide keeps the participants more focused. Some experts recommend using twice as many slides for online presentation than for a face-to-face presentation.

Technical problems/malfunctions can occur at any point of the webinar session, and regardless of their scope (one, several or all of the participants in the webinar session) they can obstruct the delivering of the lecture. This could be prevented by providing information to the learners of the different aspects of the software use prior to the webinar session, as well as having an experienced staff member that would work on these issues. The lecturer can also provide online access to the presentation materials after the webinar session, for learners that were prevented from participating.

One of the most important factors that influence the effectiveness of learning through webinars is the degree of interaction. It is unlikely that one-way communication could provide an effective learning experience. During the webinar session, interaction between the participants and the lecturer can be ensured through comments and question and answer segments. The use of the polling tool can have many beneficial effects on the overall engagement of the participants: the lecturer can use polling questions to motivate the audience to get involved in the lecture; to gain insight on the audience's knowledge of the subject matter; to draw the audience's attention to an interesting information/fact; to gain insight on the audience's particular interests related to the topic. Furthermore, the presenter can pose questions to the audience, which can serve as a form of immediate reinforcement of learning. Questions that require the audience to engage in any way can contribute to better interaction and a more rewarding learning experience.

The optimal way to assess the learning effects of the webinar is to conduct a quick test prior to the webinar and another one at the end, to compare the differences in the results.

The pre-test is a valuable asset to the educator, since it provides him/her with insight on the specific state of knowledge of the audience. Large gaps in the level of prior knowledge of the participants could lead to lack of motivation and attention among the more knowledgeable, and confusion and lagging behind among the participants with less prior knowledge on the topic.

During the webinar, educators can use polling tools to get an overview of the overall learning progress of the audience. These short tests could help the lecturer keep the audience on track and maintain their attention and concentration during the webinar session. The aforementioned practices are beneficial to the learners as well, providing them with the possibility of reflecting on their newly gained knowledge. If the participation in the webinar is rewarded with a certificate of participation, the knowledge assessment can be structured in the form of a questionnaire, with open questions, closed questions and multiple-choice-questions (Zieliński, et al., 2013).

After the webinar session, educators have additional opportunities to interact with the webinar participants – by sending an evaluation request to the attendees; and by sending follow-up materials (and/or a link of the recorded webinar).

Although there is always lack of enthusiasm for completing evaluation forms, the best response can be expected when evaluation forms are sent immediately after the end of the webinar session and when the participants have been previously informed of the evaluation process. The participants would also feel more encouraged if they see that the evaluation form is not too long and completing it would not take much of their time. Overloading the evaluation with ambiguous and lengthy questions could lead the respondents to answer ignore the questions and give little thought to the evaluation process. Additionally, most evaluations measure the learner's reaction to the webinar, and educators should make sure that the questions measure the aspects that can be improved.

The evaluation of the lecture and the learning process can be conducted through the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. There are several types of evaluation (Zieliński, et al., 2013, p. 47):

- Formative evaluation: discussion or an interview – can be used at any point of the webinar session in order to get feedback from the audience on the course. It can be either formal or informal;

- Summative evaluation: end-of-session interviews or surveys;

- Impact evaluation: after the session has finished (interviews or survey with the participants).

The recording of the webinar session is not only beneficial to the learners, but it also provides solid ground for webinar ex-post evaluation.

Another important factor for the attainment of optimal effectiveness of the webinar training is the provision of post-webinar materials. This is an important part of the learning experience since it provides learners with the opportunity to revisit the topics, the findings, and the materials used and/or suggested by the lecturer. A quality post-webinar package should include (Zieliński, et al., 2013, p. 51):

- The presentation in PDF format;

- Answers to questions which the trainer was not able to answer during the webinar session;

- Other attachments, reports, research documents – if the trainer mentioned them during the webinar;

- Links to other online sources used in the webinar.

Recording a webinar allows for it to be replayed and experienced by a variety of people turning a live seminar into an educational resource. Since this feature of webinars is not present with other traditional trainings, it is worth informing the participants about it.

Webinar Effectiveness

Most researches on webinars are focused on the performance of the different tools for videoconferencing and chat, while only a small number are devoted to investigating how these CMC tools and on-line interaction facilitate learning. The majority of these studies are focused on student experiences of learning and interaction through webinars, with little or no insight on the lecturers' input. Most commonly, the results indicate that students' satisfaction with webinars varies, but these variations are mostly due to the relevance of the webinars' contents rather than the properties of the learning approach.

One research, conducted by Wang and Hsu (2008) was focused on the investigation of pedagogical issues underlying the use of the webinar tool for educational purposes. This qualitative research was conducted in a graduate-level course at an instructional-technology program at a university in the USA. The participants were experienced trainers; nonetheless, they had little or no previous experience with webinar-delivered lectures. In order to reveal how participant understanding is linked to the computer-assisted learning system, the researchers opted for the "teach-back" method, with participants being put in different roles: one as students, and another as lecturers. The first part of the research consisted of six webinar sessions, three of which were focused on conceptual knowledge, and three were devoted to procedural knowledge.

The findings of the research indicated that optimal effectiveness was attained in sessions focused on conceptual knowledge; namely, participants made use of the webinar software tools and there was more substantial interaction between the participants; the learners successfully completed group tasks. Their ratings, as well as researchers' observation notes, and the presenters' self-reflection revealed that "topics focusing on conceptual knowledge or basic procedural skills were more effective than those focusing on hands-on skills" (Wang & Hsu, 2008, p. 182).

The interaction in sessions focused on procedural knowledge revolved mostly around confirmation types of questions, since the instructors were constantly pressured to ensure that all the learners are following and successfully completing the hands-on tasks.

The review of the data on these sessions revealed that there were multiple requests for repeating procedures, while other types of interaction rarely occurred. The respondents also showed much lower results on the tests of procedural knowledge and skills acquired in the sessions.

The research results on the effects of webinar-based learning imposed the following recommendations (Wang & Hsu, 2008):

- Instructors should try to avoid placing heavy cognitive loads on learners (involving hands-on skills and complicated activities), especially when the number of participants exceeds the limit to which the instructor can pay attention to each individual. If the topics of the webinar involve some type of procedural knowledge, the instructor should reduce the cognitive load of the participants (as well as the total number of participants) during the webinar session;

- In order to avoid technical problems, the webinar environment should be tested and participants should be provided with downloadable materials in advance. Backup plan, such as uploading the learning materials on a courseware management system is advisable;

- The level of technology skills should be similar among participants, in order to save time on individual help from the instructor.

Adult Education, Distance Education, and e-Learning in Southeast Europe

The dissemination of technological developments in education has been progressing on a global scale. However, the pace and speed of the introduction of CMC tools in education are not uniform in all parts of the world, nor are all types of education equally prepared to open up to the possibilities provided by the new technologies.

Since one of the main driving forces behind the contemporary learning society is information technology, nearly all forms of education are facing the social pressure to change and to find ways to respond better to the needs of the learners. Distance education, which throughout the decades has often been discredited and considered as second-rate, has gained immense popularity in the recent decades, owing this re-actualization mostly to the technological breakthroughs in the sphere of education. The concept of the "learning society" is inevitably intricate to the idea of lifelong learning, i.e. continuous education throughout the individual's lifetime. Thus, the concept of learning

society puts a strong emphasis on adult learning and distance learning, which are to be facilitated and enriched through the use of different forms of e-learning.

Concerning the concepts of adult education and distance education, it is necessary to emphasize an inextricable link – distance education, since its beginnings and throughout most of its history was designed to provide alternative educational prospects to adults. Consequently, there is a significant overlap between the two concepts, although they should not be equalized.

The concept of lifelong learning referring to the continuous learning endeavors of individuals in order to foster the uninterrupted development of their knowledge and skills has been set as a particular educational priority in the countries of the EU, as well as in the countries, which aspire towards EU membership. In 2011, the Council of the European Union adopted the *Europe 2020* strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, which "acknowledges lifelong learning and skills development as key elements in response to the current economic crisis, to demographic ageing and to the broader economic and social strategy of the European Union" (Council resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, 2011, p. C 372/1). The resolution puts a strong emphasis on the development of adult learning, as an integrative part of the lifelong learning concept. The document also identifies adult learning as the weakest link concerning the development of national lifelong-learning systems. With regards to the potential benefits that increased adult participation in learning could bring about, the member states agreed that by 2020 at least 15% of 25 to 64 year-olds in the EU should have a recent learning experience (gained during the previous 4 weeks) (Eurydice Report, 2015; Education and Training - Monitor 2015, 2015). In 2015, adult participation in learning in EU member states, or the share of 25-64 year-olds who received formal or non-formal education or training in the four weeks preceding the collection of data was 10.7% (Education and Training - Monitor 2015, 2015). Aside from the official EU measures on the development of adult education and lifelong learning, countries that aspire to EU membership follow these recommendations.

It is necessary to note that lifelong learning and adult learning are being less restricted to formal education institutions, and relate to all forms formal, non-formal and informal

learning practices. Thus, various forms of distance education have started to gain prominence, especially with the development of ICT and the emergence of CMC tools for educational purposes. Moreover, there are increased efforts to provide mechanisms for validation of the wide range of learning practices.

The following chapter will make a brief introduction into the different forms of distance learning in a historical perspective, and provide an outline of the historical, cultural, and normative background in distance learning, e-learning, and adult education in several countries in Southeast Europe (Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, and Croatia). This overview is necessary in order to understand the intricate circumstances underlying the contemporary conditions in the sphere of distance learning and adult education in these countries. The countries under observation have been part of different economic, political and socio-cultural processes in the past and adhere to different priorities in the development of the education system, thus no uniform conclusion could encompass the wide range of solutions and processes in these educational spheres in all countries, although some of the problems are similar.

Historical Background of Adult and Distance Education

Initially popularized by the British Open University (although with far older history), distance education goes far back to 1870s, when James Stuart, the founder of extra-mural adult education, started experiments with correspondence education for women. The beginnings go further back in history, to the 1840s, with the pioneering efforts of Sir Isaac Pittman's Correspondence Colleges making use of the new rural free delivery of mail to deliver course materials to students. Within a few decades, correspondence courses were developed in Germany, Canada, Australia, the Soviet Union, Japan and United States (Matthews, 1999).

By the early 1900s, a department for correspondence teaching was established at the University of Chicago. Despite the rapid growth of this form of education (especially among adults), it has always been regarded as second best. However, distance education

held pace with technological developments, which steadily broadened possibilities for quality education, from correspondence education, to hard-copy teaching and learning materials, to electronic communication techniques in a period of around a half a century (Jarvis, 2004, p. 218).

The establishment of the Open University in United Kingdom in 1969 marked a new chapter in the development of distance education, through the provision of mixed-media approach to teaching and learning. The educational process was still realized via mail, only the printed course materials were supplemented with audio and video materials. The Open University traced the path for other institutions of this kind, contributing to the establishment of distance education on a massive scale, and effectively bringing it from the margins to the center stage of education (Matthews, 1999). The appearance of open universities coincided with the introduction of satellites in commercial use; PEACENET, which was founded in 1971, was used in the first in history application of satellites in distance education.

Distance education is, therefore, defined as "those forms of education in which organized learning opportunities are usually provided through a technical media to learners who normally study individually, and removed from the teacher in both time and space" (Jarvis, 2004, p. 219).

With the development of the World Wide Web, the idea of the teacher begins to be unnecessary; education and learning are now distinct phenomena (Jarvis, 2004, p. 219). Distance learning comes as an idea different from distance education: the latter is usually provided by educational institutions and is accredited by them, but the learners studying through the Internet can also receive educational accreditation.

Adult Education and Distance Education in Southeast Europe

Concerning the organization and regulation of adult education in Europe, it can be stated that it is diverse as the whole continent (Gartenschlaeger & Sirelius, 2009). Furthermore, the countries of Southeastern Europe have often been left aside from the general European and international debates on policy development in adult education and lifelong learning (Popovic, 2009, p. 13). Bulgaria and Greece, in this regard, have followed different tendencies in the development of adult education, and their membership in the EU postulates different positions related to the opportunities for development of this educational branch.

> The new and stile fragile democracies have been and remain faced with the difficult task to steadily develop a modern education system and to gradually overcome the gap between real learning needs of adults and the still very poor provision.

In the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the infrastructure for adult learning marked a steady decline in the past decades, and only recently adult learning has started to be perceived as a strategic lever for the overall economic and social progress. The new and stile fragile democracies have been and remain faced with the difficult task to steadily develop a modern education system and to gradually overcome the gap between real learning needs of adults and the still very poor provision. The main conclusion regarding the school systems in these countries is that they are strongly tradition-oriented, inflexible and still rather conservative, and are faced with new problems and challenges they are not able to cope with. Therefore, according to Popović (2009, p.14), "other mechanisms need to be developed to help adult education meet the demands of the new political and economic realities."

Due to the ongoing transition processes these countries embarked on after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, a series of reforms took place, spanning over multiple social spheres,

including education. These reforms act as both a hindering factor and a driving force for development. Concerning adult education, during the past decade a number of reforms have taken place in all countries of the region. However, many of these reforms lacked coherence, thorough implementation, and a comprehensive lifelong learning perspective.

However, in the recent years, the good practices arising primarily from various international projects and other initiatives have created a more enthusiastic environment for adult education endeavors. Governments and education ministries have gradually started to recognize the importance of adult learning and education. Most of the countries have been in a process of discussion and adoption of strategies for adult education and lifelong learning, or have already adopted one. Additionally, in many of these countries, the complex field of adult education received normative regulation for the first time.

A general assessment of educational systems in the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe implies the existence of an evident lack of political backing and understanding of the beneficial effects of non-formal adult education. Adult education in general and non-formal adult education in particular, are struggling to be recognized as equal to formal education. This furtherly aggravated by the problematic funding conditions (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015, p. 8).

There is also a lack of awareness of the existing offer of adult education programmes. An additional problem arises regarding the promotion of different fields of adult education, aside from vocational educational training.

It is important to note that in all of the countries of the region the focus has been put on vocational education and training, while the role of adult education and learning in achieving civil integration and social cohesion, and in promoting democratic values and institutions is less emphasized. Consequently, there is a much more developed institutional and legislative framework for vocational training – VET strategies are already in place in most countries, filling the gap for a more broad adult education which has yet to be established or is in a process of development (Popovic, 2009, pp. 14-15).

The countries which adopted strategic documents for adult learning and education are faced with the problem of ensuring their implementation and the transfer of strategies into action plans and then into practice. Nonetheless, some countries have made additional efforts to deal with this issue – in Macedonia, for, example, special bodies have been established for the development and coordination of adult education with funding (Popovic, 2009, p. 17). This is a practice that is gradually being accepted by other countries of the region.

On the other hand, employers have continuously showed little or no interest in upskilling their employees or, if aware of the importance of up-skilling, are not able or willing to fund it. Small and medium enterprises in the countries of Southeast Europe have proven to be the least likely to invest in up-skilling their workers. In most of the countries, expenditure on education and training is seen as a cost that is supposed to be covered by individuals, rather than as the company's investment for the future. A common problem of all developed countries as well as the transition Southeast European countries is the lack of

sufficient and stable financing for adult education and learning, measured in terms of defined goals and tasks in terms of real needs (Popovic, 2009, p. 18). Public funding is scarce, therefore many adult education providers are involved in multiple (non-educational) endeavors in order to ensure sustainability[3].

The examination of adult education policies and practices in the countries of Southeast Europe reveals numerous inconsistencies, due to the lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities in this education sphere, and makes it more difficult to conduct comprehensive and systematic overview of all types of providers, programmes, target groups and programme costs. Although the very nature of adult education and learning is inherently pluralistic, complex, and not completely structured, with areas overlapping with other parts of the educational systems, it could be claimed that "in the countries of Southeastern Europe adult education is more of a social phenomenon instead of a system" (Popovic, 2009, p. 20).

The main group of adult education providers in the countries of Southeast Europe are organizations/institutions within the public sector – ministries, national agencies, formal education institutions, workers'/peoples' universities, public VET centers etc.

With regards to institutions of formal education, schools are seldom seen as important providers of adult education and lifelong learning, which is mostly due to the traditional view of schools as institutions for children and youth. However, they still provide one important aspect of adult education, especially considering the low levels of education among adults in some SEE countries – programmes for acquisition of basic education and skills equivalent to primary education degree. Institutions of higher education are very slow in changing and moving from their traditional, somewhat elitist role; there is a lack of programmes designed to the needs of older students; the implementation of the Bologna Declaration was expected to change this trend. Some countries have since adopted stimulating measures for the raise of number of adults enrolled in higher education, although there is no evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures.

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[3] Depending on the sphere of operation of the organization, non-educational activities often include consultant services, accounting, translation services, etc.

With regards to the public institutions of adult education, Open Universities or Workers' and Peoples' Universities have had a historical and traditional role as providers of adult education in these countries. In the recent decades, their numbers mark a steady decrease in all of the countries in the region, but nonetheless they are still a supporting pillar of adult education systems throughout the region.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both local and international, have transformed into one of the most important pillars of the education system in general, adult education in particular in the countries of Southeastern Europe. Their important role lies mainly in the provision of non-formal education. Nonetheless, this type of education is not always properly accepted and is often held in low regard. Although NGOs cover almost all areas of education, there are few key areas that stand out: civic, peace and intercultural education, "soft" skills and interpersonal relations, strengthening and self-development programmes, political literacy, or education for minority and marginalized groups (Popovic, 2009).

Private education providers, whose number is increasing rapidly in the recent years, are making efforts to meet the growing demands for different types of education. Domestic and international foundations and humanitarian organizations are also involved in adult education, filling the gap created by the reduction of public adult education institutions.

It could be concluded that in the countries of the region, the traditional institutions related to adult education are gradually disappearing. Many Peoples' and Workers' universities still exist, but "their role and significance has greatly diminished" (Popovic, 2009, p. 22).
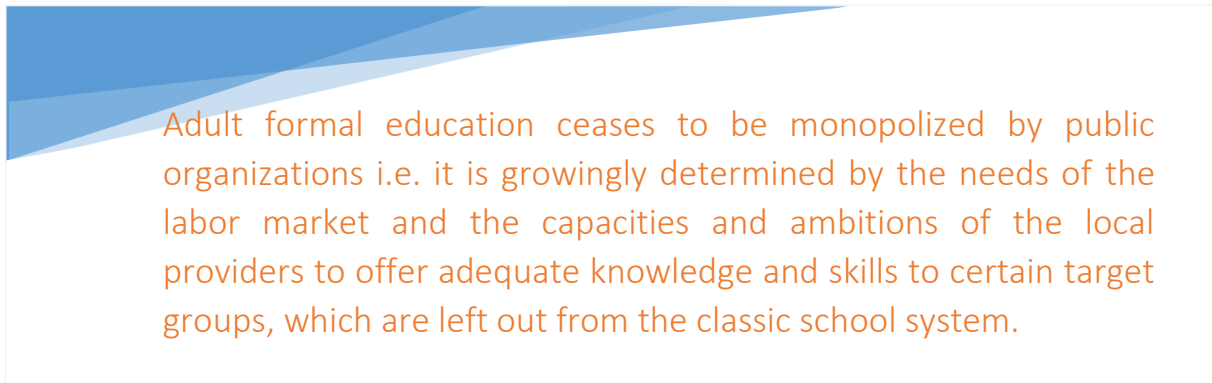
Many of the countries throughout the region do not conduct comprehensive national surveys of participation in adult learning. The available data is related to information about adults enrolled in adult education programmes in the system of formal education, while there is no comprehensive data from adult education providers regarding adults enrolled in non-formal education programmes.

With regards to the lack of data and lack of quality assurance mechanisms in many of these countries, the vast expansion of non-formal education providers poses the risk of the lack of quality criteria and standards. Furthermore, despite the lack of official statistics,

there is sufficient evidence for the claim that disadvantaged groups' participation in all kinds of adult education (formal, non-formal, informal) is continuously lower than the average.

Another important aspect related to the quality of adult education is that in most of the countries of the region, the question of the professional status of adult educators is not resolved. Most commonly, adult educators do not belong to the list of professions, with the exception of Serbia (Popovic, 2009).

> Adult formal education ceases to be monopolized by public organizations i.e. it is growingly determined by the needs of the labor market and the capacities and ambitions of the local providers to offer adequate knowledge and skills to certain target groups, which are left out from the classic school system.

According to the research on adult education providers in the countries of the former Yugoslavia conducted by DVV International in Serbia (Despotovic, 2016), public institutions are dominant in the sphere of adult education providers in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo; NGOs are prevalent among adult education providers in Serbia, while in Macedonia adult education providers are mainly private institutions. This is indicative of the conclusion that adult formal education ceases to be monopolized by public organizations i.e. it is growingly determined by the needs of the labor market and the capacities and ambitions of the local providers to offer adequate knowledge and skills to certain target groups, which are left out from the classic school system. The research results indicate that most of the providers are involved in multiple activities, and that education is not their primary or sole purpose of functioning. The changes in the adult education sphere are also evident through the example of NGOs, commonly involved in the realization of diverse types of programmes, including programmes of formal education, which was unimaginable until very recently.

Around half of the providers own/rent/use public offices to organize teaching. Over 50% of the adult education providers in the countries of the former Yugoslavia are small

organizations, with up to 5 permanent staff members, while over a quarter are large organizations with most than 20 employees. Around 80% of the providers in Macedonia, and 60% in Serbia are small organizations, while in Kosovo large organizations with over 20 employees are dominant (Despotovic, 2016).

The research data indicate that almost 70% of the organizations – adult education providers, conduct educational activities through classes, and around 50% of them through tribunes and roundtables. Exhibitions or similar extensive forms of education are used by a small number of providers. From the total number of 606 realized educational activities, classes account for around 41%, and tribunes over 32%. The scope of learners/registered students is relatively small, in view of the fact that almost half of adult education providers have on average 200 learners (Despotovic, 2016).

Speaking of intensive forms of education (workshops, seminars, courses, educational camps, summer schools, counseling and guidance, etc.), around 70% of the adult education providers organize courses, seminars, ad hoc groups and workshops. Independent learning, practical work and conferences are supported by less than 40% of the providers (Despotovic, 2016).

A dominant position in the organization of intensive forms of learning is reserved for different programs for the advancement of the professional competencies, programs that cover specific interests and literacy programs. This points to the conclusion that providers of adult education in the region target very different groups of learners, from people lacking elementary knowledge and literacy, to highly educated groups which are interested in improvement of their professional and business skills.

The research data on professional development of educators who implement extensive forms of education indicate a strong trend of professionalization in the sphere of adult education in the countries of the region, as only six percent of organizations reported that their educators did not attend any professional development programs in the area of adult education. Almost 37% of organizations reported that all their teachers have attended training programs in professional development (Despotovic, 2016, p. 59). Subsequently, despite the fact that many of the countries in the region lack the proper normative regulation on the professional status and competences of teachers in adult education,

there is sufficient competitive pressure that motivates adult education providers to demand high professional standards of their teaching staff.

This trend is also visible in the sphere of intensive forms of education, where over 65% of the organizations reported the highest levels of qualifications of their educators. Most of the educators (81.3%) involved in intensive forms of education had attended some programmes for professional development, which points to the fact that professional development is the most important factor for the success and quality of the services of these providers. Research results also indicate that almost 47% of the organizations invest in the professional development of the teachers, while only 9% do not allocate any funds for this purpose (Despotovic, 2016, p. 60).

Despotovic (2016, p.67) concludes that "transition is the main characteristics of adult education providers in the Western Balkan countries". They are increasingly less funded by public funds, and rely more on selling their services and programs, thus stimulating a multi-program orientation. The number of public institutions – adult education providers is decreasing. NGOs and private organizations are gradually becoming dominant providers of adult education in SEE. These organizations have a traditional focus on non-formal education, but there is a growing percentage among them focusing on programs of formal education as well. The following subchapters provide a brief overview of the key adult education policies in selected SEE countries:

The system of adult education in Macedonia was established in the period of Socialist Yugoslavia, therefore it bears similarities to other former members of the Yugoslav Federation. After gaining independence, the country entered a long period of transition and initiated a series of reforms in the sphere of education. Adult education had been relatively neglected. However, the reform initiatives in the light of the EU integration processes implied important regulatory interventions in the field of adult education.

Hence, in 2008, Macedonia adopted a Law on Vocational Education and Training as well as Law on Adult Education. The former provided benefits for the companies participating in student practical training, while employers were given the opportunity to propose changes to the existing VET syllabi and curricula. The Law on Adult Education provided, for the first time, a comprehensive regulation of the organization, structure, financing and

management of the adult education system. The Law also envisioned the formation of a Council for Adult Education and a Centre for Adult Education as key governmental bodies responsible for the monitoring and realization of adult education in the country (International Bureau of Education, 2011).

NGOs are primary adult education providers in the country, together with Worker's Universities as key institutions working in this sphere. However, in the recent years there is a growing number of private organizations that have started to penetrate the adult education market.

In 2015, Macedonia adopted a concept for primary education for adults, facilitating a more holistic approach in adult education. The measure allows adult education providers to offer legally recognized programmes (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015). However, the problem of lack of awareness among the citizens about the opportunities provided by different adult learning programmes, as well as the general mistrust towards this form of education persist.

Serbia initiated a series of reforms in 2002, beginning with the Strategy Directions for the Development of Adult Education. However, the political crisis at the time prevented the full implementation of the reforms. Adult education was left on the margins until 2006, when the Serbian government adopted two important strategic documents, the Strategy for the Development of Adult Education in the Republic of Serbia, and the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011). The focus of these documents was the educational policy on primary and secondary level education of adults – individuals that are outside the education system and have no formal primary or vocational education that could lead them to employment. The strategic document for vocational education and training was focused on the modernization of educational programmes and their harmonization with the changing socio-economic reality in the country (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011).

Primary schools in Serbia have the mandate to implement curricula for primary education of adults. In 2010, the number of these schools was very low –14 (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011, p. 14). All other organizations and individuals interested

in organizing and delivering programmes for adult education must meet the necessary standards and get an approval by the competent ministry, which suggests that in spite of the growing market of adult education providers there are established criteria for quality control.

NGOs have played a key part of the adult education system in Serbia in the past decades, actively promoting non-formal education and learning, which was long considered less valuable. One of their most important roles is related to the provision and active work in the field of adult education for the members of marginalized and disadvantaged groups (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011).

However, there is lack of official statistical data regarding adult education, making it difficult to present a clear picture of the situation in the country. Furthermore, several controversial educational reforms have sparked strong public reactions. One measure,

Providers of adult education in the region target very different groups of learners, from people lacking elementary knowledge and literacy, to highly educated groups that are interested in improvement of their professional and business skills

which was introduced with these reforms, had strong implications on adult learning and education. Namely, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development adopted amendments to the Law on Higher Education, which caused widespread protests. In the context of adult education, these amendments effectively implied the exclusion of adults from the higher education system, as part-time studying was not included in the amendments (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015, p. 39).

Higher education provision for adults is organized within the system of professional continuing education: courses offered by universities, mainly for their former students and graduates (Developing the Adult Learning Sector: Opening Higher Education to Adults, 2013, p. 354).

However, the number of adult learners in higher education continues to remain low, due to multiple reasons:

- No legal possibility of introducing part-time programmes at the university;
- No legal possibility of accomplishing flexible learning paths;
- No possibility of introducing and implementing short courses using the ECTS;
- Financial difficulties which cause very low personal investment in education, especially in higher education;
- Lack of financial support and lack of incentives for participation of adult students in higher education;
- Corruption in higher education;
- Universities are not used to meeting the needs of adult students –in terms of organisation, methods, specific guidance etc.
- Higher education institutions are not oriented enough to the market, to the needs of the economic sector and the world 'outside' (Developing the Adult Learning Sector: Opening Higher Education to Adults, 2013, p. 356).

The Report of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) from 2015, ascertained a lack of progress in the implementation of the Law on Adult Education, as well as the Strategy for the Development of Education. Additionally, no significant progress has been achieved concerning the programmes for basic skills for adults. Most of the burden is left to the NGOs, which rely heavily on donor support, with very little funding from the state.

There is a strong need to invest in the basic education of adults, in view of the fact that the level of functional literacy in Serbia is still below expectations. Furthermore, statistical data show that Serbia is the only country in Europe where the number of highly educated persons has decreased in the last 15 years (Developing the Adult Learning Sector: Opening Higher Education to Adults, 2013, p. 354).

The analysis of the current position and regulation of adult education in Montenegro indicates the initiation of several recent developments, including a number of initiatives in long-term adult education plans such as the Adult Education Strategy of Montenegro (2015–2025) and the Adult Education Plan (2015–2019). Montenegro authorities have

also decided to address the need for improvement of the treatment of imprisoned persons, and in this context, to offer them educational support after they have served their time (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015).

A central priority for the development of adult education in Montenegro is the raise of awareness not only among the citizens, but also among the employers in different sectors. Other priorities include conducting analyses on the educational needs of employees, training of staff, volunteerism and social inclusion of marginalized groups.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) maintains very low levels of public funding in the field of adult education. Most adult education providers are either local NGOs or representatives of foreign organizations that mainly rely on donor support. However, funding practices and legislation are not uniform in the three BiH entities. Bosnia and Herzegovina until very recently lacked proper and systematical observation of adult education, thus most of the data in this sphere is provided through independent research by foreign organizations and expert teams. The number of Peoples' and Workers' Universities has significantly dropped as well – from 56 before 1992 to only 7 in 2008 (Heric & Grgic, 2008, p. 10). The number of institutions of formal education that provide programmes for adult education is also very small.

Croatia has a century-old tradition of institutional adult education (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011). In Croatia, adult education is highlighted as an important component of the education system, which is supported by a number of strategic documents adopted by the Croatian government in the past years. A dominant place among adult education providers in Croatia have *pučka otvorena učilišta*, many of which were founded in the 1960s and the 1970s. However, there is a steady decrease in their numbers in recent years. These institutions provide programmes for adult learning in both formal and non-formal education (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011). Apart from the public institutions, there are more than 30 private adult learning providers, most of which are specialized in certain fields of adult learning (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011).

In Croatia, the National Strategy for Adult Education was replaced with a Strategy for Education, Science and Technology, which is based on the concept of lifelong learning

with adult education as its important element (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015). However, the participation rate of only 2.9% in adult education remains one of the lowest in Europe. The more thorough harmonization of adult learning programmes with the demands of the economy is expected to strengthen the position of adult learning in this country (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015).

The Croatian Association for the Education of Adults acts as an umbrella organization of adult education providers. With regards to the introduction of e-learning tools in formal and non-formal adult education in Croatia, there is no relevant information on using e-learning tools among adult education providers, aside from the formal higher education institutions.

Historically, the demand for adult learning has always been recognized in Bulgaria. However, for a long period of time there was lack of specific efforts for its development. The educational system in the period 1944-1989 was characterized by centralization, as well as weak education structures, as a consequence of too many reforms (GHK, 2011, p. 8). These factors also had an impact on the system for adult education, resulting in programmes for adult education within the educational system, in addition to different education and qualification courses that were not part of the formal educational system. In addition, there was a multiplicity of non-formal institutions that offered education in the form of courses, and distance learning through correspondence.

In 1998, the country adopted legislation on distance learning. Since then, approximately 85,000 students of higher education have been enrolled in distance learning courses. These operate within the framework of the National Center for Distance Education, established in 1994. Distance learning courses are mostly provided by NGOs and private companies operating within non-formal education. The Network of Innovative Teachers, with more than 20,000 Bulgarian teachers involved, provides several distance courses in English language and works on the development of e-learning content (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011, p. 8). There are examples of private education providers, which offer distance courses in foreign languages, e-learning for teachers, civil education, Bulgarian language courses and mathematics for secondary school students.

In the case of Bulgaria, the data issued by the statistical office of the European Union - Eurostat, indicate that this country currently has one of the lowest participation rates in lifelong learning among the adult population in the EU (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2011, p. 4). Bulgaria has adopted a National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2008-2013), which defines the conceptual framework for lifelong learning. The country has also adopted a Human Resources Development Programme as well as Vocational Education and Training Act in order to provide normative regulation, but also to facilitate increase in the employment rate for groups in unequal positions on the labor market. Several Bulgarian universities have their own open education, or provide programmes for continuing education in different areas.

In 2015, Bulgaria marked an important milestone concerning adult education, by further developing the adult education infrastructure through the launch of the EPALE platform (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015). However, the challenge of raising public awareness about the concept of lifelong learning remains.

Consequently, distance education is still underdeveloped in Bulgaria. The efforts to bring distance education from the margins to the forefront of the educational system resulted in the establishment of the National Centre for Distance Education, involving an association of 20 Bulgarian universities. Although the Centre has conducted innovative work in the field of distance education, it is faced with problems of ensuring its financial sustainability. There is an evident lack of initiative on behalf of the government, and many part-time students still rely on distance education through correspondence (OECD, 2004).

In Greece, the regulatory framework on higher education strongly discourages the involvement of non-state institutions (Owusu-Boampong & Holmberg, 2015, p. 11). The recent appearance of a number

The economic crisis in Greece implies funding difficulties for adult education, since most adult education providers rely heavily on public budget funding.

of private institutions in this sphere is not recognized as equivalent to national tertiary education degrees; these are also "not permitted to use the term university in their self-

definition or advertisements, since in Greece this term is only applicable to public universities" (Owusu-Boampong & Holmberg, 2015, p. 12). Concerning distance learning, the main national policy was based on the Operational Programme for Education and Lifelong Learning 2007-2013. Priority axes 7, 8, and 9 were concerned with lifelong education for adults and focused on the development of distance learning by designing and implementing a series of distance education programmes. The Operational Programme highlighted the involvement of adults in lifelong learning as a key strategic objective. Given Greece's particular geography, which can make access to important locations a challenge, the potential for introduction of technologies for synchronous and asynchronous distance education was defined as an important priority (Owusu-Boampong & Holmberg, 2015, p. 13). The Programme included a broad estimate of approximately 60,000 potential beneficiaries from the distance learning programmes. The deep and prolonged crisis in Greece had a strong impact on most of the reforms in the lifelong learning sector, and their implementation was largely stopped. However, a huge step forward was made with the introduction of the Municipal Centers for Lifelong Learning in 2013, which have proved very successful. In the two-year period of their existence, around 150,000 adults have participated in programmes of the 250 Municipal Centers (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015). Nonetheless, taking in consideration the foreseen budget cuts, the future of these centers is unsure, due to their dependence on public funding.

Concerning adult learners participation in higher education, in Greece there are no legal barriers, but the access is the same for young and older ("mature") students via Panhellenic Examinations. The only exception in the admission criteria are related to the Hellenic Open University (Developing the Adult Learning Sector: Opening Higher Education to Adults, 2013, p. 184). With regards to the models of studying, adult learners in higher education institutions in Greece are in most cases enrolled at part-time, distance education, e-learning and blended learning programmes, with classes and other activities scheduled for the evening hours or weekends (Ibid.). The legal reforms in higher education in 2011 envisioned the formation of lifelong learning centers at every higher education institution.

Adult education in Greece is faced with the major challenge to overcome the economic crisis with the least possible damage. In the future, adult education providers will have to focus more on developing effective programmes to tackle the rising unemployment. Strong emphasis will have to be placed on second chance education, facilitating members of marginalized and socially disadvantaged groups and dropouts to re-integrate in the system (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2015).

The economic crisis in Greece implies funding difficulties for adult education, since most adult education providers rely heavily on public budget funding. This situation puts a strong pressure on these organizations to ensure the proper implementation of their programmes and secure additional sources of funding. The economic crisis has put significant pressure on the authorities to take measures to reduce the country's deficit. Education in general and higher education in particular have been subject to severe funding cuts (around 15% in the past two years), with much of the funding concerning continuing vocational training, as well as for supporting lifelong learning and adult education relying on EU-funding (Developing the Adult Learning Sector: Opening Higher Education to Adults, 2013, p. 185).

As in all other SEE countries, adult learning is faced with challenges, both on a system level and among the Albanian citizens. The issues related to high unemployment, and more specifically to the long-term unemployment and youth unemployment, are pressing for urgent decisions and reforms.

The key institutions responsible for the management of adult learning strategies in Albania are the Department of Employment Policies and the National VET Council. Key adult learning providers in the country include institutions of formal education (schools) that mostly provide basic education for adults or programmes for basic skills, universities, NGOs, public or non-public training centers, training for qualification or re-qualification of skills for both employed and unemployed individuals, etc. (Nikolovska, 2007). In formal education, the teaching process for adults is organized according to an approved curriculum for adults.

Concerning vocational training, there are 10 VET centers throughout the country, which are experienced in delivering training courses, and are generally in line with the needs of the labor market.

Non-formal adult education is realized within separate programmes and courses. If these programmes have duration of less than 6 months, they are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor. Courses that last longer than this period are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Science.

In 2005, Kosovo adopted a Law on Adult Education with the purpose of establishing an adult education system, and introducing the concept of lifelong learning in the country. The Law envisioned different forms of adult learning, which were not regulated by the Laws on Primary and Secondary Education, Higher Education, and Vocational Education and Training (Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-2016). In the recent years, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo has expressed commitment to work on the development of lifelong learning practices.

The long period of instability has resulted in large number of adults who have missed out on formal education. However, the adult education system in Kosovo is still in its beginnings. This results with lack of regulation of the existing programmes for vocational training and adult education by private providers. At present, non-formal education under the responsibility of the Vocational Education Division of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, which is responsible for managing adult education programmes on basic knowledge and skills. The sector of non-formal education in the sphere of adult education and training and raising employability through education is largely the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports.

Some of the private adult education and training providers include the "Don Bosko" training centre, the Employment and Promotion Agency of Kosovo (EPAK), Women for Women International – Kosovo, MEST, which has implemented women literacy programmes in 19 municipalities throughout the country (with donor support). Around 3,000 girls and women have benefited from the program (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology).

There were also efforts to establish a VTC network, providing training services only to unemployed individuals that are registered within the Public Employment Service, with priority groups: young people (16-25 years of age), minority groups, women, persons with disabilities.

An important factor was the government's commitment to establish a system for recognition and valorization of the results of non-formal and informal learning. However, there are different issues that need to be addressed more thoroughly: the problem of limiting adult education solely to vocational education and training; the financial sustainability of adult education and VET providers; the unsatisfactory quality of skills provided in this sphere of education; as well as the lack of governmental support for adult education and VET providers (Kosovo Education Center, 2014, p. 12).

Adoption of CMC tools and e-learning in the countries of Southeast Europe

The introduction of CMC tools and more specifically e-learning concepts in adult education and distance education in the countries of the region has not been subject to previous systematic studies. The existing research is mostly focused on the use of CMC tools and e-learning concepts in formal education, particularly in higher education institutions and the provision of distance education programmes. Since the vast majority of adult education programmes fall within non-formal education, or the programmes are conducted by NGOs or other private providers, there is no official data on the level of use of CMC tools and e-learning, as well as their effectiveness and overall impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

The available data is derived mostly from research projects in higher education and distance learning, which are generally concerned with the level of use of e-learning in the countries of the region, and the (non)existence of quality assurance mechanisms, without a more systematic investigation of the short-term and long-term effects.

A recent report on the adoption of e-learning among higher education institutions throughout Europe, issued by the European University Association, indicated that with a

few exceptions, a vast majority of these organizations have introduced some form of e-learning. While most of the European higher education institutions use blended learning

Most of the European higher education institutions use blended learning (91%), and around 80% also offer online learning courses.

(91%), around 80% also offer online learning courses (Gaebel, Kupriyanova, Morais, & Colucci, 2014). However, the implementation of e-learning is marked with inconsistencies – only 20% of the surveyed institutions have implemented it in all disciplines. Additionally, faculty e-learning strategies are not very frequent, accounting for less than 15% of the institutions participating in the research. Over 80% of the institutions use digital courseware, online provision of educational materials, online libraries etc. (Ibid.)

A majority of the respondent institutions provide student support for e-learning, as well as staff training and incentives. The research results indicated that e-learning is perceived as an educational revolution by the surveyed institutions, three quarters of which stated that e-learning could change the approach to learning and teaching, and more than 80% consider e-learning a catalyst for changes in teaching methods. However, around 45% of the respondent institutions were not certain of the specific benefits of e-learning methods, such as the flipped classroom[4] for example, and around half of the respondents are not sure that e-learning improves the quality of learning and teaching, or they disagree with this statement (Gaebel, Kupriyanova, Morais, & Colucci, 2014, p. 9).

With regards to the provision of MOOCs, only 31 of the higher education institutions that participated in the research (accounting for 12% of the sample), either offered MOOCs or were making preparations to launch them. Furthermore, almost half of the 218 institutions that did not offer MOOCs indicated intention to introduce them. With reference to the formal position of the respondent institutions, almost a third of all the institutions had a formal position on MOOCs – in most cases a positive one – while an additional 42% indicated intentions of developing one. The research results indicated no strong

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[4] Flipped classroom refers to a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed. Short video lectures are viewed by students at home before the class, while in-class time is devoted to discussions, projects and exercises.

correlation regarding the introduction of MOOCs, and a strong engagement in other forms of e-learning (Gaebel, Kupriyanova, Morais, & Colucci, 2014). The crucial motivations expressed by the respondent institutions for the introduction of MOOCs was international visibility and student recruitment.

According to the Report on distance learning in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (Devedzic, Krstajic, Radulovic, Loskoska, & Camilleri, 2011), there are growing efforts for the support of the development of various forms of e-learning. The study, however, is limited to the investigation of distance learning practices in formal education, more precisely institutions for higher education, while not taking into account other non-formal education.

In the case of Macedonia, currently there is no public educational institution which provides a fully distance education programme. Some higher education institutions, more precisely faculties of engineering and informational technologies have adopted various forms of e-learning, as a supplement to traditional programmes.

Private higher education institutions have demonstrated higher levels of engagement with regards to this issue. The Southeastern European University in Tetovo has opened several undergraduate degree programmes via distance learning (Devedzic, Krstajic, Radulovic, Loskoska, & Camilleri, 2011). However, the students at these programmes are still required to attend multiple "traditional" classes.

According to the legislative framework in Macedonia, e-learning and distance learning are not considered different from the conventional classroom based learning. The majority of higher education institutions in the country use some sort of e-learning methods (Loshkovska, Arsenovski, & Trojacanec, 2012).

In Montenegro, higher education institutions have adopted the use of ICT to a certain degree, although these are not used for distance learning, but mostly as support to classroom studies (Devedzic, Krstajic, Radulovic, Loskoska, & Camilleri, 2011).

In terms of e-learning and distance learning, according to quality standards in Montenegro, distance education courses must go through the same accreditation procedures as a standard degree. In the period of inquiry (2011), the researchers did not

find any quality procedures or standards specific to distance education or to e-learning (Devedzic, Krstajic, Radulovic, Loskoska, & Camilleri, 2011).

Distance learning and e-learning in Montenegro was introduced through the successful projects of WUS Austria. The first higher education institution to adopt e-learning was the University of Montenegro. The provided e-learning service included different types of e-learning such as, videoconferences, distance learning, etc. According to the normative acts on higher education in Montenegro, distance learning and e-learning programmes are not considered different from the conventional classroom based learning. However, no distance learning or e-learning programmes have yet received official accreditation in Montenegro (Loshkovska, Arsenovski, & Trojacanec, 2012).
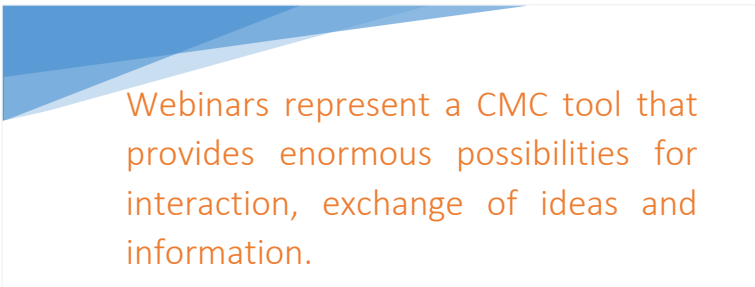
In the case of Serbia, higher education institutions offer a small number of programmes for distance learning that had undergone official accreditation. Since many of these programmes are offered in both face-to-face and distance learning modes, it can be concluded that "much of the distance learning programmes offered at universities in Serbia function as an additional support to conventional, classroom based studies" (Devedzic, Krstajic, Radulovic, Loskoska, & Camilleri, 2011, p. 13). The Serbian National Council for Higher Education produced provides a Statute on Standards and Procedures for Accreditation of Faculties and Faculty Curricula. The Statute includes a set of standards for distance education offerings as well.

With regards to distance learning in higher education in Greece, the main provider of such programmes is the Hellenic Open University, providing undergraduate and postgraduate courses equivalent to those offered by "traditional" universities, as well as vocational training and continuing education programmes (Owusu-Boampong & Holmberg, 2015, p. 14). In this regard, Greece is a rare example in the European educational context, being one of the few countries that has special higher education institution for distance learning (alongside the UK, Germany and Spain). Studies at the Hellenic Open University take place exclusively through distance learning, with conventional courses being replaced by a flexible modular system, and course modules as the basic functional unit of education. Currently the Hellenic Open University has around 15,000 active undergraduate students,

over 13,000 active postgraduate students and nearly 80 PhD students (Owusu-Boampong & Holmberg, 2015, p. 15).

Many other Greek universities offer distance education courses, most of which are focused on vocational training. Many of these universities, in the recent years, have adopted e-learning technologies mostly to facilitate synchronous online learning and presentation activities.

Although e-learning in Albania is in its beginnings, in recent years the Albanian government has initiated activities to introduce e-learning in all stages of education. Through a program

> Webinars represent a CMC tool that provides enormous possibilities for interaction, exchange of ideas and information.

supported by the United Nations, a new e-School program was introduced for students in primary and secondary education. A step further on the issue was achieved through the adoption of the National Information and Communication Technologies Strategy (Barolli & Sevrani, 2009). To this end, extensive computer literacy programmes have been provided, including basic computer literacy curricula for adults. The introduction of e-learning and distance learning in formal education in Albania is met with difficulties, which are mainly related to the poor online learning infrastructure and "a strong education system, traditions in job training, support for lifelong learning and a high rate of literacy" (Barolli & Sevrani, 2009, p. 13).

The amendments of the Law on Higher Education from 2010, introduced several reforms in the three forms of higher education in Albania: full-time studies, part-time studies, and distance learning. However, for the purposes of this study, we could not obtain an official information on the number and type of distance education programmes offered at academic level.

With regards to Croatia, the introduction of CMC tools in formal education has decades-long history in public higher education. In 1971 the University Computing Centre (SRCE) was established at the University of Zagreb, with the purpose to enhance the implementation of ICT in the academic community. The Croatian Academic and Research

Network (CARNet) has been involved in the promotion of ICT at all stages of formal education since 1991. However, the sphere of distance education has been seriously overlooked. There have been few correspondent courses, which have not gained wider popularity and acceptance.

Webinars in Adult Education: The Case of Southeast Europe

The concluding remarks in the previous chapters indicate that the use of various CMC tools and e-learning platforms in the SEE countries is very much in its beginnings, both in formal and non-formal education. Webinars, in particular, have been introduced as an educational tool only recently.

The potentials for two-way communication, training and education of webinars are mostly used by the private sector, i.e. companies that are only partially focused on training and education. As mentioned in the first chapter, webinars represent a CMC tool that provides enormous possibilities for interaction, exchange of ideas and information. Thus, the use

of webinars is not solely limited to education. Companies, both multinational and local, have long recognized the potential of webinars for training of employees, marketing, and advertising. This is also true of the mainstream use of webinars in the SEE. In other words, private companies utilize webinars for multiple goals and purposes, i.e. they combine training and education with marketing and advertising goals. These types of webinars have a semi-educational nature – they provide the participants with some form training and practical knowledge, but often this training is limited to the use of the particular goods/products the company is focused on selling. This is a very common case among IT companies, which make frequent use of these types of webinars to reach a wider market.

Other organizations that commonly rely on webinars for educational purposes are representative offices of international organizations, cultural centers of foreign countries, representative offices of international foreign language centers, etc. The use of webinars in these cases is closely related to the mission and goals of these organizations, which are tied to the provision of non-formal education and training for youth and adults. Some of these institutions conduct certified examinations and issue international certificates for knowledge and skills in various areas, thus webinars in this case are used for market penetration, as well as basic training for the interested candidates.

These organizations have an important role in the professional development of certain occupations as well, for example primary and secondary school teachers, which have been neglected for decades and have very few opportunities to stay up-to-date with the latest pedagogical trends. Webinars, in this case, represent a cost effective tool that possesses the potential to reach large parts of the target population. It has to be noted, however, that webinar effectiveness is highly dependent on the skills of participants. Many adult learners lack the basic computer skills, which are indispensable for taking part in an on-line training through which usually uses a specific software. There is also the problem of language barriers – the majority of webinars organized by these institutions are delivered by foreign trainers and in a foreign language. Besides the specific professional language used in the delivery of presentations, participants are often discouraged to take part in a webinar due to their lack of basic knowledge of the foreign language. There are

instances where the organizations make efforts to reach wider audiences by introducing domestic trainers, but most commonly, they communicate calls for participation at webinars that are designed and organized by their main offices. Subsequently, these types of webinars are mostly of interest to well-educated individuals who have aspirations of acquiring additional certified skills.

Organizations, which are solely focused on adult education, can be divided in two general groups: providers that offer programmes for formal and non-formal education. Since the legislative framework related to these types of education differs throughout the countries of the region, no general conclusions regarding the overall state of affairs can be made. Some countries, Macedonia for example, provide private education providers with the possibility to offer programmes for formal education of adults, with an obligation to adhere to certain prescribed standards. However, the use of webinars for distance learning programs of formal education is mostly dependent on regulation, which so far is lagging behind as regards the introduction of regulation for the use of CMC tools, and online forms of distance learning. Therefore, the use of interactive CMC tools in adult learning and formal education is for the most part limited to higher education institutions. In most of the countries that were part of the research, there is a limited offer of distance learning programmes in higher education institutions, with the exception of the Hellenic Open University in Greece, which is fully focused on the provision of distance learning undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, through the use of asynchronous and synchronous CMC tools. However, this is due to the specific legislation on higher education in Greece.

Distance learning programmes in higher education are low in numbers, and there is no data on the use of specific CMC tools, including webinars. With regards to MOOCs, which are more common for universities, there were no such courses developed by academic staff from SEE universities. In most cases, universities share information regarding MOOCs provided by foreign universities. Having in mind the small regional "market" for MOOCs it is somewhat expected that universities in the region will be less inclined to develop MOOCs. Additionally, the use of webinars, MOOCs, or other forms of distance

learning, most commonly has a complementary role to the existing educational processes.

Adult education providers of non-formal educational programmes, despite the opportunities webinars provide, are not very inclined to use them. This could be the result of various reasons: lack of proper infrastructure and means for adopting webinars; the type of programmes they offer; the possible lack of skills and knowledge of the participants for the use of webinars; etc. Namely, webinars can provide enormous possibilities for learning, but are not suitable for all adult education programmes. They cannot provide a valuable contribution to programmes aimed at the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills, since they require participants that are functionally literate and are acquainted with online learning. Furthermore, for some groups of adult learners, for example, members of socially disadvantaged groups, and individuals that have no formal education, webinars are clearly not an effective learning tool, since their use requires possession of means and skills whose lack has been one of the factors for social exclusion of these individuals.

The research on the use of webinars in adult education in the SEE countries has therefore been focused on organizations that use webinars in adult learning and training, in the field of non-formal education. Several organizations involved exclusively in organization of webinars have appeared in the past few years. It is a positive sign that organizations throughout the region have felt confident enough to start to produce their own web seminars, and not limit themselves solely to dissemination of information regarding webinars. Concerning payment, most webinars, especially webinars delivered by large organizations require no fees for participation. Part of the regional webinar providers, especially private companies offering training in different fields, do require fees for participation.

Concerning the scope of the webinars, most webinars have regional scope, i.e. are oriented towards participants from the whole region. Webinars covering specific topics, such as training and education ties to a country-specific legislation address a more limited target groups. The areas covered by this type of distance learning are numerous – from IT, to business and management, to various spheres of civic education. The target groups

are individuals that have obtained degree(s) in higher education, and have good knowledge of computer work and foreign languages. These individuals are usually motivated to participate in webinars due to their aspirations of enhancement of their professional skills as well as career advancement.

Most webinars are one-time events, differing from MOOCs, which have a serial structure. This indicates that the educational content has to be adapted to the available time and the likely heterogeneous structure of the audience. They usually last between 1 and 2 hours, and encourage participants' engagement in the seminar by providing questions and discussion segment at the end of the lecturer's presentation. Since webinars are part of non-formal education, they are not subject to specific quality control or regulation. Nonetheless, market pressures compel most webinar providers to the provision of quality services.

In some cases, where the organization is involved in the provision of "traditional" programmes for adult education, webinars are used either as supplemental material in facilitating learning, or as a tool for promotion of the organization's existing programmes. Concerning the location of webinar providers, they are not equally distributed in all countries of the region. There is significantly higher number of webinar providers in Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Greece, as opposed to Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro.

Methodological approach

The research on the use of webinars in the SEE countries was focused on the level and types of provision and of webinar-based education in the sphere of adult education. This focus determined the approach of the research, which consisted of several phases. The first phase examined the use of CMC tools in educational purposes, with particular emphasis on webinars as an educational tool. This phase was aimed at determining the history of the use of CMC tools in education, the types of learning related to their use, as well as a review of the scientific literature and research regarding their effectiveness in the educational process.

The second phase included a thorough analysis of the adult education and distance education history and legislative in the SEE countries. This aspect was important in order to comprehend the complex processes and measures that can facilitate or discourage the introduction of webinar-based adult education in the countries of SEE. The research included a thorough online research on adult education providers that include webinars as part of their programmes (the results are presented in Annex 1). Most of these providers are private organizations that are operating in multiple spheres (consultant services, software design, insurance, etc.). The vast majority of them have introduced webinar lectures only recently.   Furthermore, an online study on types of webinars offered in the region was also conducted (results are presented in Annex 2). This included webinars that are marketed in the SEE region, but are limited to regional providers. The number of these is much higher, having in mind that many organizations throughout the region use webinars occasionally. Foreign organization operating in the SEE region opt for webinar-based trainings and lectures more often.

A number of organizations involved in provision of webinars for educational purposes were contacted. Some of these are featured as case studies (Chapter 5), and others gave their opinions and perspectives on webinars in the form of interviews. The respondents provided insights and opinions on the perspectives of webinars as an educational tool, the perspectives of webinars in adult and distance learning, as well as the most important advantages and challenges concerning webinar-based education. It has to be noted that organizations focused on adult education solely through the webinar medium were of a particular interest. The number of these organizations throughout the region was not large, but it has to be taken into account that this is an emerging field in adult education. The research also included interviews with various organizations that organize webinars as part of their activities in the field of adult education. Organizations that merely disseminate information on webinars of other providers were not included in the interviews. These organizations are nonetheless important aspect of the research, since they provide information on webinars presence in the countries of the region.

Information from the interviews provided valuable insight in the opinions and practices of these organizations with regards to the organization of webinars. The respondents gave information on how long they have been involved in

Webinars represent an opportunity for adult education providers to satisfy the needs of a growing market of adult learning, especially concerning the trends of continuous and lifelong education.

organizing webinars, the number of webinars organized so far, the topics of the webinars they organize, the average number of participants which attend their webinars, on whether they conduct any evaluation on the effectiveness of their webinars, are they interested in the participants' feedback and what are the most common comments, their opinions on webinars as an educational tool in the SEE context, to what degree are potential learners prepared for this type of education and learning, and what in their opinion is the advantage of webinars compared to other forms of classroom based and online learning. A total of six organizations participated in the research.

Webinars: Broadening the Horizons of Adult Education

Research results indicate that despite being a relative novelty in the region, webinars represent a cost-efficient and effective tool for adult learning. Most adult learners have varied interests and obligations that can prevent them from attending class-based programmes. Webinars, to this end, represent an opportunity for adult education providers to satisfy the needs of a growing market of adult learning, especially concerning the trends of continuous and lifelong education.

Concerning the cost-efficiency aspect of webinars, they represent an ideal tool for organizations that are involved in multiple types of activities and lack capacities for organizing more "traditional" training and education programmes. Many organizations throughout the region involved in the provision consulting or technical assistance services could easily make use of webinars for a number of reasons: to gain wider visibility on the

national and regional market, as well as to present their services/products in more interactive and effective way to the target groups. Thus, these organizations can overcome some of the barriers for providing quality adult education and training programmes, conditioned by the lack of adequate infrastructure/conditions for adhering to more conventional/mainstream approach to this type of teaching and learning.

Cost-effectiveness

The previous elaboration on some of the characteristics of the use of webinars in adult education in the SEE context highlighted that the general profile of webinar providers' target groups are highly educated professionals, which are most commonly driven by the motivation of additional professional development and career advancement. A great majority of these individuals is already overloaded with professional and personal commitments, and would hardly have the time to attend classical lessons. The possibility to enroll in an online seminar/class, to be able to fully participate in the educational process, to exchange ideas, opinions and knowledge with other participants and experts (lecturers), to have an online access to course materials and to keep an asynchronous interaction with the presenter, represents a truly significant advantage of the webinar tool over other means for distance learning. The learners are given a tool that makes them fully in charge of the learning process: they can choose the time, the place and the duration of the learning sequence, and still have the opportunity for immediate interaction and assistance from the educator. Furthermore, aside from progressing at their own pace, learners can enroll in an adult learning programme from the comfort of their homes, without interrupting their daily routines in any significant way. Thus, the emergence of webinars as an educational tool is complementary and supportive to the concept of lifelong learning.

Acquisition of Skills

From a wider perspective, the "online turn" in adult education, especially with regards to CMC tools that imitate the classroom setting is expected to boost the development of adult learning in the SEE. The countries throughout the region have long been struggling with an underdeveloped adult education sector and continuous lack of distance learning programmes, creating a gap that could not be filled by traditional public institutions with diminishing capacities.

The difficult processes of transition have undermined the capacities of the countries to address adequately the problems in adult education and lifelong learning. However, these processes are important for two reasons. Firstly, the past two and a half decades marked a period of a dramatic rise of unemployment rates, which have yet to be decreased. The transition processes in the former socialist countries created conditions for long-term unemployment. Additionally, youth unemployment rates in some of the countries of the SEE region are among the highest in Europe. Faced with a grim future on the labor market, many young people decide to "postpone" their entering into the labor market by continuing their education. In the past decade, some of the countries of the SEE region have been facing the rising problems of economic migration, and more particularly "brain drain", i.e. emigration of highly educated individuals.

On the other hand, unemployed individuals which have been without a job for a prolonged period of time are faced with the risk of losing touch with the latest trends in their profession, and gradual loss of competencies. Moreover, some individuals could benefit from retraining in order to respond to the needs of the labor market more effectively. Webinars provide a great variety of possibilities to facilitate the alleviating of the problems of unemployment, especially among highly educated individuals.

Webinars, to this end, provide a low-cost means of education and training, which can provide support to unemployed adults in a variety of ways. First, webinars remove all the costs related to spatial distance and travelling, which are a burden to many unemployed people. One can attend a webinar only through the use of personal computer and an Internet connection. Second, there are many organizations that provide webinars at no

cost for the participants. Third, this type of training and education helps maintain a pro-active stance in the process of getting a job. Many individuals who are unemployed could benefit greatly from the possibility to upgrade their knowledge and skills at low or no cost at all. The processes of retraining could be more effectively supported through the use of webinars.

Development of Adult Education

Adult education, which witnessed a downward trend in the SEE countries in transition in the past decades, has once again gained importance through the concept of continuous education and lifelong learning. In many countries of the region, the field of adult education is dominated by public institutions, which have insignificantly updated their educational programmes since the socialist period. On the other hand, many of these programmes tend to the interests and needs of skilled i.e. "knowledge workers". Needless to say, a great majority of these programmes are directed towards the acquisition of basic skills and competences, as well as learning crafts and trades, while not taking in regard the needs of the labor market.

The number of these public institutions has significantly declined in the past decade. The gap that has been created in the adult learning sector has not been filled adequately. The governments in the region have not devoted the attention and resources needed for solving this problem.

Since the problem with the lack of basic education and competencies persisted, the new and emerging providers of adult education, private companies and NGOs, have focused on meeting these needs. Lifelong and continuing education were set aside, and their importance has begun to be genuinely valued only recently. Employers have refrained from investing in the professional development and training of their employees (aside from basic training), perceiving this aspect as both benefit and burden of the individual itself. In a situation where there is a large number of candidates competing for the same working position, it is quite easy to recognize the acquisition of new knowledge and skills as a demonstration of pro-active attitude and commitment of the individual candidate.

In this way, the development of the concept of lifelong learning was left to the initiative of workers themselves, with the offer of professional development programmes remaining modest. In the recent years, however, things have started to change. Nonetheless, despite the growing number of adult education providers, most of them are not financially sustainable, and thus are highly dependent on public or private donor funding. This could be a discouraging factor that can slow down the development of this type of education. Furthermore, existing adult education providers are pressured to operate in multiple areas in order to remain financially sustainable, which makes education only one of their activities.

Nonetheless, there is a growing number of organizations that are interested in providing educational programmes and training across the countries of the SEE region. Since education represents one sphere of activity, these providers are less inclined to engage in substantial investments in educational infrastructure. In this way, webinars present an optimal tool for these organizations to offer their services on the market and ensure their financial sustainability by providing education and training webinars at lower costs than traditional programmes. On the other hand, the costs for webinar organization are minimal and save significant resources for these organizations. The potential target group for the services of these organizations is also much broader online.
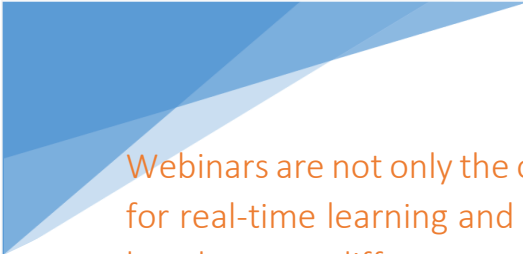
Learning Effectiveness

Unlike many other forms of online learning, webinars represent a very efficient tool for distance learning. Firstly, they provide a more immediate and substantial interaction between the participants in the educational process (educator – learner – other learners). Webinar software includes tools for posting real-time comments and questions by the participants, and the possibility to receive immediate feedback. This type of synchronized interaction removes the impersonal element of learning, characteristic of some past forms of distance learning. A properly managed webinar, especially one with a small number of participants could emanate a classroom type of experience. Various research, focused on the effects of webinar and other similar CMC tools on the processes and outcomes of

learning and education, confirm the argument that certain forms of online learning can reach and even exceed the results achieved in a traditional classroom setting. The results of such research were elaborated at length in Chapter 1.

Webinars represent a relative novelty in education, but their emergence was not unexpected – they originate from decades long innovations in CMC technologies. Webinars today are equipped with all kinds of different tools with the purpose to facilitate the teaching and learning processes. Thus, they are not only the optimal tool for real-time learning and interaction, but there are different possibilities for asynchronous learning and communication: recording of webinars, providing course materials online, asynchronous interaction with the lecturer, real-time sharing of materials etc.

Webinars are not only the optimal tool for real-time learning and interaction, but there are different possibilities for asynchronous learning and communication: recording of webinars, providing course materials online, asynchronous interaction with the lecturer, real-time sharing of materials.

Different webinar software provide a variety of different options and CMC tools: real-time chat and the possibility to pose questions to the lecturer and the other participants; the polling tool, which can be very useful for conducting a quick scan of participant knowledge, opinion, and experience on different subjects; the whiteboard tool; the possibility to share documents, presentations and other information with the entire group in real-time; as well the possibility to provide full or partial anonymity to the participants.

The opportunity to record webinars opened new horizons for the use of this type of training and learning. Namely, a recorded webinar has similar functions as any type of video-lecture, transforming this synchronous software tool into an asynchronous source of learning. In this way, learners can both participate in the webinar session and then have it at their disposal for review online. Additionally, the pressure to maintain concentration and follow every detail of the lecture by the participants have been significantly

diminished. Participants can attend the webinar, and then revise their newly gained knowledge whenever they like, since the webinar they have attended is available online. Furthermore, if some technical problems do appear during the webinar session, causing some of the participants to be left out of a part, or the whole webinar, the recorded webinar could be of a great help in filling these gaps.

Many webinar providers make continuous efforts to enrich the educational webinar experience, and thus provide the possibility for contact/interaction with the lecturer after the webinar session has finished. In this way, learners are given the opportunity to provide feedback on their webinar experience and receive help from the lecturer concerning the aspects of the presentation that require further elaboration.

Interviews with Webinar Providers in Southeast Europe

For the purposes of this study, the research on the use of webinars in the SEE countries was complemented with semi-structured interviews with webinar providers throughout the region. Despite the large number of organizations that are engaged in dissemination of information and participants recruiting for webinars from foreign providers, we focused our interest to organizations which design and provide webinars independently. A total of six interviews were conducted.

The research concluded that the number of webinar providers in SEE countries is generally very small, compared to the countries in Northern Europe or other developed nations. However, the results and the insight from the interviews indicate that this is a rapidly emerging field of education, which is expected to develop in the years to come.

The majority of the organizations that took part in the research work in non-formal education. Somewhat expectedly, formal education institutions are less interested in webinar-based education. Even in cases when the webinar provider is a public institution working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the webinar based training is not a part of formal education programme.

Most of the organizations provide services which border between non-formal and informal education. They provide webinars on topics such as entrepreneurship skills and tips, entrepreneurial mindset, motivational lectures, network marketing, freelancing tips, online business. The range of approaches in the organization and delivering of the lectures is very wide, starting from classic online seminars consisting of a lecture delivered for several hundred attendees and a Q&A segment at the end, to online "shows" consisting of informal conversation that are more focused on the specific interests of the participants.

All of the interviewed webinar providers have started operating in the past few years (the 'oldest' one was founded in 2014), which serves to support the thesis of the relatively new and emerging branch of webinar-based education in the SEE region. Despite their short period of existence, the respondent organizations have been very productive concerning the quantity of webinars produced, ranging from a couple of dozen to a few hundred webinars in the relatively short time span of 1-2 years.

All of the respondents reported large audience interest in webinars. Especially in the case of webinar providers from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, due to the language similarities, webinars are not aimed only at domestic audiences, but attract people from throughout the region.

What was even more intriguing is the large interest from members of the diaspora who, as reported by the respondents, are eager to engage in lectures delivered by experts 'from the old country'. This has also influenced their approach towards their target audiences:.

"We have viewers from the region and the diaspora; to me it is all one region of people that understand these languages [Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Slovenian, author's note]… We deliver the webinars in Serbian because people want to hear lectures from our people in the field. There are loads of such lectures in English, which is why people want to hear things from domestic lecturers. We are open for foreign audiences, we have a reputation here, but it would certainly be much harder to break through abroad".[5]

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[5] Interview with Željko Crnjaković, Webinarium.

With regards to their perspective on the use of webinars for educational purposes, opinions were divided on the issue whether webinars are adequate for delivering structured courses. Some respondents highlighted the potential of webinars in non-formal learning that should not be disregarded:

"Webinars could be used as courses but the problem is that many people expect one-on-one communication, and the webinar courses give you only the chat option…"[6]

Other participants highlight the fact that the possibility to create "classroom" learning conditions in online learning is very challenging, if not unattainable:

"In my opinion… I am teacher of management and accounting and I strongly love the atmosphere of learning in the classroom, this is very difficult to do today… Webinars are a very good way of synchronous e-learning, since we have direct contact with the learners… I consider the classroom as the most important, because it facilitates peer-to-peer learning and teacher-learner interaction, which cannot be substituted… You miss that in a webinar… People can get distracted… Not every country has the same culture of learning, the same focus and motivation… People answering a phone call or sending an email… Those things elude the power of learning…"[7]

Other respondents were very optimistic regarding the educational potential of webinars:

"Having in mind that I have attained my education in this way, I think that the period we live in and the technology are of crucial importance. This type of education is in its beginnings here [in the region, author's note]; many are only involved in dissemination of information on webinars, which was one of my motives to start delivering webinars myself."[8]

Some respondents indicated that the growing interest among learners for webinar-based education has in return influenced them to utterly change the approach towards teaching and education:

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[6] Interview with Željko Crnjaković, Webinarium.
[7] Interview with Andreas Stefanidis, AKEP.
[8] Interview with Dušan Marković, Moj profit sistem.

"When I started delivering webinars I changed my marketing strategy completely, since webinars are highly effective, with a small investment you can reach large numbers of people. In only four months, I had 4,500 people on my email list, you can get new clients fast… A good thing is that through this I improve myself as an expert, when I go somewhere to hold a lecture and I ask the members of the audience have they ever participated at some of my webinars, the ones that have done so have a feeling that they know me already… Many people attend webinars and they keep coming back. I am glad that I have managed to make a change among the participants, to motivate them to work on themselves…"[9]

The need to develop and gain recurring audience stimulates webinar providers to provide free webinars and disseminate them through mainstream online platforms (YouTube for example). In this way, they can attract wider audience, and promote their services through a free and highly effective medium. Some organizations are slowly transitioning to video lectures, which have much wider audience. According to one of the respondents:

"What is important to note on this particular issue is that people do not want to be tied to a specific time frame, i.e. that they should be in front of the computer in a certain time […] Two months ago we started creating videos that are available for free on YouTube… Since less people attend live webinars, they are used to receive a recorded version 24 hours after the webinar. We have bigger audience on YouTube… In some cases, people do not want to feel pressured to pose a question at the webinar session, and in this way, they can do it later… We noticed that people want to watch high resolution videos, and the quality is much better when the lecture is recorded."[10]

Some webinar providers give the opportunity for free attendance of the live webinar session, while the recorded versions are only available to members of their platform, which pay an annual membership. However, they also include free recorded webinars on topics of wider public interest, as an effort to "give something back to the community"[11].

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[9] Interview with Dimitrije Ostojić, Default Design.
[10] Interview with Željko Crnjaković, Webinarium.
[11] Interview with a webinar provider.

When asked about the level of interest among learners from the region for webinar-based education, all of the respondents indicated interest in this type of learning. They, nonetheless, highlighted different aspects that need to be taken in consideration:

"People are becoming more and more prepared for online education, it doesn't necessarily have to be webinars; online courses are an option even here. Our people spend money on courses on Coursera; they will embrace domestic courses as well, it only takes time."[12]

Another respondent, webinar provider from Serbia, relates the interest in webinars to the pressures for continuing education and acquisition of new skills in a contemporary age, and the clash of the traditional and contemporary value systems:

"People are very interested in webinars, which is surprising from several aspects… Firstly, people want to learn anonymously at any age… These are people aged 30-50, which often find it hard to learn from younger colleagues. Our societies are radically different because of their gender and age traditionalism. Some people still find it inconceivable the idea to learn from younger people… We have to adapt our mentality… This is one of the ways… Another important aspect is the financial one… Last night I had 138 attendees on a free live webinar, with participants from Botswana, the Netherlands… These people are mostly from the diaspora, since the webinar is delivered in Serbian…"[13]

Another important aspect, the possibility to connect and interact with the lecturer was singled out as important incentive for people to attend webinars. Many of the respondent were surprised themselves by the large number of interested learners:

"People are very interested… And are more and more prepared for this type of learning. My first webinar had around 200 registered participants, and around a hundred of them participated at the live webinar. It is important to note that the best webinars are the ones that provide the opportunity to familiarize with the lecturer… People are not attached to specific topics, but to the method of teaching…"[14]

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[12] Interview with Željko Crnjaković, Webinarium.
[13] Interview with Dušan Marković, Moj profit sistem.
[14] Interview with Dimitrije Ostojić, Default Design.

However, the general apathy in society in periods of crisis is also reflected in the motivation and desire for learning among adults:

[Question: Are people ready for this type of learning?] "Not all of them, depends from the personality of the learner, we have problem in the last 6 years in Greece to be committed even for traditional training, the time of the people is not well organized, the country is faced with many financial and political challenges, in the quest for survival people lose their priorities and it is very difficult to devote time to education, although it is very important exactly in this moment… Companies do not invest in professional development of their employees since they are also looking for survival…"[15]

When asked about the specific challenges they have encountered so far during the organization and delivering of webinars, the respondents' answers were focused on two aspects: getting people engaged and quality webinar software. The latter was not indicated as a major obstacle, and was treated as an issue that can be resolved fairly easily, depending on the specific software needs of the lecturer.

"The challenges are mostly related to recruiting of participants, finding lecturers was never a problem. People today want to share their knowledge; this is one beautiful aspect about the time we live in. The biggest problem is to bring people to participate at webinars. We do it through free advertising channels, such as social networks, email lists… The major challenge is to get people to participate at the live webinar session. The recorded YouTube lecture is always more attractive. A challenge is to get people to share their own content, which has so far not been very successful. Another challenge is to find sponsors."[16]

This statement was backed up by the response of another respondent, representative of a public institution delivering webinars for education professionals in Croatia:

"Actually, the major challenge is to bring the information to the target group, for us technology is not an issue…"[17]

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[15] Interview with Andreas Stefanidis, AKEP
[16] Interview with Željko Crnjaković, Webinarium.
[17] Interview with Ivana Vugdelija, CARNet.

Obstacles related to technical issues were seldom mentioned, and the respondents highlighted that the eventual technical problems are easily solvable. However, some of the respondents indicated that individuals working on organization and delivering webinars on their own could face multiple challenges, since quality webinars are rarely successful as a 'one man show'. For this reason, most of the respondent organizations have a team of experts in different fields, all contributing to a more effective webinar-based teaching and learning:

"I have not had major challenges, once you acquire a quality software there are no major problems. There are free options for beginners, but I have invested in webinar software. In addition, I would not be able to provide quality services without my team – a copywriter, graphic designer… Technical problems could happen, but they are easily solvable with minimal investments…"[18]

The respondents were given the opportunity to give their opinion on the key aspects that, in their opinion, provide an advantage to webinars compared to more traditional forms of distance learning and adult education. Once more, one of the respondents expressed mild skepticism regarding the interest of adult learners in the region for structured, course-like, and paid webinars.

"An advantage is that webinars are very convenient for the lecturer, I do not have to spend a lot on logistics, I can work from home, and anyone that watches the webinar can do it from home. We can interact, but this depends on the number of people that participate of course. It is not necessarily impossible; I would like to see the perspective of a paid webinar. Interaction would have to be more one-sided, delivering the lecture and a possible Q&A session. A problem arises when you need to charge people for such webinar."[19]

Other respondents stressed the financial reliefs webinars provide, the possibility to deliver a lecture and interact from different locations. The opportunities webinar software provide,

[18] Interview with Dimitrije Ostojić, Default Design.
[19] Interview with Željko Crnjaković, Webinarium.

such as the opportunity to share lecture materials, were also mentioned as a great advantage of webinars to other forms of distance learning:

"The financial relief is a positive aspect… You do not have travel expenses, expenses for clothing, food… You can participate from the comfort of your home dressed in a pajama… Another aspect is interaction… Participants can interact with each other, I can communicate with them, I can share my presentation, materials… Webinar platforms provide great opportunities…"[20]

Another important aspect that was singled out by the respondents was the possibility for more immediate and quality interaction that facilitates better teaching and learning in webinar-based setting, compared to other forms of distance learning:

"You can have participants' feedback at any moment, people can ask questions, and when you [the lecturer, author's note] respond, you talk to each participant individually…"[21]

One respondent stressed a significant opportunity webinars provide for adult learners with limited financial means. This is especially important for learners from SEE countries, which often lack the means to invest in their professional development. Thus, free webinars provide a very convenient means of staying up-to-date with the latest trends and knowledge in a certain area:

"A great advantage is that there are no costs, this is very important, since teachers in our country [Croatia, author's note] do not have financial means to make such investments."[22]

The technological improvement in the terms of the quality of service that webinar software and the numerous possibilities for interaction and sharing knowledge on a global scale were also highlighted by one of the respondents:

"First of all it is synchronous, and I like real-time possibilities webinars offer, and although it is not the same as traditional learning, I am a fan of such learning…Second, the new speed of the Internet permits better quality of webinars…Webinars are a necessity of the

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[20] Interview with Dušan Marković, Moj profit system.
[21] Interview with Dimitrije Ostojić, Default Design.
[22] Interview with Ivana Vugdelija, CARNet.

new age, and in this way it is much easier to deliver non formal and peer to peer learning between different countries… If we have in mind the language barriers, not language as a means for communication only but language as a mentality."[23]

Generally, all of the respondents focused on the positive aspects related to the financial and logistical reliefs webinars provide. There were no particular references to the effectiveness of webinars in the educational process. This is understandable to a degree, having in mind that most of the respondent organizations do not provide structured, course-like webinars, and are oriented towards informal design of the lectures. Thus, the effectiveness of the webinar is only partly related to the design and structure of the webinar, while equally important becomes the learners' motivation in the process.

Conclusion

The research on the use of webinars as educational tool, and moreover, as a medium for delivering and acquiring knowledge in adult education has encountered different practices in the use of webinars in the countries of the region of Southeast Europe. This wide array of uses is not incompatible with the perception and use of webinars around the world.

Although the use of online methods and tools in distance education has a much longer history, the turbulent decades of transition in the countries in the region have somewhat diminished their readiness to follow the pace of technological innovations. Although many of the countries in the region mark a long history of adult education, it is only in recent years that it has started to be more diverse, both in the fields of education, and concerning the types of organizations that provide adult education. These factors have contributed to the pressure to ensure state monitoring and quality assurance, and many of the countries embarked in a process of reforms of the normative regulation regarding distance learning and adult education.

However, the gap between the needs of the learners and the provision of adequate programmes has not yet been filled. The situation became more severe with the gradual diminishing of public institutions, which for decades acted as primary providers of

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[23] Interview with Andreas Stefanidis, AKEP.

educational programmes for adults. Many private institutions have since tried to fill this gap, but their future is uncertain, especially having in mind the challenges these organizations are faced with in securing their financial sustainability. State funding of the sector of education has dropped dramatically in the past decades, and there is an evident lack of financial support on behalf of the governments in the sphere of adult education. This makes private organizations involved in adult education increasingly dependent on donor funding.

Adult education in these circumstances has developed rather chaotically, and organizations providing education and training for adults are often involved in multiple areas of work, not limited solely to educational activities. This is partly due to the increasing financial insecurity these organizations are dealing with, in the face of unstable and lacking government and donor funding. On the other hand, this is also related to other educational trends globally, primarily with the idea that societies of lifelong learning need

> Nevertheless, the large interest in this type of education by adults throughout the region and the growing number of webinar providers indicate that in the years that follow webinars will gradually become more present in the educational sphere.

education providers that are up-to-date with the latest trends in their field, both theoretically and empirically. Public educational institutions have often lagged in this respect, and furthermore, there is a rising class of highly educated "knowledge workers", experts in different fields, which are able to fill this gap.

The use of CMC tools in education in the countries of SEE has been lagging behind in both formal and non-formal education. With respect to this issue, there have been several initiatives to increase the use of CMC tools in schools and universities, with varying results. These are generally related to the lack or inadequate infrastructure for introducing such technologies, and lack of initiative among educators and learners to incorporate CMC tools in the educational process.

The field of distance education in the region is rather stagnant. The widespread use of English language provides the opportunity for learners to enroll in distance education programmes at institutions abroad, while public institutions offering distance education have been somewhat reluctant to incorporate the latest technological trends in distance education. However, there is enough basis to draw a distinction. Educational institutions offering exclusively distance education programmes have been far more successful in incorporating CMC tools than institutions that are more oriented towards traditional education, and provide distance education programmes only as a part of their activities.

The results from the research indicate that webinar-based education is a relative novelty in the region. However, having in mind the number of such initiatives that have appeared in recent years it is reasonable to expect the webinars will be ever more present in adult education, increasing both in quantity and in quality.

The research results reveal that pioneering institutions in webinar-based education are mostly private institutions, generally involved in multiple activities, and are not limited to education of adults. There is also noticeable lack of coherence and structure in the delivering of webinar lectures. Namely, there are very few organizations that provide webinar-based courses in some educational field, i.e. a series of webinars that would fill the role of substitutes for traditional, classroom-delivered courses. However, many of the respondent indicated their plans on developing their work in this direction.

The existing webinar providers offer webinar lectures that belong to non-formal education. They organize webinar lectures on topics related to Internet marketing, entrepreneurial skills, motivation etc. Public institutions involved in organization and delivering of webinars use them as both part of the e-learning process (complementing traditional education), and as a videoconferencing tool.

Nevertheless, the large interest in this type of education by adults throughout the region and the growing number of webinar providers indicate that in the years that follow webinars will gradually become more present in the educational sphere. The acceptance and recognition of this type of education and training will, however, depend on the quality of the service and the efforts of the providers to follow the latest educational trends.

Case Studies

Insurance Webinars (Greece)

Website: http://www.insurancewebinars.gr/

How and why they started

The platform insurancewebinars.gr was created with the vision to provide insurance intermediaries with a series of frequent, regular lessons from professionals in the labor market who want to convey they knowledge to wider audiences. The insurancewebinars.gr is the new innovative platform for conducting specialized webinars (seminars via computer) for insurance brokers and executives of the insurance market. The goal of the organization is to provide reliable and independent education from experienced individuals in the field to new and existing intermediaries with the aim to facilitate high quality services in this sector.

The advantages

The advantage of insurancewebinars.gr is that at the end of the webinar participants can make comments concerning the quality of the webinar, but also to indicate their interest about what they would like to be added in the webinar or what they did not like. In this way the coordinators are able to get useful feedback in a way that make them to gain alternatives on how they could organize the next webinar in order to improve the quality that it's providing.

The challenges

At a time when the insurance market reviews its practices and procedures in sales but also in many other sectors (service, organization, etc.) the only weapon of intermediaries is the continuous education and training in their profession. The contribution of participants in the development and improvement of webinars is especially important. For

this reason, the participants can send their suggestions but also their comments which are taken with particular importance and gravity.

Offers/Interests

Insurance Webinars are oriented towards organization and implementation of quality private webinars:

- The insurancewebinars.gr provides the opportunity to every participant to create his/her own webinar according to his/her educational needs for his/her company's staff or his/her clients.
- Company Webcasting: the insurancewebinars.gr provides the opportunity to insurance companies and insurance enterprises to display their products and services to insurance intermediaries live via webcasting platform.

SQLearn (Greece)

Website: http://www.sqlearn.gr/sqlearn-learning-management-system

How and why they started

SQLearn started as an IT company specialized in technological solutions for distance learning platforms such as synchronous and asynchronous learning, design and development of online courses and webinars. Due to the fact that there was a general increase of the need for creating a better quality long distance learning, SQLearn LTD became the most dynamically developing company in the field of distance learning (e-learning).

Challenges/Advantages

The SQLearn Webmeetings software allows the creation of "virtual classes" in which the instructor and trainees participants can communicate with video and audio

(teleconferencing).

With the significant experience in e-learning SQLearn offers its clients:

- Complete solution covering OAED specifications.

- Training of trainers in order to implement relevant programs.

- Recording of training and treatment of the material to create webinars.

To LMS of SQLearn provides maximum flexibility for operators who want to adapt to the trainers and learners' needs, providing visual communication capabilities, participation in groups and in synchronous and asynchronous forms of education and have the opportunity to cooperate with other related communities and supports the creation of social media networks. At the same time, the software has a set of reporting tools for learners' operations, enabling individual and overall record of education.

The core of the LMS SQLearn based on Moodle. Moodle is an educational content management software (Learning Management System) in a network environment and is provided as Open Source Software. Used by more than 40,000 educational sites and has over 30 million users in 209 different countries.

The LMS of SQLearn can be installed on any server that can run PHP and SQL-like database. The educational environment works through the user's browser so there is no need to install additional programs, and is compatible with all modern operating systems (Windows, Linux, MacOS).To LMS of SQLearn can be customized and specialized according to the operator's needs or your company.

Offers/Interests

The company aims to create a comprehensive education environment to inform sellers of the network so that it can fully meet the growing needs of updating the products marketed by the company. The role of SQLearn a catalyst in this effort. The platform SQLearn, which combines synchronous and asynchronous modes of education and experience in the production of e-learning courses create the basis for the success of the integration of e-learning in our educational processes.

Extra services:

- To display 'live' on the internet presentation/conference/lesson (live streaming);
- Record the online session;
- Create online webinar-type course, based on videotaped session;
- Recorded presentation/conference/course in the client's room or in a room of SQLearn;
- To inspect the equipment and training to each participant in the session;
- To train the teacher / speaker of the session for the available online tools.

iKid Centers (Greece)

Website: http://www.ikidcenters.com/

How and why they started

The iKid centers are operating since 2000 and have a modern Centre for Prevention, Diagnosis, Treatment and Rehabilitation. The interdisciplinary team of iKid consists of speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, special educators and child psychiatrists. Their vision is to create a therapeutic framework with solid scientific basis to meet any medical requirements, which are both friendly and adapted to the needs of children and parents.

Challenges/Advantages

The iKid Webinars are the most popular series of webinars in Greece, as in those involving hundreds of people from all over the country and from abroad. People interested in expanding their knowledge of the development, education and child psychology attend the iKid webinars. Webinars are conducted by specialists from the iKid group and are

completely free of charge with the support of the organization's sponsors. The "digital" seminar room has a capacity of 1,000 seats.

Offers/Interests

The organization believes in the rule "the diagnosis leads to treatment." The aim of their scientific team is to understand what is causing the symptoms and then help in choosing the best treatment.

The iKid program offers children the opportunities they deserve, through the use of applications and exercises on computers and specialized material and development skills. The iKid centers provide individualized intervention tailored to the needs of each child.

IDEA KEK (Greece)

Website: http://www.ideakek.gr/program_list/pages

How and why they started

The I.D.E.A. Ltd. provides a series of seminars organized services to businesses and organizations of all kinds. The services include:

- Webinars: the company undertakes to organize webinars on behalf of companies and organizations. These online seminars target professionals involved in cutting-edge fields such as marketing, management, sales, customer service, logistics, etc. The webinars provide the ability to monitor the training of the professional work, without the need of any movement, while not required on the part of the participant any special technological equipment, only one ADSL connection to the internet.

- House seminars: the company undertakes seminars exclusively for your business or organization, providing fully equipped rooms, complete administrative and secretarial support and use the most modern media.

- Remote training (e-learning) to professionals: the company has set up an educational platform to provide educational programs to professionals and workers in growth sectors, such as logistics, sales, customer service, management project, business management, etc. For e-learning, in-house training is a very important innovation, considering cost-efficiency and/or productivity. This is a method that allows the simultaneous training of large numbers of workers, while offering tuition cost savings, structures rent, travel, etc. Finally, courses are offered in an environment friendly to the user, while the main concern remains to maintain undiminished the interest of participants use and multimedia application and development of two-way user communication channels - course.

Challenges/Advantages

The features and advantages that IDEA KEK supports:

Services:

- Training & Lifelong Learning;
- Human Resources Development;
- Consulting & Project Management;
- European - Developmental Projects.

Offers/Interests

The company's main objective is: "the design, development and implementation of integrated programs and specific actions in the field of Vocational Training and development of human resources."

The specific objectives of the company are related to:

- Promotion of lifelong education and training and investment in people as an important tool for economic development;

- Linking Vocational Training with employment;

- Enhancing the efficiency of Vocational Training as a means of improving the competitiveness of enterprises and organizations;

- Upgrade Training using the facilities provided by the Information Society;

- Rational utilization and Quality of National - Communal and private resources invested in Human Resources.

Epsilon training (Greece)

Website: http://www.epsilontraining.gr/istoriki-anadromi-epsilon-net

How and why they started

The company started as GREEK DEVELOPMENT and in 1992 launched a series of one-day and two-day seminars on tax issues, financial and accounting. The courses were delivered by ministry officials and financial professionals. From 2000 onwards, the seminars were enriched and oriented in more subtle areas of finance and accounting-tax area. Other topics were added as well (sales seminars, organization, marketing, labor, insurance, etc.).

Since 1996, the company started to spread its activities in the educational process. As a technology company, The Epsilon Net is constantly evolving. The follows the global trends in economy and generously disseminates the knowledge.

Their mission is to provide students with the best educational services, so they can immediately apply their newly acquired knowledge in their daily work or to use the provided qualifications as asset for their career advancement. In addition, they always strive to offer rapporteurs support needed in order to be guided in their teaching work, which remains the biggest challenge in their ongoing effort.

Challenges/Advantages

In the recent years the organization has opened seminars in more areas, such as sales, marketing, customer service, management, communication and special topics.

From 2013 Epsilon Training is the official representative of the University of Nicosia online postgraduate program in Greece. The curriculum aims to help students develop the necessary skills and knowledge required to become efficient managers and to effectively manage their financial, human and technological resources in modern organizations.

Finally, in 2015 the organization acquired accreditation from the Center for Lifelong Learning, which confirms the high-level knowledge, experience and physical infrastructure of the organization.

Offers/Interests

In 2002, the organization reached an agreement with AIA (Association of International Accountants) and at the time offered three certified formal trainings. In 2010, Epsilon Training reached a very important collaboration with the University of Athens (National University). This collaboration resulted in the provision of several courses "Financial Accounting (FA)" for young accountants and graduates of economic schools such as the title "specialization in Greek Accounting Standards (GAS)" concerning the analysis and adaptation of new data in fact, than most topical at the moment in the economic sector.

The Epsilon Training as an active member of Epsilon Net presents corporate awards affecting all parts of the company and is committed to excellent service and educational programs in the future.

The companies with the best working environment for 2015 included the Epsilon Net, according to research-institution that organizes the annual Great Place to Work awards and business with satisfied and efficient employees.

Kabinata, Bulgaria

Website: www.kabinata.com

How and why they started

The organization was founded in 2007, when there were only a few platforms for webinars on the market. The idea for distance education in virtual classroom derived from a few companies in the world. The organization was the first company in Bulgaria of that type and currently it maintain leadership in online training in virtual classroom on the Bulgarian market.

Services

Kabinata.com is a system for online learning with qualified teachers and a large database and archive of units, materials (texts, pictures, hundreds multimedia units, dictations, over 1000 tests, audio and video), systematized in the form of educational process. They offer online foreign language courses in real time with highly qualified teachers. The training is executed in small groups in a virtual classroom. The access to the system is unlimited. There is not a starting date for their courses – participants can enroll at any time.

Kabinata offer a wide span of courses:

1. Languages courses: English, German, Spanish, French, Italian;

2. Professional qualifications: Operational accounting and Web development.

Participants can register for a language course with duration three or six months. During this period, they have the opportunity to use unlimited resources of the unique system for virtual training. The courses include:

- Live classes with teachers in a virtual classroom;
- All classes are recorded, so users can review them at any time;
- Grammar, speaking, daily topics;
- Weekly writing tasks and corrections with teacher feedback.

- Certificate: levels finish with a final test and course certificate. One level is completed in 8 weeks (about two months).
- Access to all levels: users have access to all levels, and can attend classes for other levels upon their wishes. All levels are fully compatible with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The duration of Operational accounting course is one year. Web development course lasts nine months.

Organization Interests:

- In the field of education in virtual classroom;
- In the entering new markets in the Balkan region;
- In the new technologies in education.

Company Webcasting: Kabinata are owners of a number of online websites:

- www.kabinata.com (online learning courses – languages and professional qualifications)
- www.interokul.com (online language courses in Turkey)
- www.matura.bg (website about matriculations)
- www.teacher.bg (website for teachers)
- www.mybulgarian.com (online Bulgarian language course for foreigners)
- www.dechica.com (website for children)

Extra services: live event streaming

Advantages

- Easy and effectively, in convenient time – directly from home;
- The courses are flexible, provided by teachers in real time, based on the latest technologies in online education. The courses are designed for people who are active and motivated to learn foreign languages;
- The difference between standard language course and online language course: the standard course includes passing through a particular language context, structured in a textbook for a definite period. In kabinata.com you have the

opportunity to take many more classes with teachers and you have the freedom to choose one level or more, or to attend the same classes several times;

- Time: The students in kabinata.com have the freedom to arrange the time and the duration of the time working with the system. They have the power to control their learning process;

- Place: The students can learn directly from home or from the office without losing time in transportation to the place where the course is led;

- Coverage: online courses, audio recordings with more than 100 hours listening. The system features more than 1000 tests for self-training;

- Speed: Participants can start whenever they want. Kabinata does not set deadlines and starting dates. The online system of Kabinata allows students to determine their own pace of learning;

- Effectiveness: Proven effective training system - several thousand students and companies have already shown trust in our teaching method;

- Virtual classrooms and the learning there: The online classes with teachers are held in an environment enabling voice communication between the teacher and learners and between learners themselves. In practice, the teacher teaches online conversations, examinations and discussions are held in classical method, but without visual contact - entirely online. The teacher allows the students to speak or not only with a push of a button. The call program enables conference conversations between all students, even in the absence of the teacher;

- Freedom of action: The user has full control over his progress. The timetable of teachers is done in advance so that the user can follow it according to its individual plan rate of progress, even if he moves faster or slower - he has the ability to tap into a new stream and in this way does not skip material or pass quicker through the things he finds easier.

- The system of classes with online tutors is open and it gives the user a unique online learning opportunity if he want to attend other classes with online teachers (for example students who are more advanced than the others are, or classes at lower levels). In practice, a user can attend all classes that take place within one day;

- Technical requirements: The course is entirely online and in order to join, the participant only needs a browser (Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc.) and an Internet connection. The software need not necessarily be installed by the user. To communicate in a virtual classroom, the participants only need a headset and microphone.

Gudevica Learning (Bulgaria)

Website: www.gudevicalearning.net

How and why they started

Gudevica Learning started as an extra support in long-term learning process. In this project, the organization developed long-term complex methodology for training of trainers and youth workers. As a part of tools used in this methodology the organization included on-line learning phase in preparation and follow-up, in order to increase the length of the learning process and to add elements of assessment, self-directed learning and distant learning.

Services:

- Online courses;
- On-line knowledge assessment tests;
- On-line support groups;
- On-line resources and publications;
-

Advantages

- Extended learning period;
- Possibility for self-organization of the learning process;
- Possibility to address different learning styles and needs;
- Distant learning;

- Delivery of big amount of theoretical information.

Challenges

- Functions and services provided by the platform (Learnpress - LMS by Wordpress);
- Unequal involvement of all learners in the process;
- Limited options for peer to peer learning;
- Limited options for controlling learning process.

Offers/Interests

- Training for trainers
- Training for youth workers
- Training for Interactive teaching and modern pedagogy
- Alternative education
- Interactive teaching, Accelerated learning and Modern pedagogy
- Sustainable development and environment
- Non-formal learning and youth work
- Value-based education

Webinarium (Serbia)

Website: www.webinarium.rs

How and why they started

Webinarium is a project that deals with topics in the fields of IT, online entrepreneurship, freelance, the new technologies and new ways of doing business through format shows in the form of webinars. The initiator and the main culprit for Webinarium Željko Crnjaković, internet entrepreneur and founder of the initiative Coworking Subotica.

Webinars have started as a hobby project within Coworking Subotica, as well as adaptation of the initiative for organizing educational lectures on topics that were often

readily available to a wider audience, which Coworking Subotica organized in the form of free lectures live every week from July to December 2013. Unfortunately, the program of these lectures is terminated due to poor attendance.

As Coworking Subotica adapted and changed in the first half of 2014 (change in space and reduced the volume of business in order to adapt the needs of co-working community in Subotica), the idea of webinars was conceived - to set a series of educational and informative content, but in a form that is not limited to physical presence and remote viewers, which also has interactivity and durability.

Each webinar is designed to last for an hour, where the first 30 min are devoted to dialogue/interview/processing threads, and another 30 min Q&A section in the form of a chat. After the live broadcast of each webinar, it is placed on the YouTube channel, where it can be inspected if desired.

Offers/Interests

Webinarium organizes webinar lectures on different topics:

- online entrepreneurship;
- freelance;
- network marketing.

Advantages

Webinarium provides interested learners with free access of their webinars on YouTube.

Moj profit sistem (Serbia)

Website: www.mojprofitsistem.com

How and why they started

Moj profit sistem has been providing free webinars on network marketing, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial mindset since 2015. Moj profit sistem offers its clients a variety of services: educational through free webinars, provision of internet tools for various aspects of boosting companies. Thus, the educative sphere is complementary of the other services they offer: building of website, specialized approach on social network marketing, etc.

Advantages

Moj profit sistem features a digital library with online video trainings and lectures on marketing, how to get new contacts, entrepreneurial mindset, sponsorship, recruitment, team building, leadership, etc.

Offers/Interests

Moj profit system offers a wide range of services:

- Free webinars:
    - network marketing
    - entrepreneurship
- Affiliate Earning Program
- Website Design
- Information on trainings

Default Design (Business Box)

Website: http://www.default-design.com/businessbox/

How and why they started

Marketing agency Default Design has started Business Box as a project in November 2015. Since then, they have been supporting entrepreneurs, enabling them to collect practical knowledge that will make their business more successful. Through webinar lessons held twice a month, small and medium business owners can learn about online marketing, managing and upgrading the business, human resources management, motivation, and other important areas.

Default Design is a group of experienced marketers who are ready for the challenges of the digital era. The creative studio offers a wide range of services to their clients: analysis of the company presence, brand building, creating the best online and offline marketing strategy, building a modern web site that corresponds to the high demands of today's business, creating highly converting automated sales funnels

The focus of Business Box project is to provide emerging and existing entrepreneurs with insights and good case practices, and helping them implement those in their day-to-day work.

Advantages

The advantages of Default Design and their project Business Box is that they provide a full service – from education of entrepreneurs and marketers, to implementing successful marketing campaigns. Business Box regularly features guest speakers who are experts in their area and can bring the freshest and most reliable information to all viewers. Every guest also gives a special offer that only Business Box viewers can use (discounts on useful services, software, courses…)

Offers/Interests

Default Design (Business Box) provides webinars on different topics:

- online marketing
- entrepreneurship

- online business

- business communication

- motivation

ANNEX 1

Adult education providers that organize webinars.

Name of the provider	Field	Country	Website
Webinarium	Marketing, entrepreneurship	Serbia	www.webinarium.rs
Moj profit sistem	Marketing, entrepreneurship	Serbia	www.mojprofitsistem.com
Default Design (Business Box)	Marketing, entrepreneurship	Serbia	http://www.default-design.com/
Academy of Entrepreneurship (AKEP)	Entrepreneurship, accounting	Greece	www.akep.eu
Gudevica Learning	Employability, self-study	Bulgaria	www.gudevicalearning.net
Kabinata	Languages, accounting, web development	Bulgaria	www.kabinata.com
CARNet	Professional development of teachers	Croatia	www.carnet.hr
SRCE	Various	Croatia	www.srce.unizg.hr
Epsilon Training	Marketing, management, communication	Greece	www.epsilontraining.gr
IDEA KEK	Marketing, management, sales	Greece	www.ideakek.gr
iKid Centers	Child psychology	Greece	www.ikidcenters.com
SQLearn	LMS development	Greece	www.sqlearn.gr
Insurance Webinars	Insurance, sales	Greece	www.insurancewebinars.gr
Znanje svima		Serbia	www.znanjesvima.rs
Akademija Oxford	Languages	Serbia	www.akademijaoxford.com
Admiral Markets	Marketing, Sales	Croatia	www.admiralmarkets.com
Cisco	IT	Greece	www.cisco.com
IQ Studies	Web marketing	Greece	www.iqstud.webnode.com
Skywalker	Employability	Greece	www.kywalker.education/elGR/education/seminars

| Scienceweb | Coaching, exercise, and diet-fitness | Greece | www.scienceweb.gr |
| Ft1p | Accounting | Serbia | www.ft1p.rs |

ANNEX 2

Types of webinars offered in the region

Languages, Teaching	
British Council	Exploring English: Magna Carta
Future Learn	Exploring the World of English Language Teaching
British Council	Professional Practices for English Language Teaching
CARNet Croatia	Empowering teacher through self publishing
History	
University of Reading	A History of Royal Food and Feasting
Health	
The University of Manchester	Clinical Bioinformatics: Unlocking Genomics in Healthcare
University of Leeds	Improving Healthcare Through Clinical Research
University of Twente	eHealth: Combining Psychology, Technology and Health
Science	
The Open University	Basic Science: Understanding Experiments

Psychology, Motivation	
OpenLearn	Motivation and factors affecting motivation
Marketing, Entrepreneurship	
Default Design	Milenijalci kao naši novi klijenti i kupci (Millennials as New Buyers)
Nielsen	Defy the Odds - Bringing Breakthrough Package Designs to Market
Webinarium	Digitalni nomadi I buducnost rada na daljinu (Digital Nomads and the Future of Distance Working)
Innovation Centre Kosovo	Success Factor for Entrepreneurial Ventures
Other	
OpenLearn	Invention and innovation: An introduction
Taftie Webinar	Gender Equality in Research Funding
PASOS Albania	Webinar: How to create and implement stronger OGP action plans

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