

ASSESSMENT OF LIFELONG LEARNING

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NO. VRE-2

SUMMARY

The Relevance of the Assessment

One of the objectives of the European Skills Agenda is to reach the participation of at least 50 % of adults aged 25-64 in learning¹. The knowledge and skills that a person acquires at school or university are not enough for a lifetime. Society needs to become accustomed and adapt to the need to continuously improve knowledge, as the acquisition of experience and access to learning and development is a key value for the future. Quality lifelong learning opportunities are essential for all people, regardless of their occupation and other circumstances². Lifelong learning includes learning activities throughout a person's life in order to develop knowledge, skills and competences from a personal, civic, social or employment-related perspective³.

Slow but positive signals of change are observed in lifelong learning in Lithuania⁴. An increase in the level of lifelong learning⁵ is recorded in Lithuania since 2014, by 2021, it increased by 3.4 pps to 8.5 % for the population aged 25-64 but is still below the EU average of 10.8 %⁶. In other age groups, the gap also exists: the lifelong learning rate of the population aged 25-34 is 11.9 % (EU-18.2 %) and 3.5 % aged 55-74 (EU-4.2 %)⁷.

¹ European Skills Agenda. Internet access at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>, accessed on 21/11/2022.

² Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO. Internet access: <https://unesco.lt/svietimas/mokymasis-visa-gyvenima>, accessed on 01/12/2022.

³ OECD (2022), Education at a Glance 2022: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁴ Government Strategic Analysis Centre. STRATA (2022). Human Capital Status 2022.

⁵ Percentage of people in education in the last 4 weeks by age group.

⁶ Eurostat data. Internet access: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_04_60/default/table?lang=en (accessed on 02/02/2023).

⁷ Eurostat data.

On the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030, the Council of the EU identifies the following priority areas: governance in adult learning, based on cooperation between all stakeholders, sustainable funding of quality supply of learning opportunities, ensuring accessibility and flexibility⁸. In 2021, the OECD carried out a skills assessment of Lithuania and issued recommendations on four priority areas⁹. The Government's Education Development Programme 2021-2030 provides for the introduction of an efficient and effective lifelong learning framework for adults.

The National Audit Office, aware of the importance of lifelong learning and in order to encourage decision-makers to be more proactive, to focus on key issues and make targeted decisions to ensure that people's skills and competencies are in line with the needs of the market and their abilities in order to build successful careers, has carried out an assessment.

Objective and Scope of the Assessment

The objective of the assessment is to provide structured information on opportunities and barriers to lifelong learning.

The main focus areas of the assessment are:

- Governance of the lifelong learning framework for adults;
- Incentives for lifelong learning;
- Barriers and opportunities to lifelong learning for adults.

The entity assessed is the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

We assessed the information provided by ministries and other bodies. We interviewed municipalities and their non-formal adult education coordinators and institutions providing vocational training. We organised meetings with representatives of the Institute of Educational Sciences of the Faculty of Philosophy of Vilnius University, the Government Strategic Analysis Centre, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Ministry of Economics and Innovation, the Centre for the Development of Qualifications and Vocational Training, Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas Technical College, Lithuanian Association of Higher Education, Lithuanian adult education, Lithuanian municipalities, employees of Lithuanian education centres, and associations of the heads of Lithuanian municipal education units.

The period assessed - 2019-2021. We used data from previous years (from 2013 onwards) and 2022 to assess the changes. The scope of the assessment and the methods used are described in more detail in Annex 2 "Scope and methods of assessment" (page 31).

⁸ Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030, 2021/C 504/02, 26/02/2021. Internet access: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01)&from=EN) (accessed on 21/11/2022).

⁹ OECD (2021), OECD Skills Strategy Lithuania: Assessment and Recommendations, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Main Results of the Assessment

Lithuanians are reluctant to learn — the level of lifelong learning has been increasing since 2014, but in 2021 was below the EU average (10.8 %) and stood at 8.5 %. The common framework for lifelong learning has not yet been developed since 2013, and there is a lack of guidance and awareness of the benefits and supply of learning among adults, thus meaning that opportunities for continuous learning and updating of knowledge, professional, social and competencies in order to remain competitive in the labour market are not exploited.

A common model for a lifelong learning framework needs to be developed

The OECD recommendations of the Lithuanian Skills Strategy are implemented fragmentedly — 76 % of the recommendations related to adult learning are not planned to be implemented. Most of the recommendations - 7 out of 10 - implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport are linked to the introduction of a one-stop-shop for career planning and skills development. The Skills Council recommended by the OECD has not been established and information on the activities and decisions of the National Human Resources Monitoring Commission 2019-2022 is not available. There is a lack of involvement and targeted activities of social partners and municipal non-formal adult education coordinators and their roles are not defined. 10 % of municipalities do not implement the provisions of the law and do not draw up an action plan for non-formal adult education and continuous learning, almost one third (31 %) of coordinators fail to report on the results of the implementation of the plan. A lifelong learning framework has been implemented since 2013, but a common lifelong learning model has not yet been developed due to prolonged discussions with stakeholders and lack of institutional leadership. In order to increase the level of lifelong learning, it is important to develop a common model for a lifelong learning framework and to introduce an electronic one-stop shop (individual learning accounts) that is user-friendly and encourages learning (Chapter 1, page 9).

Learning should be a habit for everyone

Lithuanian residents are not sufficiently informed about the importance, benefits and opportunities of learning. 42 % of the population had never seen and heard of the importance of lifelong learning, only one in five has a habit of learning, and 19 % of municipalities identify a lack of motivation for learning as one of the biggest problems. Working adults can access career guidance services in 14 regional career centres operating in Lithuania, but their professional guidance is not regulated and is not guaranteed — only 2 % of service recipients were adults. Lack of awareness of the importance and benefits of lifelong learning, and insufficient counselling, do not allow to fully use the opportunities for continuous updating of knowledge, skills and competencies, keeping pace with the needs of the labour market and thus shaping people's habit of learning (Chapter 2, page 18).

Financial incentives and opportunities to match commitments would help to decide on learning

On average, 4 % in 2021. Lithuanians aged 25-64 participated in formal higher education and vocational training. According to OECD data, 7.6 % of adults (4.6 pp. below the OECD average) participate in non-formal learning. In Lithuania, there is no information on the number of providers (private and public) of lifelong learning, and the programs aimed at

adults. In the absence of this information, the quality of lifelong learning may not be guaranteed. Between 2019 and 2022, 29 % of municipalities did not carry out a formal assessment of continuous and non-formal adult learning, while 35 % of VET institutions rely solely on the Employment Service's job opportunities barometer for their needs assessment. According to the data of the Government's Strategic Analysis Centre, adults tend to face financial and time constraints: 30 % have difficulties in paying for training, 26 % - in matching learning with family and personal needs, and 22 % - with their work schedule. Flexible, tailor-made learning opportunities are essential to encourage more adults to take up learning, and the introduction of a one-stop-shop system of individual learning accounts should address barriers related to financial resources (Chapter 3, page 23).

Changes during the Assessment

On 30 December 2022, a draft amendment to the Law on Non-formal Education and Continuing Learning concerning individual learning accounts was submitted for formal deliberation. Following the assessment of the comments submitted by the institutions, the draft is planned to be submitted to the Government.

On 18 January 2023, a draft description of the model of the individual learning accounts system and its establishment in the Law was prepared and discussed at the meeting of the Government Commission for the Coordination of National Human Resources Monitoring on 20 January 2023. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport plans to develop the framework of individual learning accounts and the legislation governing its implementation by June 2023.