



EUROPEAN  
ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE EDUCATION  
OF ADULTS

# **Country Report on Adult Education in RUSSIA**

Helsinki, 2011



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**Please cite this report as: EAEA (2011): *Country report Russia*. (Helsinki). [www.eaea.org/country/russia](http://www.eaea.org/country/russia). Date of Access.**



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## Introduction

This Report covers the situation of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Russia. It is divided into two sections. The section *Policy and Politics* gives an overview of the key policy currently in force, and also outlines the main legislation or political situation in the country. *Structure and Providers* gives a more detailed look at the organizational structures, and also outlines the main adult education providers, mainly looking at non-formal and informal learning.

We want to thank our members for their contributions to this reflection on the adult education situation in Russia as far as possible as of 2010/2011. Inevitably there will be new things emerging within the ever changing situation of adult education, but we believe the majority of the information provided will be relevant and useful for the foreseeable future. However, to keep the resource accurate and up to date we are open to suggestions to improve the texts. If you feel there is something you can add about your country please contact us via email at [eaea-info\[at\]eaea.org](mailto:eaea-info@eaea.org).



## Overview

In order to identify opportunities for participation and the need for Adult Education in the country, one should address the structural components of a society:

Data from the **Ministry for Economic Development of the Russian Federation** suggests that the current level of unemployment among the economically active population is over 10%. The reason for such **growth of unemployment** is ongoing staff reductions given the challenging economic situation. The most adverse trends are observed in "monotowns" (population centres with township-forming enterprise(s)); these are addressed by government interventions, within the framework of the "manually administered economy" or, as it is said, they are provided with "individual targeted support". It has been seen in Russia that the way out of this situation is to reduce dependence on raw materials and develop other sectors of the economy; however, analysts believe that any tangible results in this area are unlikely to be achieved in the short term.

Education in Russia is a source of pride and an indisputable and permanent value. Of key importance is the **recognition of the need for children to study** at school, although the duration of schooling, forms and content, and, recently, the forms of control over knowledge levels, have aroused hot debates in society. In this context, adult education (AE) is an outstanding issue; more specifically, the establishment of a legal framework is a prerequisite to AE development in the country. Currently, Russian legislation has adopted the term "**vocational further education**". Understandably, however, it does not reflect the whole range of educational offers and services available in a society.

## Social sector

The following groups are seen in Russia to be of particular concern, and thus prospective users of educational services:

- **Elderly people:** In Russia, as in many other countries, there is a trend towards an aging society. Their status is determined by growing **social and economic problems:** elderly people are not competitive in the labour market, and there is currently little recognition for their life and professional experience. Combined with the increasing problems experienced by the elderly, such as social isolation, deterioration of health and financial situation, this group is increasingly at risk.

However, there are also a number of elderly people with a higher education level who do remain active. According to sociological surveys, half of the pension age population is willing to continue labour or other activities, and over 250 thousand people are in active search of paid work.



- **Rural population:** Many traditional forms of economic organization (collective farms, state farms) and respective enterprises owned by them (farms, fur farms and timber processing enterprises) have now become almost non-existent. According to official sources, the **unemployment rate** in rural areas in different regions is up to 80%. Often the problem stems from the fact that the most active and mobile part of the population tends to want to move into the cities for better work and life prospects, leaving those with lower education levels and social problems, such as the elderly, or those with low income. This has also been linked to increasing alcohol abuse, apathy, antisocial behaviour, and greater social distance between the individual and society.

In addition traditional agro-industrial sectors (livestock and crop production, machines) need upgrading and up-dating. Thus, the **training needs** of this target group are concerned with the development of professional knowledge and skills to make it possible to start a business without a big investment (for example often wood harvesting and processing, bread baking, processing of milk products, bee raising, and handicrafts), as well as mastering new approaches to **self-administration** (development of local initiatives, project approach, self-help, and "inspection" of own resources).

- **Youth:** In Russia, young people aged 16 to 28 account for 25-28% of the able-bodied population; and they mainly strive to live in cities. Youth problems are among the most sensitive: issues associated with unemployment and employment, uncertainty about future, challenges when obtaining education, financial problems, lack of positive ideas and guidance, and difficulties with identity formation.

Often young people's attitudes can be characterized as **sceptical about possible society transformation** processes; passivity and apathy hinder social development and the role of young people in this process. Also present are organizations contributing to society destabilization, who actively introduce themselves into the social environment (such as criminal groups or nationalistic associations). As a result there is a need for education and volunteer activities to promote an innovative youth environment, personality development and full-fledged participation in civic life.

- **Groups at risk:** Official sources state that "almost all of the adult population in Russia is literate, and thus there is no need to take special steps or implement programs to eliminate **adult illiteracy**." Data of the State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation suggest that the literacy rate in Russia is 99.8%, (which corresponds to rates in high-income countries). However, a number of experts note that a conclusion about mass literacy is premature for present-day Russia. Employees of social educational organizations believe that, at least for representatives of disadvantaged groups (prisoners, homeless, and illegal



migrants), the real basic literacy level of the Russian adult population is far below the declared level.

Currently, one can say that the adult literacy issue in Russia is growing in proportion to the increasing number of **refugees, migrants and homeless children**. Some estimates suggest that in 2001 Russia had 1.5 million homeless children who did not attend school. One can assume that today the number of illiterate adults has increased respectively. In particular, specialists working in the penitentiary system note that recent years have seen a great number of prisoners lacking basic literacy skills.

## Politics and Law

The Law "**On Further Education in the Russian Federation**", passed by the State Duma in 2002, never came into effect. This draft law placed on state and administrative agencies certain responsibilities to create an environment for the provision of non-formal education for various segments of the population (including not only those of active working age, but also pensioners, disabled people, and disadvantaged groups); they did not express their willingness to undertake this commitment. Moreover, experts believe that a part of the non-formal education functions (for example, development of human capital, individual abilities and self-actualization, civil society formation and development and support to democratic institutions) is beyond the scope of activities of government agencies. Some regions and constituents of the Russian Federation attempted to reform the legislation pertaining to Adult Education (**the Draft Law in the Krasnoyarsk Territory, the Draft Law in St. Petersburg**). Some of them were considered several times, however none of the drafts were approved and supported by local authorities and never came into effect, for various reasons.

To date, the main official document stipulating the concept "Adult Education" is the **Framework of the Targeted Federal Program of Education Development for 2006-2010**. However, it also considers continuous education as "the growth of an individual's (general and vocational) educational capacity". Thus, the whole resource of non-formal education seems to be **outside the law**. At the same time, in 2005 the indicator "trained for up to 72 hours (number of persons)", was introduced in the state statistical reporting form, which can be regarded as a step forward towards legalization of non-formal adult education.



## Future trends/key concerns/directions

The issues raised above all give some indications of the key concerns and issues for the AE sector in the Russian Federation for the coming years. However, also of note are challenges to the education system through the development of market relations, intensive development of information technologies, Russia's willingness to join the global economic space, and the need for conscious and meaningful choices, which any adult has to make regularly throughout their lives.

One of the most considerable problems in the way of the formation of an AE system is also overcoming the **stereotyped attitudes** of a society towards non-formal education as something secondary and insignificant. **Underestimation of non-formal education** resources results in such social problems as isolation and increasing social tension on the one hand and the underdevelopment of the culture of education of the society on the other. Consequently, a priority for the society, social sector and AE organizations is to introduce mechanisms for recognition of all adult education forms as an autonomous, independent, equally important and equivalent part of the education system.

## Structure overview

Overall, adult education cannot really be characterised as being within a system: organizations and institutions involved in adult education are **often fragmented** and do not readily cooperate and interact, often considering each other as competitors rather than partners. Nevertheless, one can identify components of Adult Education, such as **Vocational Further Education (VFE)**, sectorial and **inter-company training**, and secondary and secondary specialized vocational educational institutions.

Characterizing the overall range of educational institutions, one can say that it is distinguished by:

- A predominance of **vocational further education**. In the educational services market, there is a clear trend towards broadening the range of business training offers and there is quite a broad range of offers in brand management, use of advertising, effective operation of distribution channels, personnel motivation, coaching and manufacturing process maintenance, team-building, etc.
- Diverse forms and ways of training organization (from traditional and conservative to flexible and mobile).
- The need to ensure the **quality of services**, which has not yet been worked out on a national basis. (Each organization can determine its own quality criteria and how it is reflected in the training process).



- Different levels of technical and information status.
- Driving for a **rapid response to changes in needs**, a willingness to revise offers and tailor them to a specific client, readiness to negotiate and, in a way, social partnership with business entities, employers, and government authorities.
- A continuous and intensive **search for specialists** in andragogy, knowledgeable not only about the subject-matter of training but also didactics, and ways of interaction with an adult audience.
- It should also be noted that despite the **lack of a legislative basis**, non-formal education practices are gradually expanding, with an emphasis on the increasing number of educational **opportunities for pensioners** in different regions of Russia.

## Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education

### ‘Non-Formal’ Learning

Non-formal Adult Education is represented by training courses for adults in diverse topics that meet the various individual educational needs of citizens. There is a wide range of education on offer in non-formal education, namely within:

- **Universities for the elderly**, where pensioners can acquire knowledge in various areas (health-related courses, handicrafts, psychological training, and creative workshops)
- Amateur/creative associations of adults at **cultural institutions** (culture palaces and centres, museums, philharmonics)
- „**Znanie**” (knowledge) society auditoriums, and
- Leisure centres for **disabled** people

Acquiring knowledge of the arts, the opportunity to communicate, being united by common interests and mastering practical skills ensure a better quality of life. In this context, involvement in the educational activities of **disadvantaged groups** or adults who for any reason find themselves in a difficult situation is of particular importance. More specifically, pensioners who have been trained at "lifelong education centres" or at the „Znanie" society, list among the results of their training: better health status, improved emotional state, positive changes in relations with their relatives and the ability to make friends with their peers. They



also note improved **self-esteem**, social activity, willingness to cooperate and communicate. Moreover, it makes no difference what course they have taken - computer competence, foreign languages, physiotherapy, "personal finance management", choral studio or a "biographical workshop".

Along with organisations implementing educational activities in practice, the issues associated with adult education are addressed by **social services** (which organise leisure activities and support re-socialization), research institutes and centres (which develop theoretical aspects of AE), and **culture institutions** (that help meet various needs of adults contributing to their self-actualization and communication).

### Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Non-profit non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have been actively developing in recent decades in the Russian Federation. Initially, most NGOs were mainly aimed at addressing a set of social issues and reflected people's willingness to **improve social standards** - at least in some areas (environment, politics, social institutions development, status of disadvantaged groups, etc.), however these socially oriented activities moved progressively closer to education. In fact, organisation of round tables, preparation of publications, and conducting various campaigns, as well as training of their own personnel and setting up educational programs for target groups transformed NGOs into institutions implementing **professional socially-oriented educational activities**.

- **The Association of Regional Nongovernmental Educational Organizations.** This association states as its primary goal the "urgent correction of the legal framework of non-government education both at federal and regional levels", and declares that reform is needed for all forms of education including children, secondary and higher education.

- **The All-Russia Movement "Education for All"** is directed toward the struggle for equality and exercising of civil rights in the widest sense. It seeks to establish (and reconstruct) the publicly available and **free preschool education system**, the compulsory and **free full secondary education system**, and make it possible to obtain basic or secondary vocational education at any age. It also seeks development and approval of the special government program "**Lifelong Education**", and the establishment of a system of supplementary social protection during training of low income groups, orphans, disabled persons and the rural population. The fact that these institutions have emerged suggests that society is gradually becoming more aware of these issues, however the realisation of these goals is still seen to be unlikely in the near future.



## Vocational Institutions and career-related training

In general, it should be noted that **conservatism** is typical of state vocational AE institutions. Characteristics of adult trainees, their life and professional experience are rarely taken into account, which somewhat reflects the higher education or school system, where **learning is almost always classroom and desk based**, with a formal system of tests, examinations, and course work.

The Vocational sector can be divided into various kinds of provision:

- **Sectorial and inter-company training centres** (sectorial training centres, training and course centres, advanced training courses, etc.), which are subordinate to federal ministries and agencies. In this respect, the most active actors are the Ministry of Education (over half of the total number of trainees), and professional development institutions of the Ministry of Health. The advanced training and retraining institutions under ministries of agriculture, transport and energy are preserved as well.

- **Secondary and secondary specialized vocational educational institutions** (technical schools, lyceums, colleges, and vocational-technical schools), as well as higher educational establishments (institutes, academies, and universities), which provide training and retraining for managerial, engineering and technical personnel. The official statistics suggest that Russia has over two thousands state educational institutions implementing vocational further education programs.

- **Commercial vocational educational institutions.** Since their primary objective is to make a profit, these institutions work to clients' needs and produce products which are in demand in the educational services market. Most popular are language courses, courses in mastering various software, programs for accountants and economists, various compensation programs (personal growth and development schools, courses in public speaking, etc.), application-oriented occupations and professions - hair stylist, masseuse, administrative assistant, etc. The quality of those services cannot be assessed here; however often their activities are subjected to severe criticism (in the mass media, the Internet and by users of educational services).

## Universities and Distance Learning

Distance learning (DL), which was initiated in Russia as a pilot project, has made a breakthrough over the past decade. New regulatory documents, which **legalize DL methods** to a considerable extent, have been developed and put into practice. "**The Methodology of Distance Learning Organization at Higher Vocational Educational Institutions in the Russian Federation**" has been prepared, and a number of draft industry-specific standards have been



developed. Heads of several higher educational institutions participating in the pilot project were granted the government award for development of scientific-methodological and organizational-technological fundamentals of the federal university distance learning network. However, distance learning still lacks a solid legal framework (laws and standards on higher education cannot be used to address issues and legalize DL), communication channels are far from perfect, and methodological and educational aids have different formats, which makes it difficult to use them.

Distance learning (DL) has begun to be **implemented as a "substructure" of higher education**, and has been introduced into higher educational institutions, both at a state and non-state level.

Those considered as leaders in the field include, **International Management Institute LINK, Moscow State Industrial University, All-Russian Distance Learning Institute of Finance and Economics, and the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia**. Within the period of their operation, they have collectively established around 588 training centres (affiliates), employing thousands of teachers, tutors and teachers-technologists. Currently, through the Internet, hundreds of training courses are offered to adults in various areas (training in PC software, management and quality of project implementation; skills in memory development, writing and even musical training). However it is important to note that this training is **not accessible to everyone**: both from the fact that the training requires advanced computer equipment and internet access, and also because courses can cost up to 800-1,000 euros.

## References

With kind permission this report is entirely taken from **Olga Agapova's document 'Adult Education in the Russian Federation'**, as published in Uwe Gartenschlaeger (Ed.), 2009, *International Perspectives in Adult Education - IPE 63: European Adult Education outside the EU*, published by the Institut für Internationale Zusammenarbeit des Deutschen Volkshochschul-Verbandes dvv international in Cooperation with the European Adult Education Association EAEA. Some of the language in the text has been edited or altered for the purpose of this report, however all content remains the work of the original author.