



EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION
OF ADULTS

Country Report on Adult Education in LATVIA

Helsinki, 2011



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Introduction

This Report covers the situation of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Latvia. 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 Latvia 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

Latvia is geographically the central country of the Baltic States, with a rich adult education history. Adult education is seen in this context as a diverse process offering personal development and the capacity to cope in the labour market throughout life. It is a part of the lifelong learning process determined by social and economical needs of the state. Latvia offers its adult population many possibilities to learn through both the formal and the non-formal learning system. [1]

Politics and Law

The Lifelong learning policy is currently based on the strategy "**Guidelines for lifelong learning Policy for 2007-2013**" with the idea that individuals acquire competencies for personal growth, self-development and integration into the labour market at every life stage. This creates preconditions for the development of active citizenship, provides abilities to adapt, and improves **social integration, employment**, and active civil participation. [2]

In order to support the implementation of the strategy, the "**Programme for implementation of the Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy**" has been created with the following objectives:

- To ensure the availability of learning;
- To create quality-driven learning provision; and
- To harmonise legislation for efficient use of resources.

The Lifelong learning strategy has been developed on the basis of national development policy documents such as the **Latvian National Development Plan 2007-2013** and takes into account economic and demographic challenges. A reviewed strategy and the programme were approved by the government at the end of 2009. Amendments reinforce the **labour market oriented priorities** in education and training according to the National Action Plan for Economic Stabilisation and Development (February, 2009).

Based on the strategy, national legislation includes adult learning aspects in the following acts:

- Education Law (1998); [3]
- Adult education definition (2007)
- General Education Law (1999); [4]



- Professional Education Law (1999);
- Law of Higher Education Institutions (1995) [4]

Future trends/key concerns/directions

The main challenge in the present day situation of adult education is how to increase the participation rate in adult learning. The **Education and Training 2020 programme** sets the aim for participation of adults in lifelong learning to 15% in the age group 25-64. According to Eurostat data Latvia has achieved a 5.3% participation rate in 2009 whilst the EU average was 9.3%.

A revised strategy foresees the following activities in the future:

- Introduction of a revised **national qualifications framework** based on learning outcomes with links to the **European Qualifications framework**;
- Implementation of the **validation of non-formal and informal learning**;
- Increase of mobility opportunities for learners;
- Education supply to better match the labour market needs;
- Provision of opportunities for new basic skills acquirement for all;
- Reduction in the number of drop-outs and early school leavers;
- Enhancement of the **'second chance'** education opportunities, especially for socially at risk groups.

Structure overview

The main goal of adult learning in Latvia is to provide individuals with the opportunity to obtain or complement existing learning based on needs and interests, irrespective of age, sex and previous education (with an emphasis on **'up-skilling'** or **'re-skilling'**).

Nine national ministries [5] along with other stakeholders collaborate in the implementation of the lifelong learning strategy. The ministries are: The Ministry of Education and Science, The Ministry of Welfare, The Ministry of Culture, The Ministry of Agriculture, The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government, The Ministry of Justice, The Ministry of Economy, and The Ministry of Interior. This model of governance is intended to ensure that adult learning responds to the needs of various groups of individuals in different sectors and for different reasons. The main funds for adult learning are distributed from the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Welfare.



In Latvia, according to the Education Law **local governments** are also responsible for **adult non-formal education** provision. Local governments had established a network of adult education institutions to provide education service for adults. However during the recent economic downturn and due to very limited resources available, local governments may stop further developments of, or even have to close, government adult education institutions.

Within the Latvian framework of the formal educational system, adult education extends over general education (basic and secondary), vocational education, post-secondary education (further vocational training) and higher education. There is a wide range of non-formal adult education opportunities, provided by the state, local government and private education institutions. Informal learning acquired through working and personal life has been given higher value through the ability to validate it as a form of educational level (starting 2011). Education is available in a number of forms, including full-time, extramural education; extramural - distance learning (also for general education), or self-directed education.

Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education

There are 31 general education evening schools, a network of 58 vocational education institutions (41 VET institutions admitted adults in the 2009/2010 school year) , 58 higher education institutions (including 26 colleges) and 571 adult non-formal education institutions. According to the Education Law an education institution is able to provide adult non-formal education programmes without having a licence, but other institutions (e.g. private companies) require a licence issued by the local authority. In 2009 1286 licenses were issued in 81 local municipalities.

Distance learning or e-learning facilities are offered for students in most universities (e.g. University of Latvia, Latvian University of Agriculture, Riga Technical University) offering a large variety of non-formal and formal education programmes for adult learners, as well as language learning activities.

There are also lifelong learning centres in the regional universities (e.g. Liepaja University, Ventspils Higher Education Institution) which put special emphasis on adult education and offer a broad variety of adult learning courses.

In Latvia, state schools are used for adult education by an agreement of the school administration and local authorities. In addition various adult education programmes are offered by local municipalities, and adult training centres established by municipalities at regional and local level. One example is the Jelgava Adult learning Centre [5]. This centre offers a good learning environment



and provides courses to a wide target group (jobseekers, employees of different institutions, entrepreneurs, school teachers, youth groups and seniors).

Adult education as a whole also covers vocational and in-service training for business or sectoral needs. Large state-owned and private companies have training centres (e.g., The National Bank, Latvian Mobile Telephone, Lattelecom, The Latvian Railway, The Latvian Postal Service, large trade centres etc.). These centres have regular education programmes for the employees of companies. The specific needs and requirements of individuals are taken care of by a network of private and non-governmental educational institutions and undertakings that are run on private funding and some of the are profit-oriented [6].

EAEA Members

Latvian Adult Education Association (Latvijas Pieaugušo izglītības apvienība), LAEA, is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, which unites adult education providers in Latvia - both individuals and organizations. The aim of LAEA is to promote the development of non-formal adult education and to advice the national body for lifelong learning policy, thereby promoting development of a civic, democratic and open society [7].

References

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