



EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION
OF ADULTS

Country Report on Adult Education in POLAND

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Introduction

This Report covers the situation of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Poland. 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 Poland 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 Poland, adult education is often referred to as ‘**Continuing Education**’, which is defined as ‘education in schools for adults as well as the development of general knowledge, vocational skills formation and ability development in out-of-school forms by persons who have graduated from compulsory education’. Often the main focus of adult education is **centred on the labour market** (especially true in previous decades), and getting unemployed people into work. Over the past few years changes are emerging which show a new desire to make adult education more accessible, by developing systems - for example - with **e-learning**. However it is still true that most Continuing Education is aimed towards **vocational training** in one form or another, especially in relation to helping people adjust their skills to the needs of a rapidly developing market.

Politics and Law

The Minister of National Education is responsible for co-ordinating adult education, primarily through the activities of the **Department of Vocational and Continuing Education**, which is responsible for many of the aspects of adult education. Activities which fall into this remit include the establishment and running of public continuing education centres, public practical training centres and in-service training centres, as well as for the definition of principles underlying the acquisition, complementing and improvement of vocational qualifications. They also have responsibility for the co-ordination of the **core curriculum for vocational training**, evaluating the continuing education system and the accreditation system for education centres. The Minister of Education also co-operates with the **Minister of Economy and Labour**, the **Minister of Culture** and the **Minister of Health** in the area of vocational and continuing education.

The **powiat (district) authorities** are responsible for running of **post-gymnasium schools** (see ‘Structure and Providers’) including those for adults, continuing and practical education centres and other non-school institutions. The gmina authorities are in charge of primary and lower secondary schools for adults (apart from special schools). All public schools for adults are organised and run by **territorial self-government units**. Non-public schools for adults are organised and run by individuals or by bodies such as **associations, social and religious organisations**, etc.

Continuing Education is regulated by the following main acts:

- **The Education System Act** of 7 September 1991, which - with subsequent amendments - states that education, training and in-service training can be



provided on a daily, evening, extramural, distance-learning, or out-of-school basis, or in any other system combining any of the above forms (i.e. in non-formal or flexible ways). These tasks are carried out by public and non-public adult schools, centres for continuing education, practical training centres, and other institutions of out-of-school education run by, among others, associations and foundations or folk universities. **The Education System Act** (amended in 1998) also made it possible for the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Administration, of Justice and of National Defence to run particular kinds of schools, (however, these schools remain a marginal phenomenon within the Continuing Education sector). The important change in functioning of adult schools was introduced by the Act of 21 November 2001 'Regulations introducing the reform of school system' which introduced **the new types of post-gymnasium schools**.

- The amended version of the Education System Act (of June 2003) introduced vital changes to adult education in Poland. In this legislation a rule was introduced which **separated the continuing education centres (CKU) and practical education centres (CKP)** from schools, and recognised that they had different statutory aims. This new position of the CKUs and CKPs allowed them to integrate actions undertaken by various continuing education institutions and to create **regional or national networks of continuing education institutions**. It also brought about changes in the system of examinations and gave a basis of support for the providers of adult education, including pedagogical supervision. Local authorities can now delegate tasks related to education to the provider organisations themselves, which also changes the rules of regulating the financing of non-public organisers of continuing education from the state budget. This is of particular importance in terms of support to adult education.

- **The Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market** of 20 April 2004 includes legal regulations concerning institutions of the labour market, e.g. public employment services, training institutions, social dialogue institutions and institutions of local partnership. According to the Act public and non-public bodies offering education in out-of-school forms (see Structure and Providers) and registered as training institutions with the regional authorities, are eligible to offer **training to the unemployed**. The act aimed to **increase professional activity** among the unemployed and to involve more participants in the programmes focused on the promotion of employment. According to the introduced changes, labour market and research institutions can receive funding from the central budget or from the Labour Fund for implementation of activities related to the development of the labour market and also social integration. The state's tasks concerned with tackling unemployment are implemented on the basis of the Action Plan towards Employment approved by the Polish government (the Council of Ministers) in 2008.



- The Act '**Law on Higher Education**' of 27 July 2005 includes legal regulations regarding **post-graduate studies** and training courses offered to adults by higher education institutions.

The detailed rules and conditions for improvement of vocational qualifications and of general education of adults are included in the regulations by the Council of Ministers and by the ministers of education and of labour.

Future trends/key concerns/directions

Innovations in adult education, particularly related to vocational training, have been progressing over the past years within the context of the **European Qualifications Framework**. This includes **developing qualification standards**, modular curricula and educational packages, and was begun in 2008 with a view to continuing throughout the coming years. The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) was introduced into the European education on the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of in 2008, and has become a common reference framework which links countries' qualifications systems. Additionally, the framework addresses qualifications acquired in continuing education. Since 2008 trends in Poland have been focussing on developing a national framework of qualifications in line with the EQF, which is still ongoing (as of late 2010).

There has also been a growing concern for **developing professional standards**, and as such over 250 **National Professional Qualification Standards** have been developed by the Institute for Sustainable Technologies - National Research Institute in Radom between 2006 and 2008. This was within a project commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy which lead on from previous similar projects such as the "**Investigation of Training Needs**" from 1998. As an outcome of this project there was **evaluation of standards** and reviews, as well as the development of educational packages and module curricular. Educational packages here refer to sets of materials for teaching and learning, which provide teaching contents and resources for a modular unit (correlated handbooks for students and teachers). **Modular curricula for vocational education** are a set of educational training modules in a vocation and respective modular units designed on the basis of specific criteria enabling acquisition of knowledge and development of skills and attitudes appropriate for a given job. All programmes are available at the website: www.standardyiszkolenia.praca.gov.pl (last accessed October 2010).

This development shows how the attitude to professionalism and **developing national standards** has been growing over the past decade, and still remains an important concern for the future. It also shows the direction that Poland is taking in striving to achieve the most up to date standards and innovative methods of teaching, especially related to vocational training, which is also demonstrated in



the trend for promoting and **developing e-learning** and digital learning resources and techniques.

Structure overview

The system of Continuing Education in Poland is often seen by the terms **‘in school’ or ‘out-of-school’**. On the whole these phrases quite closely relate to the idea of **formal** and **non-formal** education, as ‘in school’ comprises education in institutions and qualification driven vocational training, where as ‘out of school’ is more independent and informal. Adult ‘in school’ education is provided in primary schools, gymnasias (secondary schools), basic vocational schools, upper secondary and post-secondary schools, and in higher education establishments, although primary schools for adults are very rare. Postgraduate studies are also considered to be a form of continuing education, and are organised by public or non-public higher education institutions, research units and by units of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education

‘Non-Formal’ Learning

The main providers of **‘out-of-school’ continuing education** in Poland are **Continuing Education Centres** and **Practical Training Centres**. Practical training centres are more focussed on offering the **unemployed** and those registered with the Labour Office as a **‘job seeker’ training** and programmes to help them find employment. Continuing Education Centres can follow an **accreditation scheme** with the local authority, and are mainly organised by **social organisations, religious organisations or individuals**. Continuing Education Centres are also in charge of offering advice to teachers and lecturers employed in adult education, and also employ professional advisers specialised in adult education. Practical Training Centres are also involved in in-service training programmes for youth and adult school teachers.

Vocational Institutions and career-related training

The National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (KOWEZiU) is in charge of the preparation and co-ordination of activities in the area of training and **in-service training of teachers working in schools for adults** and in continuing education. It co-operates with CKU and CKP. The Centre organises meetings and seminars with a view to disseminating most recent developments in the area of vocational and continuing education, as well as research results, publications and pedagogical innovations. It also **co-**



operates with social partners with respect to the **quality assurance** in the area of vocational and continuing education.

As mentioned, vocational training is often directed towards the **unemployed** with a view to getting them back **into the labour market**. The unemployed are directed by labour offices towards courses on the basis of criteria agreed by the training institution, or the employer if relevant. Qualifications required by employers are taken into consideration while preparing the training programme, as well as the level of previous education, work experience and additional skills etc.

e-learning

E-Learning in Poland has been a focus of **Higher Education institutions** over the past decade, as they have been increasingly working towards developing effective e-learning platforms. This is backed by the **Ministry of Education**, although currently only targeted at **formal education** and Higher Education institutions. However, there seems to be increasing energy in the field, and in 2006 the Association for Academic E-Learning was established in Poland, who aim to participate in the process of raising the level of education of Polish society and the development of the idea of an information society and to promote and develop e-learning in academic communities and public administration. [1]

References

Written with the guidance and collaboration of the Institute for Sustainable Technologies - National Research Institute, and: Eurydice. 2008, Structures of education, vocational training and adult education systems in Europe: Poland, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/structures/041_PL_EN.pdf ; www.koweziu.edu.pl ; www.itee.radom.pl

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