

## LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION IN LITHUANIA

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**Abstract.** *The article reviews the changes in legal acts and their role in the development of adult education in Lithuania. Developing learning opportunities and bringing educational services closer to each individual is a political action based on a fundamental provision of respect for the individual, his / her ability to create one's own life and that of his / her loved ones and the duty to help to do it as best as possible. Education, as an institution, has an increasingly complex role to play in justifying and creating a common educational content on which to build the social life of society in order to enable a person to develop general skills, lifelong learning skills, and helping him to adapt to a constantly changing environment. The laws and resolutions discussed reflect the advanced attitude of adult education in Lithuania as an important part of the lifelong learning system in society and provide wider opportunities for its development. Summarizing the normative documents regulating adult learning, it can be stated that at the level of strategic objectives they are relevant and purposeful, but not sufficient in some cases.*

**Keywords:** *adult education, legal documents, strategies.*

### Introduction

In Lithuania, as in the most of the world, there is a growing awareness that learning is one of the most important and necessary means of helping people to become the conscious managers of their own functions, the participants in state development, the regional citizens who can effectively contribute to the sustainable change, economic and social progress. Developing learning opportunities and bringing educational services closer to each individual is a political action based on a fundamental provision of respect for the individual, his / her ability to create one's own life and that of his / her loved ones and the duty to help to do it as best as possible. The signs of modern rapid change reveal the importance of the ability of a person, organization and society to adapt to constant change. Changes are based on economy, technology, communication, but they may not be related to morale or the values that education seeks to transfer. Thus, education has a dual purpose: to help an individual to adapt to the external changes dictated by globalization and to pass on the inner values of society that are related to the identity of the nation and the person. Education, as an institution, has an increasingly complex role to play in justifying and creating

a common educational content on which to build the social life of society in order to enable a person to develop general skills, lifelong learning skills, and helping him to adapt to a constantly changing environment. However, the development of the education system requires the development of a legal framework that assists and promotes the development of adult education in Lithuania.

The aim of the article is to analyze the changes in legal acts and their role in the development of adult education in Lithuania.

### **Evolution of adult education legislation**

In 1990, after Lithuania regained its independence, the political and economic system of society changed, and the process of integration into the community of democratic states began, this situation created new requirements for adult education. The building of an advanced adult education system based on legal documents has become a task of public interest, as the exploitation of adult education potential is the main success story in solving topical problems of today's Lithuania.

The legal basis for adult education in Lithuania consists of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, laws, resolutions of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (secondary legislation), normative acts of its authorized institutions (ministries, etc.) and other legal documents.

The main document defining the rights and duties of the state and its citizens, the document defining the state structure is the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992), which was approved in 1992 and Article 41 of the Constitution states that learning in state and municipal general education, vocational and higher schools is free, but also compulsory for individuals of until 16 years of age.. Higher education is also available to everyone according to the abilities of each person. The right to any kind of participation in education (the right to disseminate information) is declared, it only requires that it does not harm health and morality.

The first Lithuanian Education System Development Strategy Paper “Lithuanian Education Concept” (1992) noted that adult education is a large part of the permanent education system that augments the physical and spiritual power of the personality. The document emphasizes that the adult education system is characterized by complexity and diversity of structures - educational institutions, voluntary organizations, educational and cultural institutions, commercial institutions and mutual assistance groups. Media and modern information technologies also play an important role in this system. Thus, as a system, adult education encompasses all structures in which formal and non-formal adult education takes place, as a process, adult education is any activity

that leads adults to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as their attitudes and behavior. This concept also provided for the training of adult education specialists, not limited to teachers (called pedagogues), but complementing them with libraries, museums and club workers. It should also be noted that, at the very beginning of the state's restoration, the concept focused not only on the training of adults directly involved in the labor market but also on social exclusion groups (people with disabilities, migrants, sentenced persons) and other vulnerable groups.

The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in 1991, noted that the purpose of education is to create the conditions for a person to acquire the foundations of civil and political culture embodying democratic traditions, to develop the skills and experience necessary for a person as a competent Lithuanian citizen, member of a European and global community, a multicultural society member.

As the structure of the Lithuanian economy changed dramatically at that time, much attention was paid to vocational training. In 1997, the Law on Vocational Education and Training of the Republic of Lithuania defines vocational training as training aimed at providing individuals with a profession or with necessary retraining. In addition to providing the profession and general cultural education for individuals, the objective of the vocational training system was to create conditions for the improvement of professional qualifications and retraining so that the person could respond to the constantly changing needs of the labor market. The Law on Special Education of the Republic of Lithuania (1998), established the principles of the organization of one part of the special education system - adult education, and Article 3 defines non-formal education of adults with special needs as a cultural and rehabilitative education for persons with special needs, encouraging an individual to develop, and creating conditions for more effective social adaptation.

The Law on Non-formal Adult Education of the Republic of Lithuania (1998), adopted in 1998, is particularly important for the development and accessibility of adult education in Lithuania. It is important to note that Lithuania was the first of the Baltic States to adopt a law regulating non-formal adult education. The law legitimized the term of non-formal adult education, defining it and laying the foundations for its structure, operation and management. The following tasks of non-formal adult education were formulated in the law:

- to help the person to meet the needs of self-education, to develop his / her creative interests;
- to develop the person's creative powers and abilities;
- to help a person become an active citizen of a democratic society;

- to create conditions for acquiring theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary for professional activities, as well as conditions for the improvement of qualification.

The Law identifies the main forms of non-formal adult education, identifies key factors and actors for successful non-formal adult education. The non-formal adult education council (expert body) defines the main perspectives of non-formal education development and coordinates the activities of non-formal adult education institutions. The law places great emphasis on education participants and their rights. Participants have to get all information about adult education programs, forms, offer to institutions, and use of state support. Obligations of promoters in non-formal adult education are set to ensure high quality implementation of non-formal adult education programs for participants.

To sum up, a young state, along with a lot of attention to economic change, has also focused on adult education and its legal regulation as an important factor in Lithuania's development.

### **The Role of Legal Documents in Developing Lifelong Learning in Lithuania**

Global changes in the world at the beginning of the 20th century (abundance of information, new information communication technologies) created preconditions for further improvement of the country's economy and upgraded people's standard of living. This changing society has been called a knowledge, information, learning society. According to Jarvis (1996), society is a complex, constantly changing social system. Educational institutions are under pressure by this change, especially by the growth of technology and economic institutions, but at the same time, educational institutions also affect other institutions. Individuals are also affected by these forces when they try to find their place in society. According to Fullan (1998), people are not passive receivers of social impact, they themselves make changes in their environment, become active agents, and contribute to the process of societal change. Fullan (1998) notes that the rapid change of the modern world is one of the main features of postmodern society. Reich (1992) links postmodernism and education by stating that the most important values of each are the citizens' intelligence and skills. In his view, the most important thing for each country is to increase the potential that its citizens can contribute to the world economy by sharing their experience and skills and improving their application on the global market. All these changes are reflected in the adopted legal documents for adult education.

In March 2000, the European Council in Lisbon noted that Europe has undoubtedly entered the Age of Knowledge, in which learning and education

become a necessity and that it has an impact on economic, cultural and social life. The Memorandum of Lifelong Learning published in the same year noted that the availability, motivation and skills of the most up-to-date information and knowledge become a factor in increasing European competence, people's employability and greater opportunities more than ever (Zemaitaityte, 2007). Lifelong Learning Memorandum Discussions in Lithuania have led to the drafting of an amendment to the Law on Education in the Republic of Lithuania. The new version of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, approved in 2003, defined the purpose of adult education - to create conditions for a person to study for life, to meet the needs of cognition, to improve the acquired qualification, and to acquire additional qualifications.

This is confirmed by the most important strategic documents of education development - the Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-2012 (2003) and the Implementation Program and the Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning (2004) and the Action Plan for its Implementation. The National Education Strategy 2003-2012, approved in 2003, highlights the mission of education: to help a person to acquire a professional qualification that corresponds to the state of the art in terms of technology, culture and personal skills, and to create conditions for lifelong learning to meet the needs of cognition, to develop new competencies and qualifications required by the individual. professional career and meaningfulness of life. In order to ensure the efficiency and coherence of education development, the aim is to transfer a large part of responsibility to municipalities and districts not only for general education but also for vocational training, special education and continuous adult learning. The document noted the need to create a flexible and open educational structure combining forms of general education, studies, formal, non-formal and informal learning into a common educational space. The following general strategic objectives for the development of education were raised in the National Education Strategy Implementation Program for 2003-2012:

- to develop an effective and coherent education system based on responsible management, targeted funding and rational use of resources;
- to develop a continuous, lifelong learning, accessible and socially fair education system;
- to ensure the quality of education, in line with the needs of both the individual living in an open civil society and a market economy, and the needs of the present world society.

The 2004 Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning has highlighted the importance and importance of key competences in developing adult learning. It

was emphasized that the acquisition of key competences facilitates the integration into the labor market and the professional qualification of adults and did not acquire it. In this way, adult learning is based on cooperation, the development of individuality, personal qualities and social abilities. Although the development of key competences is more a priority for vocational training and continuing vocational training, this education is emphasized throughout the education system, without distinguishing between general training schools, universities and other institutions.

Recently, adult education is increasingly focusing on the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal adult education, especially when discussing individual competences and professional flexibility and mobility. The world of production and the social community hope that the changed internal education supply system will bring about new and rapid changes, i. e. that educational institutions meet the new needs for competence development. Educational institutions are expected to meet the needs of both individuals and organizations, and will ensure an individual learning process. According to Bjornavald (2000), the ongoing fundamental transformation of non-formal education and vocational training is linked to the growing importance of continuing education. Creating a permanent learning system requires a strong link between different forms of learning, different learning spheres and different life periods. Bjornavald (2000) notes that the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal education are undoubtedly perceived as indispensable tools for new ways of learning and for accelerating public progress. In the knowledge economy, the development of human resources is becoming a decisive factor in maintaining competitiveness (Schultz, 1998), so diplomas, certificates and other qualifications prove to keep their value for employers and individuals in the enterprise and the labor market. Employment competition is growing, and employers need more and more skilled workers. Recognition and assessment of non-formal knowledge and skills encourages a person to increase his / her competence, strengthen his / her career position and suitability in the labor market, and increase the potential of human resource management. Recognition and assessment of competences are highlighted in the context of the validity and relevance of the three key learning environments:

- appropriateness of learning that took place in formal education and other learning environments;
- appropriateness of learning that has been linked to the labor market;
- suitability of learning in the context of voluntary activities and social services (Lauzackas et al., 2005).

Responding to the European Commission's Communication "Adult learning: It is never too late to learn", in 2008 a new Strategy for Ensuring

Lifelong Learning was adopted, which also responds to the strategic priorities set out in the Draft Long-term Strategy for Lithuania's Economic Development up to 2020. The development of economic policy focuses on the growth of quality employment and investment in human capital, the development of physical, financial and social infrastructure and science, technology and innovation, and ensuring macroeconomic stability of the country. The Lifelong Learning Strategy (2008) emphasizes that a competitive economy, the development of a knowledge-based society and the prevention of social exclusion lead to the need not only to gain the skills required for the labor market, but also to improve qualifications, self-improve or retrain. Employee qualifications are becoming an increasingly important criterion for labor supply. It should be noted that for the first time in the Strategy, another important area of adult education has been highlighted - informal non-vocational adult education, which is important not only for employment or economic well-being, but also for social cohesion, active citizenship, and personal well-being of individuals. The Strategy recognizes the need to develop adult education programs in the country's higher education institutions, to introduce a system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The vision of a lifelong learning strategy is a peaceful, stable and prosperous society providing quality learning opportunities in the context of education, community, work and family for all members of society, based on national cultural heritage and universally recognized social and personal values to enhance their contribution to the economic, social and cultural fabric of the nation. Life and the individual's personal life potential, improving the quality of life. Thus, it can be said that at the political level in Lithuania, more and more attention is paid to adult education. The fact that the Lifelong Learning Strategy and the Action Plan for its implementation (2008) no longer define adult learning as a mere vocational training shows that the importance of non-formal and informal adult learning and their place in the modern concept of lifelong learning is better understood at the state level.

The changing era and new documents of European Commission have led to a review of the Law on Non-formal Adult Education adopted in 1998 and, in the light of current issues, the adoption in 2014 of a new Law on Non-formal Adult Education and Continuing Education. The law aims to provide legal guarantees for a person to exercise their innate right to lifelong development of their personality, to guarantee the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills, to discover new meanings of life, to promote not only professional skills but also to develop meaningful leisure time, to be an active member of a democratic society. The law states that the organization of non-formal adult education and continuing education includes: planning and implementing non-formal adult education and continuing education; information and consultation of

participants; quality assurance in learning; monitoring and evaluation of implementation and recognition of competences acquired by non-formal and informal learners.

Lithuania's 2030 Progress Strategy approved in 2012, emphasizes that Lithuania seeks to become a learning society: modern and dynamic, ready for the challenges of the future and capable of acting in a constantly changing world. The strategy notes that one of the most important factors determining the development processes of society is a well-developed and successful lifelong learning system, which effectively applies the possibilities of information communication technologies, ensuring acquisition and improvement of the knowledge and abilities necessary for a dynamic society.

Implementing the above-mentioned Law on Non-formal Adult Education and Continuing Learning (2014) and responding to the fourth objective of the National Education Strategy for 2013-2022 (2003), "to guarantee the effectiveness of the education system, to create a framework of incentives and a level playing field for lifelong learning based on effective support for self-identification and for choosing the way to the world of activities. In 2016, the Program for the Development of Non-formal Adult Education and Continuing Education for 2016–2023 (2016), the strategic goal of which is to create and develop a system of adult education and continuing education that is supportive and accessible, and socially fair education, in line with the individual and society needs working in the open civil society. The strategy mentions lifelong learning as one of the key factors in ensuring that Lithuanian society is prepared for global change and enabling smart society.

In 2017, the action plan for lifelong learning for 2017-2020 was adopted to ensure the effectiveness of the education system, to create a system of incentives and a level playing field for lifelong learning based on effective support for self-identification and the path to global action, the creation of effective conditions and incentives for lifelong learning; increasing social inclusion.

The Law on Non-formal Adult Education and Continuing Education of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in 2014, was aimed at "strengthening coordination of adult education at national and municipal level, appointing adult education coordinators in municipalities, consolidating the adult educator-andragogue profession", but experience of implementation of the law has revealed the need to revise the subject of this law and relationship with relevant Lithuanian education documents and international (UNESCO, EU, OECD) policy guidelines and recommendations. The purpose of the draft law for consideration is to create legal preconditions for the systematic development of non-formal adult education as part of lifelong learning. The goal of adult education is to contribute to an inclusive development of the society: to provide opportunities for adults to participate in education activities on a continuous



basis in order to acquire competences relevant to successful professional career, meaningful self-expression, active participation in community life, representing social, cultural, economic and environmental interests. The project notes that adult education is a public good based on the following principles: equal opportunities; contextuality, dynamism and partnership. In the opinion of the project developers, the new wording of the law will ensure more differentiated by fields of activity (improvement of qualification, development of general competences, personal development) and more flexible coordination of adult education. Activities will be targeted to meet the needs of adult education at the municipal level, the planned adult education target programs being developed by the relevant ministries would be targeted at public education and engagement in the implementation of sustainable development objectives.

The European Commission's report on the European Commission's Adult Education Policy (2015) and its in-depth analysis of effectiveness says that, alongside rising employment and wages, adult education has a social impact: participation in educational activities reduces social exclusion, increases life satisfaction, including physical and mental health and self-esteem, strengthens social responsibility, tolerance, encourages participation in politics and community projects. This is fully in line with the needs of society development in Lithuania.

### **Conclusion**

The laws and resolutions discussed reflect the advanced provision of adult education in Lithuania. Existing laws formally provide essential preconditions for the implementation of the principle of lifelong learning in the policy of the European Union, but the lack of sufficient and concrete state support and good practice hinders the development of modern adult education and lifelong learning in Lithuania. Although three forms of learning - formal, non-formal and informal - have already been legalized in the most recent documents, full legal preconditions for the systematic development of adult education as part of lifelong learning are needed. A broader legal framework will undoubtedly contribute to the creation of an inclusive society by ensuring that all adults have regular opportunities to participate in education through the acquisition of competences and self-expression. Empowered lifelong learning as an integral part of public life will integrate learning into the everyday activities of adults.

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