

Evaluation of more effective involvement of low-skilled employed adults in learning



SUMMARY

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences
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The aim and the scope of the study

The **aim** of the evaluation was to elaborate a portrait of low-skilled adults and to identify their learning needs and the most effective strategies for their involvement in adult education.

The target group of the evaluation - **low-skilled employed adults** - are adults aged 25 and older who are employed in low-skilled occupations (i.e. 9th basic groups of occupations in which employees perform simple and monotonous work or mechanical work operations using hand tools and often also physical force, and the 8th basic group of occupations, i.e., equipment and machine operators and product linesman (professions whose main tasks are related to the use of highly automated and other industrial machines and equipment)).

Other **target groups**:

- ✓ participants of the specific objective No 8.4.1. project “Improvement of Professional Competence of Employed Persons” (SO No 8.4.1. project) who correspond to the main target group of the evaluation;
- ✓ municipal employees responsible for adult education;
- ✓ experts in the field of adult education - policy planners, implementers, and providers of adult education.

The study covers **the education policy sector**, in particular adult education, which is part of the lifelong learning. In accordance with the strategic benchmarks defined in ET 2020 at least **15% of adult EU population** should participate in learning by 2020. In relation to Latvia this objective is included in the mid-term education policy planning document “Guidelines for the Development of Education 2014-2020”.

In 2019, 7,4% of adults aged from 25 to 64 years were participating in learning in Latvia. Adults with lower levels of education and qualifications have lower participation rates.

The main activities of the evaluation:

- ✓ the statistical analysis of socio-demographic data of low-skilled employed adults;
- ✓ the survey of low-skilled employed adults;
- ✓ the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the SO No 8.4.1. project participants' – low-skilled employed adults - motivation and barriers to get involved in learning, their learning experience and necessary support measures;
- ✓ the analysis of the SO No 8.4.1. project participants – low-skilled employed adults – employment situation 12 months after participation in the project (learning);
- ✓ the survey of 119 municipalities on the organization and implementation of adult education;
- ✓ the analysis of the outreach activities in 119 municipalities for low-skilled employees during 2016-2018;
- ✓ the study of the experience of Estonia, Finland and the Netherlands in the field of adult education, particularly during 2016-2018;
- ✓ based on the results of the evaluation, conclusions and recommendations for the involvement of low-skilled employees in learning were developed.

Statistical portrait of a low-skilled employee

As a result of the analysis of statistical data on low-skilled employees in Latvia, a **socio-economic portrait** of this target group was created.



- ✓ man
- ✓ at pre-retirement age (45 - 64 years old)
- ✓ having secondary general, vocational or secondary vocational education
- ✓ employed in the construction, energy, transport and storage sectors
- ✓ works in the professions of drivers of self-propelled machinery and equipment and operators of lifting equipment and machinery or miners, construction, production and transport workers

Adult education supply development resource and problems

The projects supported by the EU funds and co-financed by the Latvian state have the main role in ensuring the adult education supply in Latvia during the 2014-2020 planning period. In the field of adult education in Latvia EU-funded projects are implemented under the administrative supervision of three sectoral ministries – Ministry of Education, Ministry of Welfare and Ministry of Economics.

The overall adult education supply is diverse in terms of content and type of programmes.



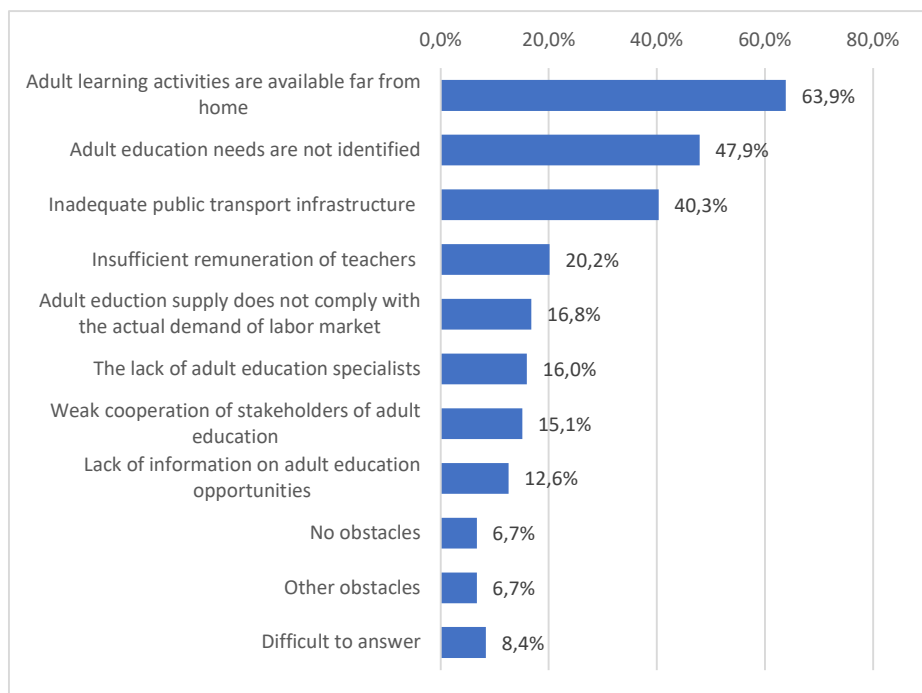
There is a risk of ensuring the sustainability of resources invested in the field of adult education, unlike a stable and independently functioning adult education system with clearly defined stakeholders', incl. state and local government-founded educational institutions, functions is established. Therefore, during this period **it is necessary to create and implement a versatile adult education system**, as well as to develop mechanisms, which are strengthened in the regulatory framework, for the further operation of this system after the end of EU funding support.

Adult education in municipalities

At the municipal level, **there is no unified system for the adult education supply development**, there is no targeted and planned approach applied.

- ✓ 13.4% of municipalities' planned measures in the field of adult education are fully implemented, 56.8% - partially implemented, 25.2% - are not planned / not implemented.
- ✓ 39.5% of municipalities annually provide targeted municipal budget funds for adult education, such are not provided in 48.7% of municipalities.
- ✓ 40% of municipalities do not identify adult education needs.
- ✓ 6% of municipalities' representatives feel fully informed about the education needs of the population.
- ✓ 77% of municipalities do not implement specific information measures for low-skilled employees.
- ✓ 92% of local governments do not organize specific outreach activities for low-skilled employees.

The obstacles of adult education organization in municipalities (%)



Source: the survey of municipalities' employees (n=119). Multi-response question, the sum of the answers is more than 100%.

Examples of good municipal practices for reaching and motivating low-skilled employees to involve in learning



In the municipality, there are **trusted persons** among the population who establish contact with the target group, find out their needs, living conditions, and inform them about learning opportunities in a simple way that they can understand. Such a practice is based on the enthusiasm of individuals, therefore there is a certain risk of its sustainability, so it can be a complementary tool in the overall work of the adult education coordinator at the municipal level.



A municipal employee in the field of adult education, together with representatives of the target group (usually individually), goes to visit a specific company **to get acquainted with the work environment and content, thus motivating them to engage in training** that would allow them to work in that particular company.



The municipality **works purposefully with employers** by going to companies, informing them about learning and training opportunities and conditions, helping to understand how employees could combine training with work, at what times and days the employer would be better off with training, and then employers motivate or send staff for training.



The municipality co-operates with employers to organize **meetings in companies with employees** and to inform them about educational opportunities, incl. the SO No 8.4.1. project activities. It is considered as proactive direct addressing of the target group in the work environment.

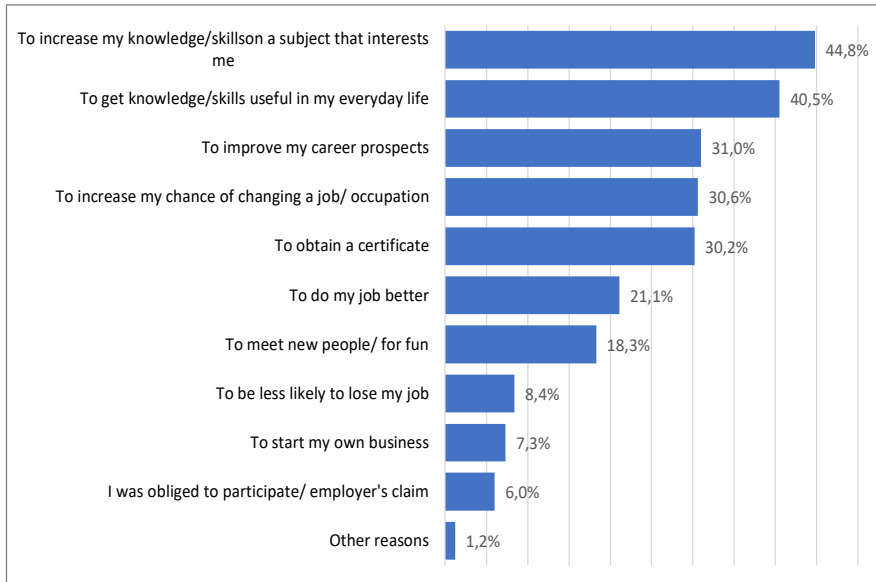


The potential of local communities - an informal action group of villagers has been established, which is called a smart village group. The members of this group have regular interaction with local residents, they are as intermediaries between the municipality and residents in disseminating all kinds of information.

The motivation of low skilled employed adults to involve in learning

An analysis of the motivating factors for low-skilled employed adults shows that, although learning is seen as a way to acquire new knowledge and skills for work, the current profession requires learning in about a third of cases, and more often, such professions already are performed by those employees who express a higher motivation to learn.

The motivation of low-skilled employed adults to involve in learning (%)



Source: survey of low-skilled employed adults (aged 25+), persons looking for training opportunities and starting learning. Multi-response question, the sum of the answers is more than 100%.

First, the motivation of low-skilled workers to learn is enhanced by **concrete, quickly visible benefits**, among which future perspectives, such as job retention or skills maintenance, are relatively rare.

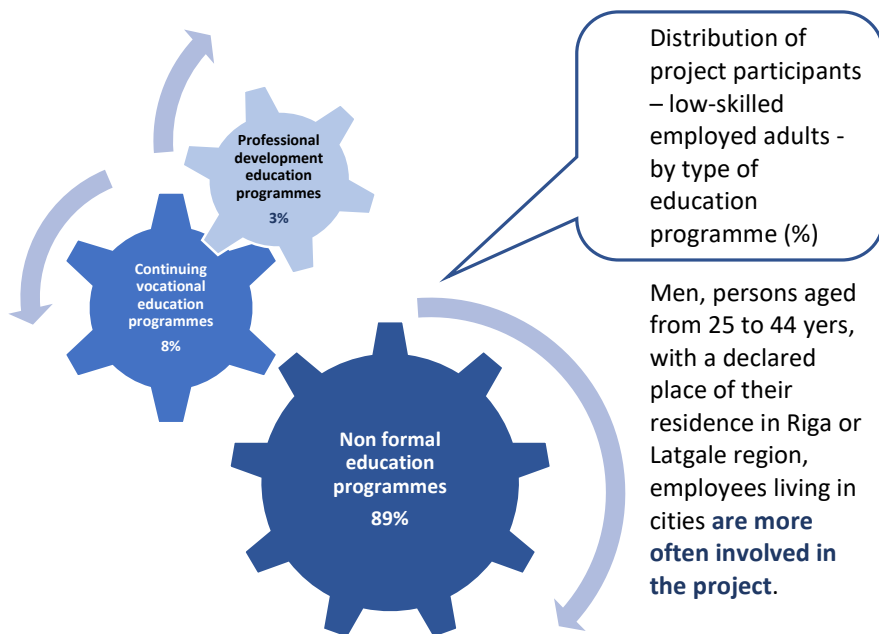
Second, higher motivation is observed among employees aged 25-44 years. **As a person ages, the person's learning motivation decreases.** The employer has a certain role in creating external motivation by his demands or incentives.

Third, low-skilled employed are **more intended to acquire knowledge or a profession that is relevant to their current occupation.**

Fourth, the impact of learning on work results and tasks is identified, i.e., **on work productivity components rather than wages**, although it is an essential tool to motivate this specific target group.

SO No 8.4.1. project: low-skilled participants' learning experience

The projects supported by EU funds and co-financed by the Latvian state have a significant role in the implementation and financing of adult education in Latvia. In relation to the main target group of this evaluation, the most important role is played by the SO No 8.4.1. project "Improvement of Professional Competence of Employed Persons" which is administrated by the State Education Development Agency – www.macibaspieaugusajiem.lv



Non-formal education programmes proposed by the SO No 8.4.1. project give a person the following benefits:

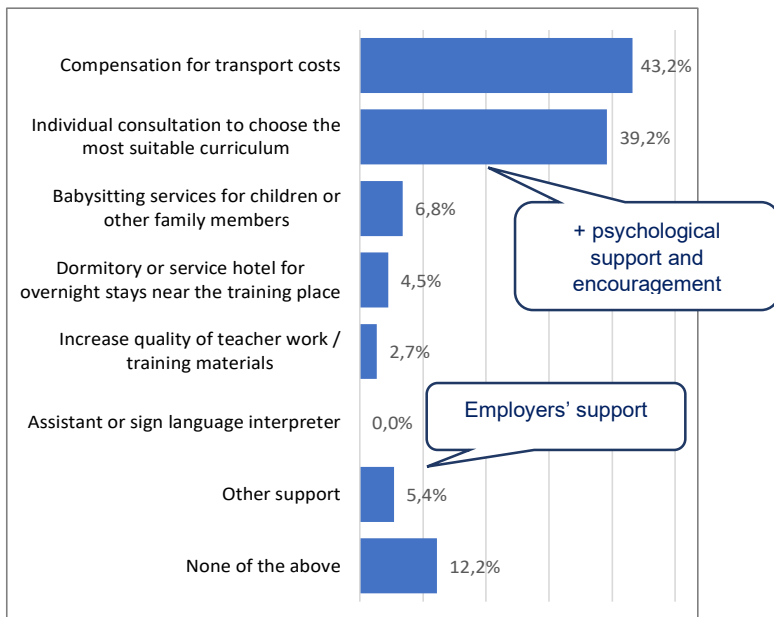
- ✓ personal growth,
- ✓ strengthening the position in the actual profession,
- ✓ getting learning experience.

The obstacles to get involved in continuing vocational education programmes:

- ✓ employee personality factor: development and maintenance of motivation,
- ✓ employer factor: adaptation of working time to learning process,
- ✓ organizational factor: adaptation of training/ learning to employees' employment situation;

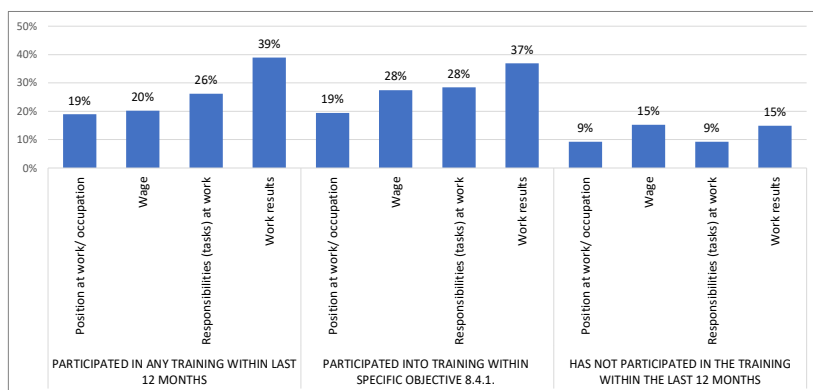
- ✓ financial factor: the co-payment for continuing vocational training programmes is higher than it is, for example, in the case of non-formal education programmes.

Necessary support measure: SO No 8.4.1. project participants' experience



Source: administrative data on SO No 8.4.1. project participants' – low-skilled employed adults (2020). Multi-response question, the sum of the answers is more than 100%.

The improvement of employment situation 6 months after learning (%)



Source: the survey of low-skilled employed adults (25+ years old); the survey of the SO No 8.4.1. project participants – low-skilled employed adults (2020).

The evaluation's results prove that **any learning or training activity has had a positive effect on the employment situation of an employee!**

Recommendations for the involvement of low-skilled employed adults in learning

- ✓ To develop **an understanding of lifelong learning**, including adult education, and its role in the professional and personal development of a person, both in society in general and among employers.
- ✓ To further develop **career education and career support services** in the general education stage, work with groups at risk of dropping out of the education system must be continued.
- ✓ To facilitate **the return to the education system** of those adults who have dropped out of it for various reasons. Opportunities must be provided for these educational target groups to acquire the required level of primary education, secondary education or initial vocational education.
- ✓ To expand the study offer for the acquisition of **basic skills and lifelong learning competencies**, incl. the SO No 8.4.1. project, according to the demand of the target group of employed adults, i.e. digital competences at all levels, multilingual competence, personal, social and learning competence.
- ✓ To increase **the involvement of Vocational Education Competence Centers** in the implementation of adult education for low-skilled employees by organizationally adapting formal education programmes for low-skilled employees.
- ✓ To provide **financial training support** (scholarships) for those involved in adult education, especially those on low incomes.
- ✓ To continue the existing technical support measures, especially for **regional learning mobility**.
- ✓ To evaluate the possibility in the projects supported by the EU funds, which are aimed at offering educational activities, **to determine the amount of financial support for persons with disabilities** - a certain amount of money that a person may use according to his / her needs to participate in project activities.

- ✓ In order to strengthen the role of planning regions in the provision of adult education, it is recommended to evaluate the possibility of developing **regional governance of adult education**.
- ✓ To develop a **network of adult education coordinators throughout Latvia** by introducing adult education coordinators as a full time position in municipalities with appropriate level remuneration.
- ✓ To develop and provide adult education coordinators with a **non-formal education programme, building the capacity and competence of the coordinators** in reaching, motivating and counseling the target group.
- ✓ **To develop employers' understanding** of the importance of employee education and learning culture in the company.
- ✓ To develop a new sustainable funding model for adult education in cooperation with employers and social partners - **sectoral skills funds**.
- ✓ To develop the provision of **integrated employment and training counseling services in the work environment** in co-operation with municipal adult education coordinators, employees' interest representatives (trade unions, NGOs, career counselors, etc.) and employers.

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