PORTRÄT

Galina Veramejchyk

Adult and Continuing Education in Belarus

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Länderporträt

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Country Reports on Continuing Education

A Series of the German Institute for Adult Education – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning

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Preliminary Notes

The interconnectedness of adult education, learning and its socio-political environment (persons and organizations, aims and educational concepts, as well as the labor market) is closer than that of universities and schools. Political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the particular national environment not only provide the general framework for adult education and learning, but are also under their influence.

There are various reasons for that. First of all, adult education has become an integral part of people's lives. Learning is considered a lifelong process in which knowledge, new competencies, skills and behavioral patterns are acquired. In addition, learning occurs not only on an individual level, but all economic development as well as democratic participation of the individual requires formal and informal learning.

Hence, the appearance of adult education and learning can be quite interlaced, confusing and complex. It varies from presentations, weekend seminars, courses of longer duration up to long-term vocational training. It occurs in companies, in educational organizations, at home, in cultural institutions and in the media. It is subject to different political and legal contexts. Sometimes, adult education is financed by official or state funds, sometimes by project resources; increasingly it is structured by the market.

The various systems of adult education that are embedded in national and regional traditions are hard to compare with each other. This becomes obvious when supra-regional and transnational projects with common interests and experiences are aspired to. The European Union is an excellent example for a process in which such differences are becoming more and more visible.

Stakeholders in research, practice and politics of adult education are more and more and more often confronted with the necessity to communicate and cooperate with partners in other nations on a professional level. Here, content, funding, reputation and interests become relevant. Cooperation and communication may be inefficient if the knowledge about conditions and structures in other European regions is insufficient. Especially when it is about details in cooperative structures, a lack of knowledge can turn into a problem.

If you want to cooperate with European partners, an overview about the situation of adult education and adult learning in other countries can be very helpful, since it puts partial information into context. This can be the base for further exploration.

The German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning continues its established series of reports on adult education in other European countries with this volume on "Adult and Continuing Education in Belarus". Volumes on Austria, Denmark, England, Germany, Greece, Spain, Switzerland, Cyprus, France and Norway have been published in the last ten years. This loose series shall be continued. All volumes about non-German speaking countries will be published in English and Open Access. Readers who prefer traditional books may order a print version for a small amount from W. Bertelsmann Verlag.

The series "Länderporträt" by the DIE provides a beneficial base for European adult education politics and one's individual practice in continuing education.

Josef Schrader
German Institute for Adult Education –
Leibniz-Centre for Lifelong Learning

1. General information

Facts and figures

Figure 1. Map of the Republic of Belarus

Official name: Republic of Belarus
Short name: Belarus
Territory: 207,600 square kilometres
Geographic position: located in Eastern Europe, borders to Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia
Official languages: Belarusian, Russian
National currency: Belarusian ruble (BYN)
Population: 9,498,700 (as of 1 January 2016). Share of urban population: 77.3%
Ethnic composition: Belarusians: 83.7%, Russians: 8.3%, Poles: 3.1%, Ukrainians: 1.7%, Jews: 0.1%, other ethnicities: 3.1% (2009 census)
Religions: Orthodox, Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islamis
Natural resources: potassium salts, wood, peat, granite, dolomite, limestone, clay, sand, minor oil and natural gas deposits
Climate: moderately continental, formed by Atlantic air masses with relatively moist and hot summers, mild winters, weather disturbances in autumn and spring
Administrative division: The Republic of Belarus is a unitary state consisting of six regions (oblasts) divided into 118 districts ("raions") and ten cities of regional subordination. The capital, Minsk, has the status of an independent administrative unit

Current political situation

Since the Republic of Belarus became independent on 25 August 1991, it has made a wide range of decisions aimed at transforming its political system. The most important among those was a shift from parliamentary democracy to presidential government (1994). The election of Alexander Lukashenko as the first president initiated the alteration of the political system towards the expansion of presidential power. Those changes reinforced the traditional centralization inherited from the Soviet era, hampering local self-government development. The expansion of presidential power led to tensions in domestic politics, producing more rigid framework conditions for civil society and political party activities, infringement on human rights, and restrictions on the freedom of the media.

The Lukashenko presidency brought the issue of language back to the public policy agenda. In 1991–1995, the Belarusian language was the only official language in the country. As a result of the referendum held in 1995 at the President's initiative, the Russian language acquired the status of a second official language, strengthening its position in both the document workflow and the education system. Moreover, it became a subject of political debate, with opposition forces emphasizing the dominance of the Russian language and calling it the continuation of 'language colonialism' (Brügermann, 2010, p.73, 80). Likewise, the 1995 referendum replaced the historical symbols (the emblem and flag) with new ones, which were very similar to those used in Soviet times, and declared the course for economic integration with Russia.

Today, Belarus is a presidential republic. The head of state has wide-ranging powers in all spheres of state administration (For instance, he issues decrees that have the force of law, defines the governmental structure, appoints half of the 12 judges of the Constitutional Court, approves laws adopted by the Parliament, is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, etc.). According to the Constitution of 1994 (amended in 1995, 1996 and 2004), the President is elected in direct elections and can serve for an unlimited number of terms.

Legislative power is exercised by a bicameral Parliament called the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. The lower house of the National Assembly (the House of Representatives) comprises 110 members, who are elected by direct vote for a four-year term. The upper house of the National Assembly (the Council of the Republic) is the chamber of territorial representation, 56 members of which are elected by local councilors, and 8 more are appointed by the President. Executive power is exercised by the Government (the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus) led by the Prime Minister. The judiciary power comprises the Supreme Court and specialized courts, such as the Constitutional Court, courts of general jurisdiction and economic courts, and is exercised through constitutional, civil, criminal, economic and administrative legal proceeding.

In its foreign policy, Belarus is oriented at maintaining and building cooperation with the CIS countries, primarily Russia, and a number of developing countries in

Asia and Latin America. A number of agreements with Russia have been signed since 1995 that resulted in creating a supranational union between Belarus and the Russian Federation in 1997 and a common Customs union in 2010.

The history of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union can be roughly divided into two periods: the first one covering years 1992-1996, and the second one starting from 1997 until the present time. The first period can be characterized as the time of building bilateral relations and searching for common interests. The second period is marked by a gradual cooling down in relations, limited contacts at the political level, and permanent confrontation. These years are marked by a number of contradictory decisions driven by the European Union's aspiration to promote democratization in Belarus and the Belarusian government's desire to benefit from cooperation with the EU.

In 2009, Belarus entered the Eastern Partnership and made an attempt to move to a whole new level of relations with the EU. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe offered the Belarusian parliament observer status (the Republic of Belarus is not a member of the Council of Europe), but disallowance of the results of the 2010 presidential election and the imposition of sanctions resulted in yet another relations freeze. The situation changed only in 2014, when Minsk initiated a negotiation process aimed at resolving the Ukrainian conflict. The change in geopolitical status-quo forced both sides to revise their positions and to start the process of normalizing relations.

Economic development and modernization challenges

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the economic situation in Belarus was characterized by a scarcity of natural resources, a favourable geographic position (transit territory), a strong dependence on Russia in energy supply, a focus on finished product manufacturing, and the existence of a qualified labour force. Lacking natural resources, Belarus was forced to start an economic modernization process and technology innovation implementation (Timmermann, 2005, p. 280). But instead of this, the government took a long path of looking for a 'unique way' for the Belarusian economy to balance continued state ownership over the means of production with an orientation towards full employment and the rejection of major market reforms.

Despite overwhelmingly pessimistic forecasts, this economic-political game was quite successful for many years. For instance, the GDP grew steadily after 1995. Gradually, though, this growth started to slow down, amounting to 7.7 percent in 2010, 5.5 percent in 2011, 1.7 percent in 2012 and 0.9 in 2013; the last two years were characterized by negative rates. Moreover, according to experts, the GDP dynamics in 2015-2016 were the worst since the 1990s (Ravskij, 2016).

The Belarusian economy is export-oriented and integrated into the CIS countries' economic space. For example, the turnover with the CIS countries in 2016 reached 34.5 billion USD (55,7% of the total national sales volume of the Republic of Be-

larus). The global economic crisis and slower domestic economic growth resulted in a 9.2 percent reduction in the volume of exports, an 8.7 percent reduction in imports, and a negative foreign trade balance. The latter was 27 million USD in 2016 mainly due to the negative balance in trade with Russia. The turnover with the EU member states in 2016 was also reduced but retained a positive balance of roughly 11 billion USD (Belarus in numbers, 2017, pp. 64, 65, 68). Besides the EU and CIS member states, Belarus actively trades with China.

The main exports include oil and oil products, potash and nitrogen fertilizers, metal products, trucks, tractors, chemical fibres and threads, tires, dairy and meat products, sugar. In 2014, the list of the most profitable exports was complemented by telecommunications and IT. The Belarusian IT sphere is targeted at the market beyond the CIS, supplying software to more than 60 countries in the world. The success in that sphere is preconditioned by highly-qualified specialists graduating from local higher education institutions and various tax benefits.

The main imports include energy resources (oil and natural gas), raw materials and components (metals and metal products, raw materials for chemical industry, machine parts), and manufacturing equipment.

The slowdown in economic growth forced the Belarusian government to reconsider its private property policy and to take measures on entrepreneurship development. Within a couple of years, the country managed to improve its rating in the World Bank Doing Business report, rising by 13 positions during 2016 and ranking at number 37 as of the beginning of 2017 (WB, 2017).

Economic recession negatively affects the situation in the labour market. For a very long time, official unemployment was very low, mostly within 1 percent of the economically active population. According to the experts, such rates do not reflect the real situation, since they consider only those who apply for unemployment benefits. The strain on the labour market, aggravated in 2015–2016, forced the government to rethink its unemployed registration methodology. As of 1 January 2017, the data on unemployment will be gathered by means of quarterly sample household surveys. By the preliminary assessment of experts, the level of unemployment might reach 5–7%. These data will be published along with the official unemployment rate, calculated in the traditional way (Belarusinfofocus, 2017).

The future of Belarusian society

Demographics, environmental protection, desovietization and democratization

When describing the current situation in Belarusian society, three statements are of major interest. The first two are shared by a wide range of experts and have been a subject of ample public debate over the last few years. The third one, on the contrary, has been put forward by a relatively narrow circle of people who describe themselves as an intellectual opposition to mainstream opinion.

Statement 1:
Depopulation and ageing threaten the development of Belarusian society

Starting in 1994, the Belarusian population has been shrinking continuously; the number of urban residents has been rising, whereas that of rural inhabitants has been decreasing. The demographic changes are characterized by two significant processes: the rate of senior people in society is growing constantly while the number of children and youths is dropping.

The low birth rate is the main reason for depopulation processes. For example, the number of new-born babies per woman in 2010 was 1.49. To ensure mere population reproduction, however, this rate has to reach 2.15. Generally, a weakening focus on family values is being observed in all generations (Nationalnaya Programma, 2011, pp. 3–5).

The process of depopulation can also be partially ascribed to a relatively high death rate. It is especially relevant for men, whose mortality is three times as high as that of women. According to the World Health Organisation, the death rate of Belarusian men aged 15–60 is 3 to 4.5 times higher than in most EU countries. Only 16 percent of Belarusian men live up to pension (Thinktanks, 2017). These losses in the working age population in turn lead to an increase in average age. In early 2016, it was 42.5 years for women and 37 years for men (NSK, 2017).

At the moment, one in five Belarusian citizens is a pensioner; in rural areas, it even is one in three. The burden on the pension system is getting heavier every year. According to official data, pension expenditures in Belarus constituted around 9 percent of the GDP in January 2017. On the whole, there are more than 2.5 million pensioners in the country; of those, 665,800 keep on working. To lessen the burden on the pension system, the government has initiated a gradual increase of the retirement age. Starting in January 2017, the minimum age for getting an occupational pension will be raised by 6 months annually; by 2022, it will have reached the benchmark of 58 years for women and 63 years for men. Apart from that, according to Decree 534 of 31 December 2015, the minimum qualifying pensionable service needed to obtain an old age pension will also be gradually increased by 6 months (it is now 15 years, and by 2025 it will be 20 years) (MyFin, 2017).

Statement 2:
A country that suffered from the Chernobyl disaster should pay special attention to environmental protection

The accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station is considered the first global industrial disaster. About 70 percent of the total radioactive fallout covered Belarusian lands. This led to tragic consequences and large-scale economic losses. Almost 20 percent of agricultural areas were contaminated by radioactive nuclides to a certain degree, more than 138,000 people were resettled to other regions, and about 1.5 million people needed regular medical monitoring and the like.

25–30 years later, the remedial actions in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster are presented and evaluated differently. In its national report, the Belarusian gov-

ernment notes that the country has accumulated vast experience and knowledge in remediation that can be shared with others and states that, thanks to damage control measures, no significant health deterioration of the people living in contaminated areas has been detected in comparison with other regions. Opposed to these declarations, the reports on the medical consequences of the Chernobyl accident issued by organizations unsympathetic to nuclear energy (Greenpeace, IPPNW: International Physicians for the Prevention of the Nuclear War) are more pessimistic. Furthermore, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) point at other health problems that were not detected previously, such as nervous disorders, fatigue syndrome, genetic changes and others (Sahm, 2011, pp. 17–18).

The abovementioned contradiction is indicative of the state policies in the field of ecology and environmental protection. On the one hand, the Republic of Belarus pays close attention to the preservation of nature and the environment. These goals are laid down in policy papers and national legislation: the National Strategy on Sustainable Social and Economic Development until 2030, the Strategy on Environmental Protection until 2020, the Strategy on Mitigation of Transport Adverse Impact on the Atmosphere until 2020, the National Action Plan on the Preservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for the period 2016-2020, the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Natural Resources and Lands, legislation on the preservation of the flora, water resources and nature reserves.

The intentions fixed in policy papers are reinforced by practical steps. Numerous pilot projects in the sphere of alternative energy, waste disposal and sustainable construction are being implemented; new professions such as bioecologists, radioecologists, ecology managers and auditors are emerging (NSK, 2011, pp. 228–229).

On the other hand, public discourse involves a number of thorny issues that have been provoking conflicts between the state and civil society for a long time. These debatable issues include: the attitude of society, politicians and environmental activists towards the use of nuclear energy and the participation of citizens in making ecologically important decisions (for example, when evaluating the impact of the industrial group 'Belaruskali' that yields from 20 to 30 percent of foreign exchange earnings to the state budget but simultaneously adversely affects the ecological conditions of the region) (Kulikov, 2016).

The attempts of environmental activists to initiate a broad public discussion on those issues, as well as important civic and political topics as regards human rights and the acknowledgement of election results, are quite harshly suppressed on local and national levels.

Reflecting on the conflict situations of previous years and the current period raises a question about what Belarusian society has learnt from the Chernobyl disaster, since environmental friendliness itself – without the readiness of the state and other stakeholders to actively engage citizens in understanding and tackling ecological problems – does not suffice to preserve nature and ensure favourable living conditions.

Statement 3:
Democratization can only be achieved when de-sovietization processes are finished

During the international conference 'Belarusization: Is it possible to complete the institution building of an independent state?' (Minsk, 22 November 2013), Vladimir Nikitin, President of the All-Ukrainian Pedagogical Club, noted that a lot of ex-Soviet republics had already stepped away from the Soviet (first) model of interaction between the state and society but didn't switch to the post-Soviet (second) one.

The first model is based on total control over society: 'Society consisted of the workforce and a strong administrative apparatus. To retain its simple structure, repressive administrative machinery and closed borders were needed.' (Spasjuk, 2013, p. 2).

The second model is based on a more intricate power system that provides for the life of a diverse (complex) society. In such conditions, each interest group has its say and an opportunity to participate in political life. Consequently, there is a need for various tools for alignment of interests, which allows for different forms of government, self-organization and public dialogue.

What does de-sovietization mean in this case? According to Semenov,

> de-sovietization presupposes a certain view of the Soviet phenomenon, understanding its essence and its "apparencies", and the simultaneous realization that it is impossible to hold on to these "apparencies". The phenomenon of the Soviet is dead, but the marks of the Soviet are scattered both visibly and implicitly almost everywhere around the country (…) For former "Soviet people", the topic of de-sovietization is a matter of searching for a new identity (…) (Semenov, 2007, p. 88).

The post-soviet transformation of the Republic of Belarus is not yet completed. The unfinished process of de-sovietization hampers the formation of a national identity and the Belarusization of society. In this context, Belarusization is not limited to language but considered in the context of further Europeanization of the country, which is an additional essential prerequisite for a comprehensive post-soviet transformation of Belarusian society (Spasjuk, 2013, p. 1; EuroBelarus, 2014).

Education system

According to the UNDP Report, Belarus's HDI value for 2014 was 0.798 – which is in the high human development category – positioning the country at 50 out of 188 countries and territories. Between 2000 and 2014, Belarus's HDI value increased from 0.683 to 0.798, an increase of 16.9 percent or an average annual increase of about 1.12 percent (Human Development Report, 2015).

Such a high rate is to a large extent ensured by the system of education. It is characterized by wide coverage of children and youths (the coverage with basic, general secondary and vocational education constitutes 98 percent of the quantitative composition of relevant age groups) and a low level of inequality.

	IHDI value	Overall loss (%)	Human inequality coefficient (%)	Inequality in life expectancy at birth (%)	Inequality in education (%)	Inequality in income (%)
Belarus	0.741	7.1	7.1	6.8	3.7	10.8
Serbia	0.693	10.1	10.1	8.5	8.1	13.5
Azerbaijan	0.652	13.2	12.9	21.7	8.3	8.9
Europe and Central Asia	0.651	13.0	12.9	14.3	7.9	16.6
High HDI	0.600	19.4	19.0	10.7	16.8	29.4

Table 1. Belarus's IHDI for 2014 relative to selected countries and groups
(Source: Human Development Report (2015). Work for human development. Briefing note for countries on the 2015 Human Development Report. Belarus, p. 5)

Consequently, Belarus can boast a very high level of adult literacy, amounting to 99.7 percent according to official statistics.[1] Apart from that, the first decade of the twenty-first century saw no Belarusian citizens aged 25–29 with only basic or unfinished basic education, and the number of people who had only basic education decreased significantly: from 24 percent in 2000 to 2.5 percent in 2010 (WB, 2013, p. 69).

Belarus also shows high levels of participation in higher education. Ever since it declared its sovereignty, higher education in Belarus has experienced considerable growth. The number of undergraduates has increased from 180 to 330 people per ten thousand citizens (2016) (NSK, 2016, p. 6). Over the last years, this rate has fallen a bit due to the demographic recession.

Nowadays, the education system in the Republic of Belarus includes *main* (core), *supplementary* and *special* education. Main (core) education is divided into preschool, general secondary, vocational, specialized secondary, higher and postgraduate education. Supplementary education consists of children's education, youth education, and adult education.

[1] It is worth mentioning that the Republic of Belarus doesn't take part in international research on adult literacy such as PIACC, thus the aforementioned data is derived from general statistics on education at different levels.

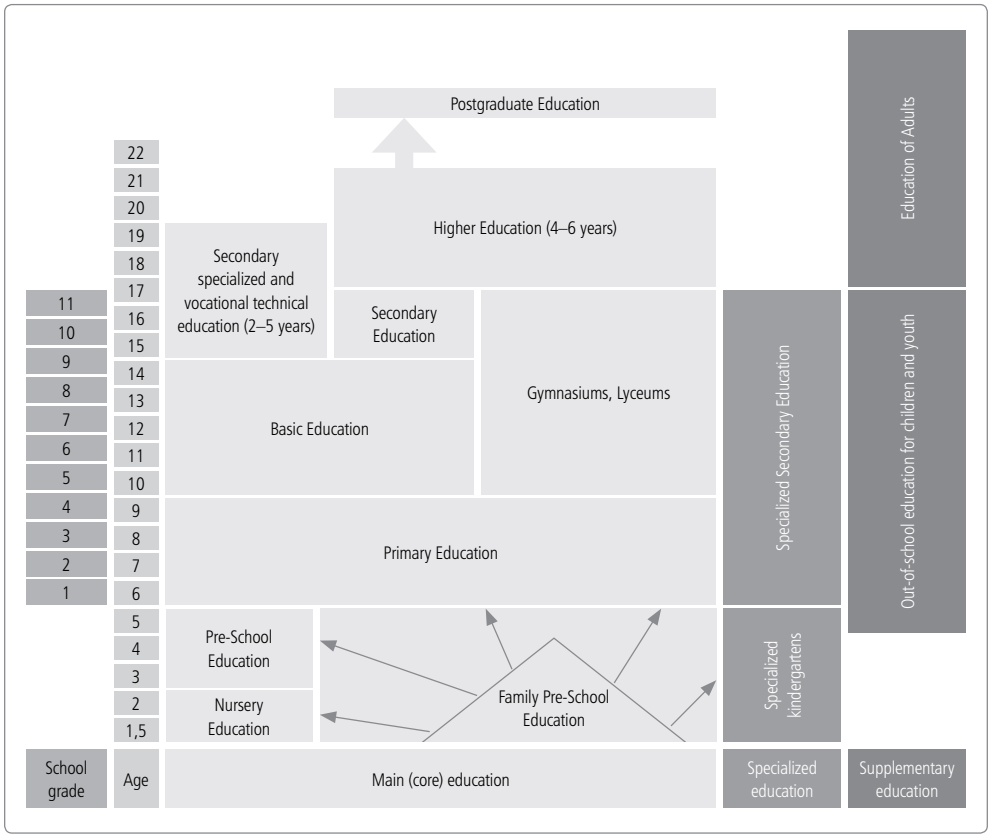

Figure 2. System of education in the Republic of Belarus
(Source: Author's own graph based on the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus)

Main education

Belarus has a well-developed system of *pre-school education*. Although it is not mandatory, most children attend pre-school institutions before going to school. Since mothers have a right to retain their employment and get a child-care allowance until their children are three, most toddlers start going to pre-school institutions at this age.

In 2016, 75 percent of children attended pre-school institutions (48.8% in rural areas and 82.2% in towns and cities). In the 2015/2016 academic year, there were 3,972 pre-school institutions in the Republic of Belarus, eleven of which were private providers.

General secondary education in Belarus starts at the age of six and includes two levels: *general basic* and *general secondary* education. Basic school covers nine years of studies, whereas general secondary school covers eleven years. Upon completion of basic school, young people have two options: 1) to pursue education in colleges, lyceums or vocational technical schools, where they simultaneously get general sec-

ondary education and undergo vocational training; 2) to finish general secondary education at school. A general secondary or specialized secondary education diploma is the main document to become entitled to enter a higher education institution. This approach allows for continuity between different levels of education and makes it possible to pursue education in a university as an adult.

In 2016, there were 3,155 general secondary education institutions on the territory of Belarus, ten of which were private providers.

Unlike many post-soviet republics, Belarus has retained quite an effective system of vocational and specialized secondary education. It is evenly distributed throughout the country, providing opportunities for citizens to pursue a blue-collar career as close to home as possible.

In 2016, there were 196 vocational institutions (vocational lyceums, schools and colleges) and 230 specialized secondary education institutions (colleges) (NSK, 2016). *Higher education* (tertiary education) includes two stages:

First stage: higher education providing training in areas of expertise and specialization, confirmed by the corresponding qualification and specialist's diploma (Diplomirovannyj Specialist 4, 4.5 or 5-year curriculum).

The second stage is realized in two types of programmes: research and professionally oriented Master's programmes, confirmed by Master's diploma (Magistr, 1- or 2-year curriculum). Graduates of higher education institutions also have the option of earning a postgraduate degree: Candidate of Science (comparable to a PhD); postgraduate courses-aspirantura, adjunktura (military), assistentura (probation period) and Doctor of Science (doktorantura).

Institutions providing postgraduate education include higher education institutions (regardless of the type of ownership), scientific organizations, and other organizations entitled to provide postgraduate education in accordance with established procedure.

Higher education is broken down as follows: 15 educational profiles, 387 areas of expertise at the first stage of higher education, 179 areas of expertise at the second stage of higher education, and more than1,000 specialisations.

Three forms of learning are available at Belarusian higher education institutions: full-time, evening and by correspondence. Full-time learning is the most widespread form and in greatest demand, accounting for two-thirds of all students. Less than one percent of students take up evening classes, and over 35 percent of students learn by correspondence. Lately, distance learning has also been gaining popularity. Nowadays, around ten universities provide distance learning services.

There are four types of tertiary education institutions in Belarus:

1. Classical University (Universitet)
2. Profile University (Academy, Akademia)
3. Institute (Institut)
4. Higher College (Vysshyj colledg) (EACEA, 2012)

In 2015, the Republic of Belarus made another step towards the Bologna Process. To become a full member, the country has to implement a series of reforms and meet the conditions of the Roadmap by 2018. According to the Public Bologna Committee, certain articles of the Roadmap do not cause any political difficulties – for example, the introduction of a three-cycle system according to the established Bologna model (Bachelor-Master-PhD); the development of the National Qualifications Framework in line with the standards of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA); ensuring automatic and free-of-charge issue of a transcript to the diploma. Other requirements are more sensitive – for instance, guaranteeing EHEA fundamental freedoms: academic freedom and university autonomy, restriction of the obligatory job placement for students studying at the government's expense, and the like (EaP CSF, 2016).

Special education

The Republic of Belarus has made quite some progress in organizing work with special-needs students. The network of educational institutions provides not only for the education but also for the monitoring, rehabilitation, correctional and pedagogical assistance and upbringing of such children at all stages of their socialization and at all ages (99.2%). More than 70 percent of children with special psychophysical needs are integrated into programmes of pre-school and general secondary education institutions.

At the moment, more than 200 special education institutions are operational in the country. They also serve as resource centres, that is, as a material, informational and methodological base for raising the quality of special education, training the teachers working with the children, and so on.

Supplementary education

Out-of-school education of children and youth is the responsibility of more than 318 establishments (3 republican and 315 regional ones). 133 institutions are sector-specific (including 4 centres (palaces) of artistic crafts, 17 with a technical specialty, 24 ecological ones, 62 centres specializing in tourism and ethnography, 20 centres with a focus on physical training and sports), and 185 establishments are multidisciplinary.

Supplementary education institutions of all types unite more than 30,000 interest groups – in fact, one in three schoolchildren attends a supplementary education establishment for children and youth (NSK, 2016).

The *system of adult education (supplementary adult education)* can figuratively be divided into a public one and a private one. The latter is represented by commercial providers and non-profit making organizations. The current legislation describes the system quite broadly and a priori covers all the diversity of institutions that are involved in the provision and delivery of adult education. However, standard presentations and descriptions of the national education system usually refer only to supplementary adult education institutions, most of which were founded in Soviet times as facilities for advanced training. This approach is also evident in the official

statistics, which only reflect the number of specialists and workers who gain qualifications in the process of formal learning.
At the moment, there are around 400 adult education institutions in the country that offer advanced training and retraining services. On average, 380,000 people undergo training every year.

Statistical data on other forms of adult education (non-formal, civic, cultural, etc.) is not available – therefore, it will be presented in the next chapters by describing established practices.

ISCED 0	pre-school education designed for children aged 3 and older
ISCED 1	primary education designed for children starting from 6–7 years and intended for 4 years of education (1–4 forms)
ISCED 2	general basic education (first stage of secondary education) (5–9 forms)
ISCED 3	general secondary education, second stage (10–11 forms) or vocational education based on the general basic or special education
ISCED 4	post-secondary non-tertiary education designed for students mastering vocational education programmes based on general secondary education
ISCED 5	short cycle of tertiary education targeted at students participating in specialized secondary education (except for those related to ISCED 3)
ISCED 6	Bachelor degree or equivalent level; meant for students mastering educational programmes of the 1st tertiary degree
ISCED 7	Master degree or equivalent
ISCED 8	Doctoral degree or equivalent level, covers I and II degree postgraduate educational programmes (postgraduate and doctoral studies).

Table 2. The classification of education levels in the Republic of Belarus is in line with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011)
Source: MoE, 2016, pp. 3–4

2. Historical Development

Origins and Belarusian Enlightenment

The cultural history of Belarus in the 16th–18th centuries, when it was a part of the Great Duchy of Lithuania, can be divided into three periods: 1) second half of the 16th century: humanitarian reform movement; 2) late 16th century until the first half of the 17th century: Counter-Reformation epoch, onset of Baroque; 3) second half of the 17th century until the 18th century: dominance of Baroque, onset of classicism. It was in the latter period when the ideas of the Enlightenment spread across Belarusian territories, where, unlike in Europe, it had a later and unorthodox character and little social and political influence (Dubianecki, Uglik, 2010, pp. 14–15).

Belarusian Enlightenment is closely connected to both Eastern Slavic and Western European Enlightenment (Snapkouskaia, 1998, p. 41). Along with the adoption of European artistic styles (Baroque, Classicism, Sentimentalism, Rococo), the Belarusian cultural space developed its own local styles and schools (artistic schools of Mogilev, Vitebsk, etc.). In addition, problems concerning the country's autonomy and its relations with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire, as well as the coexistence of different layers in national culture, arise. A Belarusian intellectual community emerges, represented by B. Dubshevich, K. Narbut, S. Shadursky, A. Daugird, the Snyadzetsky and many others. Grodno county governor A. Tyzengauz launched many educational projects, including financial support for schools for local residents. The Commission for National Education of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – the first Ministry of Education in Europe – as well as professors at Vilnius University, the Jesuit Academy of Polotsk and the Hory-Horatski Agricultural Institute contributed greatly to the promotion of education and Enlightenment ideas.

Typography developed rapidly; the number of libraries grew steadily. Researchers note that multilingualism was a characteristic feature among the population. Along with the dominant Polish language, people spoke Latin, French, German and Italian. Official life is dominated by Polish, Latin, Hebrew, and old Belarusian. These four languages were traditionally used to greet the King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Stanislav August (Maldzis, 2007).

The period was marked by the launch of numerous private artistic schools. For example, before the division of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, there were 26 theatres (opera and ballet) and around 30 symphonic chapels in Belarus. The actors and musicians working there were also offered informal education opportunities.

Craft unions became more popular (unions of artists, carvers, carpenters, goldsmiths and silversmiths, etc.; their members provided vocational education to their friends (Veramejchyk, 2010).

Social and political changes after the annexation of Belarus by the Russian Empire

After the third division of the Polish-Lithuanian state, Belarusian territories were annexed by Russia. This served as an artificial barrier to Belarusian Enlightenment. The first half of the 19th century brought many social-political changes to these lands, most of which were directly related to education: loss of the Magdeburg right, abolition of the Uniate church, emigration of a great number of Enlightenment philosophers, scientists, social activists, closure of Vilnius University and many cultural and Enlightenment unions (such as the Philomath Society and the Filaret Society), prohibition of studying at higher education institutions in Poland and Western Europe, and the launch of new educational institutions providing instruction in the Russian language. The traditions of Belarusian Enlightenment were replaced by the imperial paradigm of resigned obedience to authorities.

The situation began to change in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century; these changes were ambivalent, however. On the one hand, the abolition of serfdom (1861) and industrial and economic growth brought new challenges and requirements concerning the education levels of the population, which led to the school reform of 1864 and the creation of numerous educational institutions in Belarus (with instruction in the Russian language, of course). On the other hand, this reform was implemented in Belarusian territories with several limitations caused by the uprising of 1863. Belarusian education continued to decline following the closure of the Hory-Horatski Agricultural Institute and eight secondary education institutions, the continuing ban on using the Belarusian language in the educational process, as well as increasing control over the educational and Enlightenment activities of intellectuals and cultural activists (Snapkouskaia, 1998, pp. 43–44).

The limitation of direct contacts with European countries coexisted with the expansion of views and ideas by progressive Russian intellectual activists (Chernyshevsky, Ushinsky, Vodovozov, Dobroliubov, Pisarev, Pirogov, etc.) who prepared the ground for education to be available to a wide circle of the population, including adults. This is exactly the time when first attempts were made to recognize adults as a special category of learners and to launch specialized institutions for them. The 1860s saw the launch of the first Sunday schools for adults (the first one was opened in Kiev in 1859 by Pirogov), and literacy committees were being organized (the first one in Moscow in 1845).

People's readings were one of the most popular aspects of non-formal education and Enlightenment for adults at that time. Because of their extreme popularity, they caused concerns among the authorities, who established strict control over them. Readings were prohibited at factories and works, and a special permit was needed in other places. The list of works to be read was provided by the Study Committee of the Ministry of National Education or the Holy Synod beforehand. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned difficulties, readings were organized in a growing number

of towns and villages starting in the 1870s. In the mid-1880s, readings were held in all provinces and district towns and almost all villages that had primary schools. The 1880–1890s saw the spread of courses for workers, giving minors and adults the opportunity to study the basics of the Russian language, Mathematics, Drawing, Mechanics, and so on. People developed their own forms of self-education, and practical knowledge increased. The so-called 'holy evenings' – that is, villagers gathering in one house to listen to their most educated fellow-villagers, retired soldiers or wondering craftsmen – gained popularity. Agricultural unions, county museums, health and education communities and animal protection unions became increasingly active, spreading Enlightenment ideas across Belarus in the last decades of the 19th century (Veramejchyk, 2010, p. 4).

Russian adult education researcher S.G. Vershlovskij identifies five sometimes contradictory approaches to the problem of mass education or out-of-school education (a later name) in the Russian Empire of that time (Vershlovskij, 2004):

1. The official position recognized the need for education as a precondition for social-economic evolution, but subjected it to strict control, initiating the so-called 'protective Enlightenment', which resulted in low literacy levels among the Russian Empire's population.
2. The proponents of a conservative-adaptive position stuck to a similar point of view, seeing mass education as a means of nurturing people's intelligence in an effort to preserve the existing social order and make it more stable.
3. The advocates of the 'Enlightenment concept' perceived education as an important prerequisite for the democratization and humanization of society and supported primarily the creation and existence of Sunday schools for adults.
4. Revolutionary democratic population groups were more radical and adhered to the opinion that political authorities, financial wellbeing and literacy are intrinsically interconnected. This approach found practical implementation in creating educational unions similar to the Scandinavian ones.
5. Finally, the representatives of industrial social strata regarded adult education as a precondition for Russian economic development.

It goes without saying that approaches to adult education development that were typical of Russia at the time were also shared by Belarusian society.

At the same time, the emergence of a national identity and the rise of various social and political movements became the hallmark and a powerful engine of cultural, Enlightenment and educational uprise in Belarus.

The nationalization and democratization of education and enlightenment form one of the crucial objectives of social and educational movements, which are reflected in their political programmes. The lifting of the ban on printing in the Belarusian language and the launch of the first publishing house (1906) laid the groundwork for a powerful educational and cultural movement. The beginning of the 20th century in Belarus was characterized by the existence of numerous cultural and educational social communities: the Grodno Pedagogical Community (1907), the Association for

the Dissemination of Knowledge among the People of the Slonim and Slonim District (1907), the Slutsk Association for Education (1909), the Polotsk Library Community (1911), the Education Association in Vitebsk (1909), the Bobruisk and Bobruisk District Teachers Union (1918), the Belarusian cultural and educational community 'Motherland', and others (Baciaeu, 2004).

World War I (1914–18)

This period of Belarusian history in general, and the history of Belarusian education in particular, is underresearched. According to Liahouski, the situation gets even more complicated because Belarusian territories saw several regime changes during the war: the Russian monarchy, German occupation, the Russian Temporary Government, and finally Soviet rule (Liahouski, 2010, p. 10). It is worth mentioning that researchers should consider not only the documented sources of the afore-cited regimes but also the archives of the Belarusian People's Republic, which were created on those territories but recognized neither by the German Empire nor by Soviet Russia. Researchers investigating that time lack archival data, which were destroyed by war or removed to other countries. But it goes without saying that the outbreak of hostilities brought an end to a considerable part of the educational movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Adult education development in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic and the early Soviet Union (1918–45)

The famous Russian non-institutional education theorist Medynskij wrote in 1918:

> The Revolution (1917) and bloom of cooperative movement have put us on the doorstep of a historic change in adult education, in general, and higher schools for peasants that meet the needs of the province, in particular. (Medynskij, 1918, p. 27, quoted in Tonkonogaia, 2000, p. 42)

Those expectations were reinforced by government activities: access to all forms of education for all social groups free of charge was guaranteed by law; besides, the Department of Out-of-School Education was established within the People's Commissariat for Education. The state subsidized the following fields of education:

1. literacy schools (due to the extremely low literacy level of a major part of population);
2. elementary schools for adults;
3. higher schools for peasants (creating jobs and training specialists for local needs);
4. libraries;
5. training educators in different aspects of out-of-school education;
6. training activists of local self-administration (Tonkonogaia, 2000, p. 43).

The policy of Belarusization was characteristic of the first decades of Soviet rule. Belarusian education, literature and publishing received state support and were actively developed. Educational NGOs and initiatives aiming at combating illiteracy, building civic and political consciousness among various social layers, and strengthening national cultures (Belarusian, Russian, Polish, Latvian, Tatar, etc.) experienced incredible growth (Dubianecki, 1998, p. 101).

State and social efforts aimed at combating mass illiteracy were coupled with the emergence of various forms of people's universities, secondary schools for adults, evening schools, workers' faculties, schools for the working youth, schools for the peasant youth, and the like. Such rapidly developing initiatives demanded a theoretical basis and the consolidation of experience. The specialized 'Out-of-School Education' journal was launched in 1919, and research activities were dedicated to the problems and peculiarities of adult education (Golant, Krupskaya, Medynskij, etc.).

The mid-1930s mark a watershed in this rapid and promising development: The activities of most adult education institutions were centralized under state control, mostly for the following reasons:

- the Soviet regime made impressive progress in combating illiteracy;
- massive repressions against representatives of Belarusian and other national elites took place;
- the state and the Communist party sought to take control over education in all its various forms and types.

Many of the initiatives and NGOs that emerged at the turn of the century ceased to exist. Some were incorporated into higher education institutions; others formed the basis for technical colleges, public evening schools, and the like.

Moreover, the Soviet government deployed a policy of de-Belarusization of culture and enlightenment: Out of the 540–570 writers who published their works in Belarus in the 1920–1930s, no fewer than 440–460 (80%) were repressed by the Bolshevists. And if we take into consideration those forced to leave the country, the number reaches 500, which is a quarter of the writers repressed in the entire Soviet Union in the period of Stalinist repression (Marakou, 2003, p. 16).

In 1933, the Political Commission conducted a language reform with a view to revise the Russian-Belarusian dictionary and the spelling rules of the Belarusian language. The reform resulted in the addition of more than 30 phonetic and morphological peculiarities characteristic of the Russian language to Belarusian, and the introduction of some Russian vocabulary (Barshcheuskaja, 2004).

The final formalization and transfer into state ownership after World War II (1945–91)

An interesting process took place in the USSR starting in the 1950–1960s.On the one hand, adult education continued to develop and became more profession-oriented (correspondence learning and evening courses offered growing opportunities for higher education, problems of adult education became the object of scientific research, etc.). For example, the number of adults receiving higher education through correspondence and evening courses almost doubled within 15 years (Tonkonogaia, 2000, p. 50). Advanced training in different forms was actively developed as well. Between 1970 and 1973, the number of Advanced Training Institutes grew from 34 to 50, the number of their branches from 49 to 70, the number of faculties for advanced training from 51 to 93, and the number of courses organized by higher education institutions from 96 to 102. The number of adults enrolled in advanced training programmes grew from 42.6 to 60.4 percent during the period of 1960–1985 (Tonkonogaja, 2000, p. 55).

On the other hand, general adult education became more and more infiltrated by state ideology, whereas non-formal education in all its various forms and types was 'washed out' of the education system. In the second half of the 1960s, adult education was divided into two major aspects – advanced training and cultural work – a division that is still typical of education systems in the majority of post-Soviet countries. The consequences of such a division need to be investigated thoroughly, but it is evident that making educational programmes the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture resulted in a decline of general and non-formal adult education in the regions.

The term 'advanced training' gradually gained popularity and was used in policy papers to define any form of adult education. Even though in the 1980s, some researchers made unsuccessful attempts to bring back the term 'adult education' into common use, the education of adults remained divided into advanced training and cultural work until the fall of the Soviet Union.

In this period, the Russification of the educational system in the BSSR came to a successful conclusion. The Belarusian language gradually vanished from the learning process at universities, institutes and institutions offering vocational and advanced training. Secondary school in rural areas were the only exception, but the graduates of these schools couldn't proceed to further education in their mother tongue.

The period of change: The revival of general and non-formal adult education (1991–2011)

The 1991 Education Act of the Republic of Belarus contained two articles on adult education: one on advanced training and one on the self-education of citizens. The system of advanced training institutions, created in the Soviet era, was preserved and complemented by dozens of private centres offering advanced training. In the early 2000s, public institutions made attempts to go beyond the scope of narrow specialized (sectoral) programs and started offering services (including non-formal) to various target groups in the market.

As for the supranational level, in 1997 the Council of the CIS Heads of Governments approved the concept of creating a single (general) *educational space* of the CIS, signed the *Agreement on Forming a Single (General) Education Space* in the Commonwealth of Independent States, and adopted the *CIS Education Cooperation Council Regulations*. The *CIS Interstate Committee on Knowledge Promotion and Adult Education* was established in 1997. It started by developing three model laws: the Adult Education Act (initial version of 1997, last amended in 2005), the Postgraduate Education Act (1998) and the Educational Activities Act (2002). The aforementioned acts recommend that the CIS member states pass legislation to ensure the rights of adult people, broaden the thematic scope and formal variety in adult education, and develop scientific foundations and social partnerships. Nevertheless, the new edition of the Education Act that came into force in the Republic of Belarus in 2002 de facto limited the right of adults to participate in organized learning processes to advanced vocational training, since the article on self-education of citizens was excluded and there appeared no progressive idea from the CIS model laws.

At the time, the practice of adult education has been actively developing. Two emerging sectors – commercial education and civil society – have sought to meet the challenges posed by the changed educational needs of Belarusians. They also use organized adult education as a way of promoting their own ideas and products.

The commercial sector, along with the public advanced training institutions and programmes offered by the Employment Office, helped develop the market economy and make adults more competitive in the labour market. At the same time, its services are available primarily to the population living in the capital and to those with a high income. Private centres offer programs aimed at building professional skills (IT and language courses, etc.), social skills (team work, stress management, communication skills) as well as skills in professional spheres not yet recognized as professions (trainings in active selling, merchandising, floristics, etc.).

Civil society organizations promote the development of civic competences and critical thinking skills, human rights programmes and environmental education, Belarusian culture and language revival, and so on. Belarusian NGOs, despite their small number, act in unison and contribute to the creation of a new culture of non-formal education. Within the period of 1995–2011, they took steps to professionalize education in the third sector and to draw public attention, as well as the attention

of commercial sector and legislative bodies, to the problem of the changed perception of adult education (primarily non-formal) and the role of the non-governmental sector in its development.

Let's have a look at some large-scale projects implemented by AHA (abbreviation from the Belarusian 'Organizations of Civic Education'), a network of Belarusian non-governmental organizations (Veramejchyk, 2008; Vialichka, 2006):

- The journal *Adukatar* (published since 2005) gained popularity despite its small circulation. This can be attributed to the fact that at that time it was the only communication platform for the organizations and trainers engaged in the non-formal education of adults and youths in Belarus.
- The resource programme of study circles (2004–2011). The key objective of the programme was popularizing the study circle method (following the Swedish example), sharing experiences and promoting cooperation among the organizations and initiatives using this method, and providing training and advanced training for study circle leaders.
- The Week of Non-Formal Education was annually held by the AHA Network in the period of 2005–2009. It aimed at drawing public attention to non-formal education, demonstrating the role of NGOs and building contacts with target groups.
- And finally, in September 2006, the members of the AHA Network, in cooperation with IBB Minsk and DVV International, initiated the first Festival of Non-Formal Education that gathered more than 200 educators from across the country. The Festival has become the traditional professional platform and is held every two years in Minsk. Despite the complicated relationships between civil society and the state, almost all Festivals were attended by senior officials or politicians.

The collaboration of civil society organizations in practice resulted in the formation of the Association of Lifelong Learning and Enlightenment in 2011. The Association implements most of the projects initiated by the AHA Network.

The Education Code of the Republic of Belarus, which came into force in 2011, changed the legislative nature of the education system and introduced the term 'supplementary adult education' at the legislative level. The term 'non-formal education', promoted by NGOs, is not used in the text of the new regulation but is widely spread in the everyday work of public and private institutions.

3. Legal conditions

Political framework and responsibility for education

The key educational policy tools in the Republic of Belarus are concepts and state programmes. The former are frameworks outlining goals and priorities of development; the latter present a list of activities, indicate their estimated costs, sources of financing, and bodies and institutions responsible for implementation. Nowadays, around 10 0 state programmes are being implemented in the Republic of Belarus – each of them touches upon the issues of education development, training of personnel in different fields, science and education to a varying degree.

Strategic documents set vectors at the national level, almost disregarding specific goals of education development in the regions. They reflect a high level of centralization in education policies and management, typical of the country in general. State policies, including those related to education, are determined by the President of the Republic of Belarus, whereas the government and the Ministry of Education are responsible for the implementation of state educational policies, general management and the overall functioning of the system. The Department of Advanced Training and Retraining operates within the structure of the Ministry of Education and is engaged in the overall coordination of adult education activities. As the name of the Department suggests, it is focused on building the professional competencies and skills of employees.

The competences of regional and district education departments (structural units of local and regional public authorities) include:

- participation in planning the development of the education system by working out programmes on education development on a specific territory,
- supervision of subordinate educational institutions, and
- forecasting staffing needs.

The advantage of the current situation is that a uniform standard is applied to all regions. But the disadvantage is that local and regional authorities have little independence in defining the priorities of educational policies. This impedes the emergence of a unique (regionally specific) kind of knowledge and development of innovative education. District and regional education departments play a minor role in the innovative development of both the country and the economy. It is explained mostly by the fact that local and regional authorities are focused on the provision and delivery of pre-school, general secondary, vocational, and supplementary (out-of-school) education for youths. Consequently, district and regional programmes on education development mostly outline goals and activities targeted at the development of education for children and young people. Meanwhile, according to the methodology of the Joint Research Centre and the General Directorate of the European Commission for Regional and Urban Policy, school education only provides for elementary levels of competitiveness and innovation introduction.

To resolve the above-mentioned problem, a number of measures have been undertaken. The current state programmes define goals connected to a switch to mass higher education, the extended use of computer technologies, the creation of direct links between educational institutions and industrial enterprises, the introduction of interactive forms of learning, the development of an educational services market, and the integration of the Republic of Belarus into the international education environment (CIS, Union State of Russia and Belarus, EHEA).

Special attention is being paid to the development of scientific innovative activities in higher education institutions, the creation of innovative student parks, and the development and production of working groups of teachers and students. At the moment, seven technological parks, two innovation centres, nine centres for the transfer of technologies, an inter-university centre for marketing scientific and research developments, and regional marketing centres are functioning under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2017).

In 2002, the Republic of Belarus ratified the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region – the so-called Lisbon Recognition Convention. In 2015, Belarus joined the Bologna Process. The integration of the Belarusian education system into the international environment is closely connected with the competitiveness and mobility of graduates. This goal is achieved through the development and implementation of a national qualifications framework. The first steps in this direction were made in 2010. In January 2014, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 34 enacted the testing of new elements of the national qualifications system in pilot areas (information technologies and executive management activities). At the moment, the following work is being carried out: sectoral qualifications councils are being created; sectoral qualifications frameworks in line with the national framework are being developed; professional qualification standards and model charts of professional development and career growth are being elaborated.

At the same time, most measures undertaken address the development of vocational and higher education – even when they are targeted at adult education, they only touch upon its formal part. For example, the state programme 'Education and youth policies', adopted for the period 2016–2020, includes a sub-programme, 'Development of adult education system'. Although the Education Code adopted in 2011 broadly interprets adult education as formal and non-formal, professional and non-professional, the sub-programme is focused mostly on formal education (namely, advanced training and retraining). It singles out two strategic priorities: (1) revising the standards of specialized retraining and (2) increasing the number of institutions offering distance learning programmes.

Nevertheless, the document contains a number of quite progressive indicators. For instance, by 2020, 15 percent of the adult population is envisaged to take part in education (as of today, around 10% of the working-age population participates in advanced training and retraining every year) (MoE, 2017). This goal is consistent with the goal set by the European Union. Since official statistics only relate to formal

professional education and the upskilling of the working-age population, it can be expected that, if the measures are successful, the actual share of the adult population involved in learning will be much higher.

All policy papers outlining the framework for the development of non-formal education (State Programme of Culture Development in the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020, regional sustainable development strategies worked out in 2015–2016, and the Concept of Business Education Development in the Republic of Belarus adopted in 2015) primarily define the systems and ways of information dissemination rather than organized educational processes.

In 2014, the Republic of Belarus celebrated the 60th anniversary of joining the UNESCO and, on this occasion, publicized its achievements in culture, science and education. However, the topics of lifelong learning and adult education – as well as the issue of validating the results of all forms of learning (including non-formal and informal ones) – have so far not been addressed well enough in the country's bilateral relations with the UNESCO. The Republic of Belarus hardly participates in international processes and pays little attention to those topics in its educational policies.

Adult education legislation and regulation

Article 49 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus ensures the right to education for every citizen, thereby guaranteeing free access to general secondary and vocational education. The fundamental law claims that 'specialized secondary and higher education are accessible for all in accordance with his or her abilities. Everybody is allowed to get relevant education free of charge on a competitive basis in public educational institutions' (Constitution, 1994, 1996, 2004). Adult education, as well as the obligations of the state regarding its support, are not mentioned in the Constitution directly.

The Education Code of the Republic of Belarus is the main document regulating the system of adult education and the corresponding legal relations in the sphere. Section XIV, 'Supplementary adult education', contains five chapters describing the system of additional adult education (participants, typology of programmes, educational standards in the retraining of executive staff and specialists), the organization of educational processes, scientific and methodological support, and the issues of assessing learners' competences.

Article 240 of the Code defines supplementary adult education as 'a type of additional education targeted at the professional development of a learner or trainee and satisfying their needs for education' (Education Code, 2011, p. 272).

To get an idea of the lawmakers' understanding of adult education, it is worth considering how the system is described by means of a *typology of educational programmes for adults*. Article 242 states that programmes of supplementary adult education are divided into:

1. educational programmes for the advanced training of executive staff and specialists;
2. educational programmes for the retraining of executive staff and specialists with higher education;
3. educational programmes for the retraining of executive staff and specialists with specialized secondary education;
4. educational programmes providing internships for executive staff and specialists;
5. educational programmes providing special training necessary to take up certain job positions;
6. educational programmes providing advanced training for blue-collar workers (white-collar workers);
7. educational programmes for retraining blue-collar workers (white-collar workers);
8. educational programmes providing professional training for blue-collar workers (white-collar workers);
9. educational programmes providing training courses (lectures, thematic workshops, practical training sessions, trainings, military officer courses and other types of educational courses);
10. educational programmes providing on-the-job training;
11. educational programmes for improving personal skills and abilities;
12. educational programmes preparing applicants for enrolment in educational institutions of the Republic of Belarus.

The detailed description of the courses stated above reveals that eight of them belong to programmes of formal professional adult education (1–8), two (9 and 11) incorporate rather different contents and may not be lead to official certificates, and on-the-job training (10) can be either formal or non-formal. Programme 12 can be related to secondary non-formal education targeted at enhancing participants' level of general knowledge rather than awarding academic certificates.

The Education Code clearly indicates what kind of organizations can be referred to as *institutions of adult education*. Article 245 of the Code says that institutions of supplementary adult education mean *'educational institutions implementing educational programmes of additional adult education, as well as postgraduate educational programmes'* (Education Code, 2011, p. 279). As evident from the definition, lawmakers assume that institutions of adult education may be involved in training academic staff,[2] which suggests the initial focus on the active involvement of higher education departments.

2 According to Article 218 of the Code, postgraduate education leads to certification as a 'research worker'.

Below is a list of five types of educational institutions belonging to the system of adult education:

1. academy of postgraduate education;
2. institute of advanced training and retraining;
3. institute for education development;
4. centre of advanced training for executive staff and specialists;
5. centre of training, upskilling and retraining for blue-collar workers.

At the same time, the Education Code acknowledges that a number of programmes of supplementary adult education may be implemented by other organizations and private providers.

In accordance with common tradition, educational institutions cooperate closely with the Ministry of Education; therefore, their level of autonomy is not that high. For instance, the head of the institution of supplementary education can be assigned as a founder only with the approval of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry also certifies standard educational plans for the majority of formal programmes of adult education and grants licenses for educational activities.

Regulations fixed in the Code are also specified in a number of additional normative acts covering mostly advanced training and retraining. Among the most significant are the following documents certified by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic Belarus No. 954 of 15 July 2011:

- the regulation on the procedure of recognizing the institution of supplementary education of adults as a leading educational institution of the field;
- the list of educational lines and profiles fixed within the republican governing bodies elaborating the educational standards for retraining executive staff and specialists;
- the regulation on lifelong professional education for executive staff and specialists;
- the regulation on lifelong vocational training for blue-collar workers;
- the regulation on training courses of supplementary adult education.

To be able to issue official academic degree certificates, an educational institution or other organization has to obtain a license on educational activity and the certificate of state accreditation. The main statutory documents to issue the license for educational activity are as follows:

- Presidential Decree of the Republic of Belarus of 1 September 2010, No. 450, 'On licensing certain activities';
- Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of 30 November 2010, No. 114, 'On estimating the compliance of candidates' abilities for receiving a special permit (license) with the licensing requirements and conditions';
- Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of 12 July 2012, No. 76, 'On establishing certain types of documents dealing with the issues of licensing educational activity'.

Furthermore, professional adult education is mentioned in the Law on Supporting Employment and in the Labour Code. Cultural adult education (or enlightenment) is mentioned in the Culture Code and Law on Craftsmanship and Folk Crafts.

4. Financing

Although the Republic of Belarus is constantly reinforcing its commitment to the ideas of quality and availability of education, we can see the trend towards a gradual shrinking of public allocations to the national education system. Over the last decade, the share of public funding for education has been reduced from 6 to 5 percent of the GDP (NSK, 2016). In the absence of relevant data, it is almost impossible to say how much of those 5 percent is spent on adult education. The research conducted on education financing either includes those sums in other expense items (Chubrik, Shimanovich, 2013, p. 7) or disregards them completely (WB, 2013).

It is worth mentioning that the use of public funding for educational needs is only possible in case of formal education programmes (advanced training and retraining) conducted primarily by public education institutions. Two financing patterns can be identified: compensation of maintenance costs of public education institutions directly from the state budget, and compensation of training costs through participation fees paid by the relevant Ministry. The latter concerns primarily advanced training offered to the representatives of socially relevant professions such as teachers, doctors working at state-run institutions, and civil servants. In some cases, additional education expenses can be covered from local or regional budgets (e.g. for agricultural organizations). However, much more often, the costs of employees' advanced training and retraining are covered either by employers or employees themselves (Polozhenie A, Polozhenie B, 2011). The law provides for an opportunity to get a reimbursement for those expenses from other sources (donations, funds of international donors, etc.), but how feasible that opportunity is in practice cannot be evaluated because the data on sources of funding are not systematized.

The Republic of Belarus doesn't have an established procedure of allocating public funds for non-governmental organisations providing non-formal education services. Moreover, current legislation does not permit non-state education providers to charge participation fees. In the absence of public funding, the key sources of adult education funding in civil society are volunteer activities and funds of international agencies.

Alongside with public funding, the participation in profession-oriented adult education programmes can be sponsored by employees and learners themselves.

The research on business education conducted by the Association of Management Development showed some unexpected results: The estimated business education market capacity in the Republic of Belarus in 2014 reached approximately 10.33 +/- 0.5 million USD. Of those, 6.97 million USD (67%) were spent on open educational programmes launched by Belarusian companies; 2.64 million USD (26%) on corporate trainings; and 0.72 million USD (7%) on educational services offered by international providers (Association for Management Development, 2014). The researchers, however, did not specify the share of expenses covered by participants and employers.

Generally, it should be mentioned that adult education funding is not the subject of wide public discussion – therefore, the established patterns are not subject to revision. Moreover, the representatives of different sectors hold different opinions: public institutions of adult education strive to preserve public allowances despite the overall trend towards a commercialization of education, whereas the private sector promotes the principles of a free market.

However, the lack of attention paid to adult education funding may lead not only to a misallocation of public funds (primarily on the advanced training of civil servants) and the limited availability of educational programmes for various social groups but also to reduced professionalization in the sector in general. The latter is rooted in the unclear self-perception of educators working with adults: they are torn between the image of assistant professor/lecturer at the university (advanced training, second higher education), business and profit-making ventures (commercial adult education centres), and volunteer activities in civil society initiatives.

5. Institutions of adult and continuing education

The system of adult education in Belarus, just like in other countries, is very diverse. It can be represented by several groups of providers:

Institutions providing professional education for adults (advanced training and retraining) that conduct, primarily, programmes of formal education and are targeted mostly at specialists of the state-run economy sector or at those working in fields rigidly controlled by the state (e.g. transport system, power industry, etc.).

According to the Education Code, the key adult education institutions are:

- academy of postgraduate education;
- institute of advanced training and retraining;
- institute for education development;
- centre of advanced training for executive staff and specialists;
- centre for the training, upskilling and retraining of workers.

The system of advanced training institutions is structured according to departmental subordination, where each institution is accountable to a certain ministry. At the moment, 391 educational institutions provide advanced training and retraining for executive staff, specialists, blue- and white-collar workers (MoE, 2017). These institutions vary in their status, departmental subordination and form of ownership, but public ownership prevails.

Advanced training and retraining services are also offered by higher education institutions and universities, vocational and specialized secondary education establishments (vocational schools, colleges, etc.).

Universities and higher institutions play a prominent role in large cities. To conduct advanced training and upskilling programmes, special institutes or departments of advanced training and retraining are created on the premises of universities or higher education institutions. The activities of those divisions are mostly in line with the general profile of the university. Sometimes, training centres providing services to the population are also created in tertiary education institutions. The prevailing areas of their activities are computer and language courses, pre-entry preparatory courses and others. Unlike advanced training courses, these services are fully paid for by learners themselves.

Recent years have seen a growing number of adult education programmes provided by vocational institutions. Unlike universities, vocational schools and colleges are situated almost in each district – therefore, they are more accessible in terms of location.

A distinctive feature of the Belarusian adult education system, according to the Education Code, is that it includes – alongside educational institutions –other organizations and private enterprises entitled to provide educational services under the law. Consequently, not only continuing (adult) education institutions but also other educational establishments, organizations and self-employed people may organize adult education programmes as prescribed by law.

Adult education in other public institutions. Taking into account the experience of other countries, a network of employment bureau divisions was created, and training is provided for unemployed people in existing educational institutions and specialized training centres under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

A great deal of enlightenment work, especially in the sphere of culture, is carried out by community culture centres, libraries and clubs. Usually, their educational work is not separated from other activities, so no statistical data are available to evaluate the scope of their activity. However, in rural areas these organizations remain, as a rule, the only place for enlightenment and adult self-education.

The absence of multidisciplinary educational institutions for different population groups in the existing system forces some organizations to go beyond the scope of their activities and engage in the provision of adult education programmes – for example, territorial centres of social services for the population that are evenly distributed over the territory of the country. They can be considered leaders in organizing education for senior people.

On-the-job training is in the focus of attention of employers, associations of hiring entities and trade unions. Usually such programmes are paid for by employers.

The *private adult education* sector aims primarily to broaden the scope of non-formal education programmes both for citizens and organizations. It is represented by commercial and non-profit organizations.

The *private commercial* sector of adult education is quite young; many organizations have not been around for more than 10–15 years. Like the institutions of higher education and advanced training, most commercial sector providers are situated in the capital and regional centres. Some organizations try to organize educational services in smaller towns without opening a permanent branch office (by inviting trainers as contractors and renting rooms for specific courses). The activity of private organizations can be institutionalized in the form of commercial organizations or private non-profit educational centres. Private entrepreneurs can also be involved in commercial education. As with quantitative data on private providers and their programmes, no precise information concerning the prevailing legal forms of organizations is available.

The *non-governmental and non-commercial* sector is represented by private educational institutions, informational and enlightening institutions and civil society organizations. Private institutions can be created at all levels of the education system, including adult education. They offer mostly formal adult education (advanced training and retraining), which requires licensing by the Ministry of Education. Different organizations and private individuals can be founders of such institutions.

Private informational and enlightening institutions are allowed to organize programmes of non-formal education without licensing and coordination of training programmes by any government departments. Private persons usually serve as founders of such types of organizations.

Civil society organizations – public associations and foundations – also quite often use programmes of non-formal education for their purposes. According to the data on the portal www.ngo.by, at the beginning of 2017, 435 non-governmental organizations named 'education, enlightenment and upbringing' as one of their lines of activity. In most cases, however, educational activity is not the focus of civil society organizations. At the same time, together with elaborating and holding educational courses, civil society organizations also pay much attention to promoting the values of lifelong learning, non-formal and civic education.

In recent years, civil society organizations have faced a trend towards self-organization, networking with those who focus on education development and the creation of specialized NGOs targeted at promoting specific lifelong learning issues.

When speaking about the very first initiatives, the activity of the network of Belarusian NGOs needs to be noted – that is, the 'Organizations of Civic Education' (active from 2002 until 2011, abbreviated as AHA network from the Belarusian language). In 2011, this organization became the foundation for the newly created and registered Association of Lifelong Learning and Enlightenment with ten member organizations.[3] The Association focuses on promoting the values of non-formal and civic education and continues implementing the majority of programmes and projects of the AHA network. As for the latter, one should mention the publication of *Adukatar*,[4] a journal on non-formal education, and joint lobbying actions and events. For example, the biannual Festival of Non-formal Education has been held since 2006, featuring representatives of different regions and types of organization.

In 2005, the Association of Business Education was created in the Republic of Belarus. Among its founding members were public higher education institutions interested in the development of academic business education (MBA programmes). The Association is not active enough in the public arena and has few members. The main reason for that is the stage of formation of business education, falling behind global processes, as well as the limited influence of NGOs on existing processes in the educational services market. Public accreditation of educational programmes offered by business schools and other educational institutions, which might help business education providers achieve better ratings and improve their image, hasn't yet become widespread in Belarus. The major contribution of the Association of Business Education is conducting an annual conference, 'Topical issues and challenges of business education' (Laboda, 2012, p. 43).

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3 For more details, please visit www.adukatar.net

4 The electronic version of the journal is available here: http://adukatar.net/chasopis-adukatar/

In 2011, the Association of Management Development was created. It aims to develop a business education market in the Republic of Belarus, represent its member organizations and protect their common interests. Unlike the Association of Business Education, the founders of the Association of Management Development include leading private training companies and leaders of the corporate training market: the business school of the Institute of Privatization and Management, the 'Key Decisions Company', the 'here and Now' consulting group, the '21st Century-Consult' business school, and the Pro Retail advisory company.

In 2014, the association Education for Sustainable Development was created. As evident from the title, its activity focuses on the development of education for the sake of sustainable development. Institutions of formal education served as founders (a university, an academy, an institution of advanced training and a school). The number of member organizations has grown considerably for the last two years. Member organizations are extremely active, implementing various projects and programmes on sustainable development that, in practice, are programmes of non-formal education held on the premises of formal institutions.

Generally, the interaction between various segments of adult education and types of institutions and organizations is not systematic in nature. Within the specified subsystems (public sector of advanced training and retraining, commercial sector of business education, and non-commercial sector of non-formal adult education), however, cooperation and information exchange do take place.

Since the country has no single system of collecting data about the activity of different adult education organizations, there is no reliable statistics about their quantity.

6. Programmes and participation

At the moment, the Republic of Belarus has no unified data collection (monitoring) system that would cover the activities of various providers and present summarized information about the content, forms of adult learning and scope of participation in professional and non-professional, formal and non-formal adult education.

Consequently, despite the diversity of adult education programmes offered by public and private providers, their activities can hardly be presented within a single system and substantiated by accurate figures.

Programmes of and participation in public adult education

When speaking about public education providers, one can refer to the classification of programmes presented in the Education Code. According to the legislation requirements, adult education institutions may conduct primarily eight types of educational programmes:

1. advanced training programmes for executive staff and specialists;
2. retraining programmes for executive staff and specialists having a higher education diploma;
3. retraining programmes for executive staff and specialists having a specialized secondary education diploma;
4. internship programmes for executive staff and specialists;
5. programmes of special training needed to qualify for certain positions;
6. advanced training programmes for blue-collar (white-collar) workers;
7. retraining programmes for blue-collar (white-collar) workers;
8. programmes of professional training for blue-collar (white-collar) workers.

Most of these programmes can be financed from the state or regional budget and are considered the main line of activity of such institutions. It is for these programmes that the statistical data are available – they reflect the rate of participation of adults employed in this or that field.

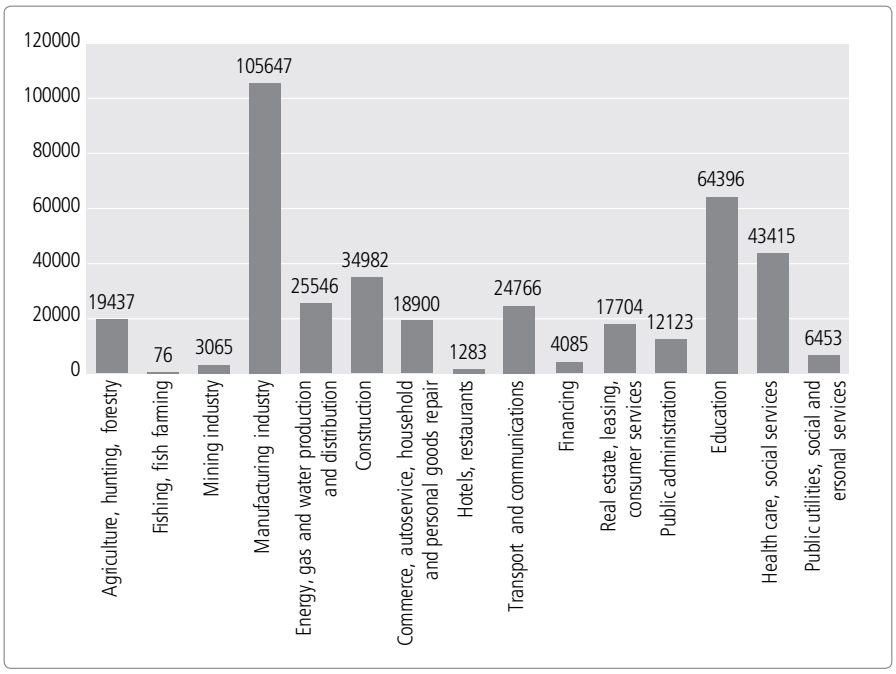

Figure 3. Professional training of workers as regards types of economic activities in absolute values, 2014
Source: Author's own graph based on the data of NSK, 2015, p. 191

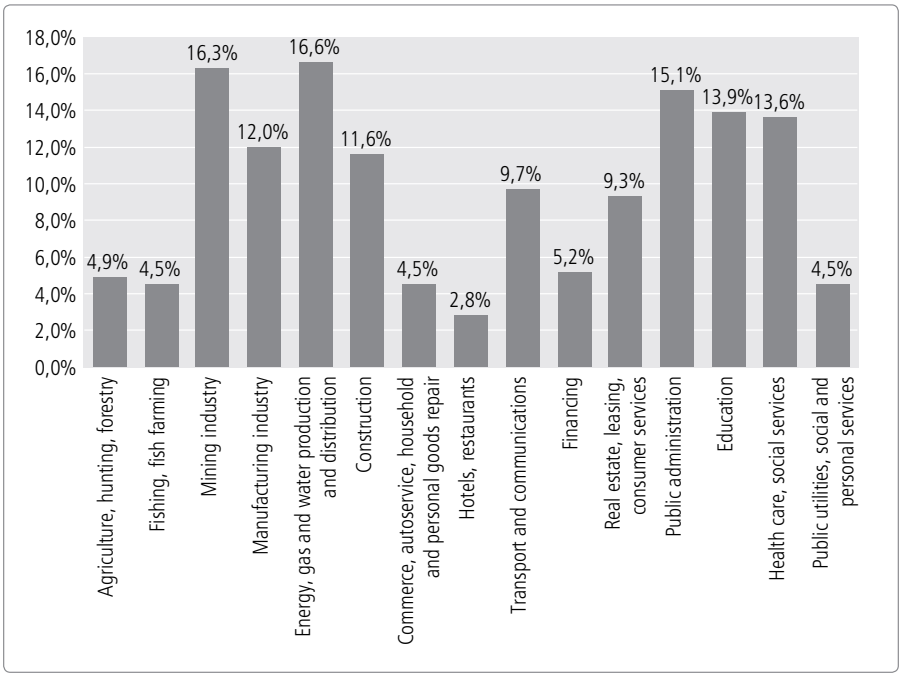

Figure 4. Professional re-training of workers as regards types of economic activities in percentage to the total number of employed people
Source: Author's own graph based on the data of NSK, 2015, p. 191

As one can see, the specialists from the following industries update their professional skills more often: production and distribution of energy, gas and water (16.6%), mining industry (16.3%) and public administration (15.1%).

Educational institutions, of course, also conduct non-formal education programmes:

- training curriculum of educational courses (lectures, thematic seminars, practical sessions, trainings, officer and other educational courses);
- training curriculum of personal skills and opportunities enhancement;
- training curriculum of pre-entry courses.

These are considered a source of revenue by the institutions, and data on such programmes are not included in official statistics. No special research aimed at exploring and accumulating the offers of educational institutions in the field of non-formal learning has been conducted.

For private providers, legal regulations often remain in the background, since they only have to align their programmes with the legislation if they issue state-approved certificates.

Commercial sector of adult learning and business education

The commercial sector of adult education can roughly be divided into two major parts: training programmes targeted at private individuals and those aimed at the development of the business sector or business education.

Training centres working with individual clients offer programmes of varying thematic scope. They include programmes aimed at enhancing the skills that are sought-after on the labour market and programmes aimed at personal development. The first group is represented by a wide range of programmes on professional skills development. Most of them, cannot be regarded as professional education in strict legal terms, because participants don't get a state-approved certificate upon completion of the course. This can be explained by the fact that some of these programmes are aimed at providing knowledge and skills in the fields not recognized as separate occupations (IT, floristists, landscape gardeners, image stylists, fitness instructors, etc.) and, therefore, are not regulated by the Ministry of Education. The second group of educational programmes is designed to provide professional knowledge and skills for recognized occupations, but the duration of training is much shorter than in public institutions of professional education.

Alongside programmes on professional skills development, private training centres also specialize in foreign languages, computer literacy skills, and the development of creative abilities (e.g. music, painting, etc.)

The notions of business education and business schools are relatively new to Belarus and are not yet recognized by national legislation. According to the Association

of Management Development, business education is a specific form of entrepreneurship, a product and object of competition in a rapidly developing market of educational services. At the moment, business education in the Republic of Belarus may be delivered in the following forms:

- MBA programmes leading to the degree 'Master of business administration';
- retraining programmes for executive staff and specialists with a higher education diploma in economics and administrative fields;
- advanced training programmes for executive staff and specialists on topical issues of economics, business organization and management;
- training curriculum of educational courses (training courses, business seminars, trainings etc.);
- training programmes in organizations.

A retraining programme should cover at least 1,000 hours of instruction within 18–24 months (upon completion, a retraining diploma is issued). An advanced training programme should last no less than 36 hours of instruction (a state-approved certificate on advanced training is issued). The programme of training seminars, as a rule, should cover at least 35 hours.

As we see, active stakeholders try to align business education with the legislative framework, covering, along with adult education, the second stage of tertiary education.

In 2014, most of the 401 programmes advertised by business education actors had a short-term character: 'one-session programmes':[5] 83 percent, 'multisession short- and middle-term programmes' (2–4 sessions): 12 percent, and 'multisession long-term programmes' (5 and more sessions): 5 percent (Association for Management Development, 2014, p. 4).

The analysis of programmes offered by private institutions shows that the prevalent topics of training are 'sales', 'personal development' and 'management'. As for universities providing business education services, their programmes of advanced training and retraining cover all topics.

Since statistical data on business education programmes are not available, a research team tried to identify the prevalent topics by analysing the programmes of the most active market players from 12 November 2014 through 31 December 2014. It should be noted that the analysis of activities conducted within 1.5 months cannot be indicative of the whole year, but they can give an idea of the topics of trainings/seminars offered. On the whole, in the above-mentioned period, 107 programmes (short-term trainings, seminars, long-term educational programmes) were advertised, of which the most frequently offered were 'sales' (26%), 'management' (20%), 'personal development' (17%) and 'marketing, advertising, PR' (14%).

[5] According to researchers, the average duration of a one-session programme is 16 hours of instruction (2 days).

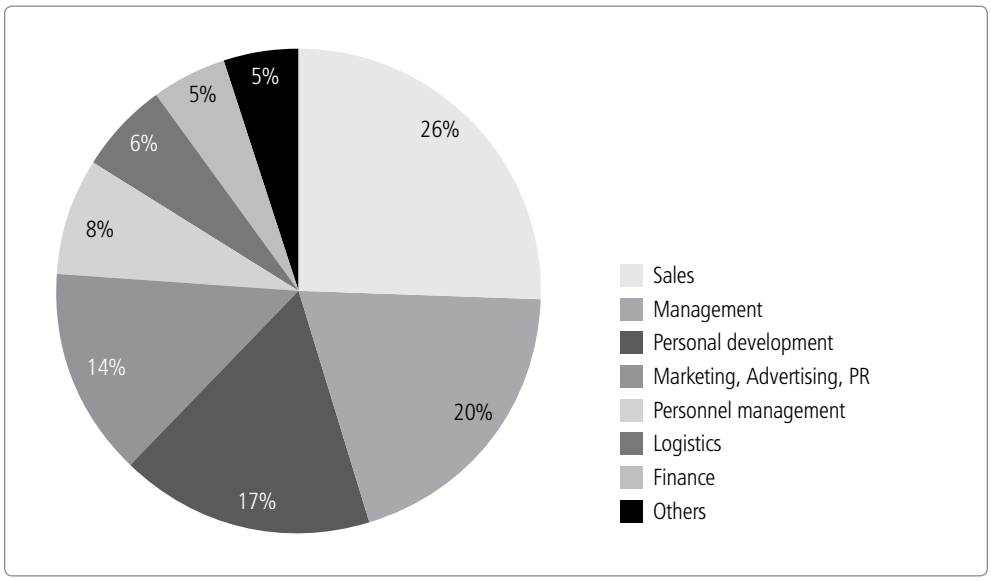

Figure 5. Topics of business education programmes
Source: Association for Management Development, 2014.

Accurate data on the number and structure of participants of business education programmes are not available. However, based on the analysis conducted by the Business School of the Institute of Privatization and Management, one can conclude that most requests for educational services came from companies.

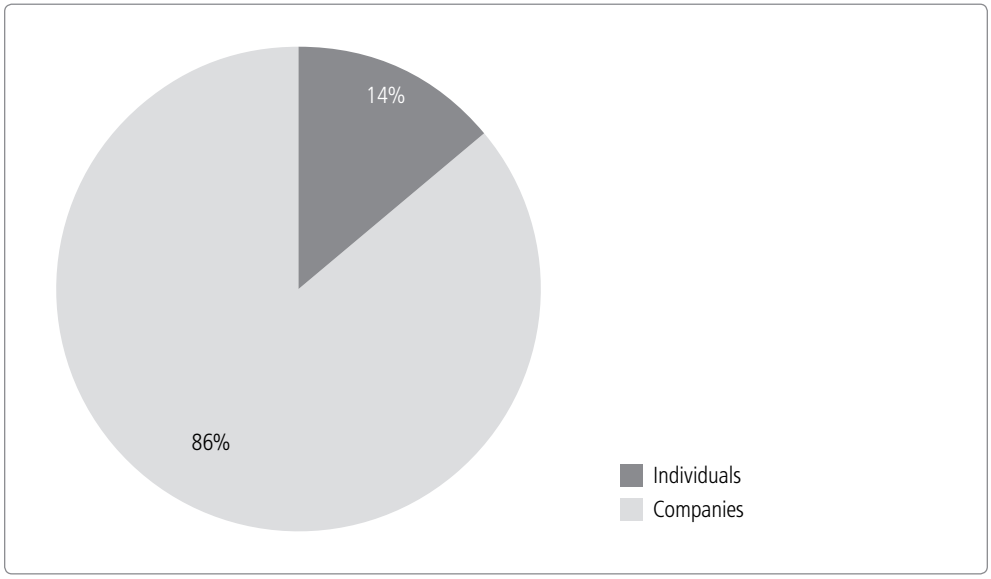

Figure 6. Correlation between companies and individuals as consumers of business education services
Source: Association for Management Development, 2014.

Education in civil society organizations

The programmes offered by civil society organizations (CSOs) belong to the category of non-formal learning. According to the Education Code, they can be assigned to two groups:

1. training curriculum of educational courses (lectures, thematic seminars, practical sessions, trainings, officer and other educational courses);
2. training curriculum of personal skills and opportunities enhancement.

Some CSOs try to work in a format similar to that used at public institutions, but they pursue goals and objectives that differ greatly from those outlined in the Education Code. One example, in this case, is the programme of the Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs 'Social interns', which has been implemented since 2010, enabling the organization to provide non-formal learning services to young people and to form a prospective talent pool. The interns may choose one of the specialties (international secretary, PR manager, office manager, trainer, etc.) and, while assisting and working alone, acquire basic knowledge and skills in this or that field.

However, CSOs, like commercial institutions, rarely use the definitions of programmes as set by the legislation.

According to the analysis of the civic education sector, CSOs use various forms and methods of training and give preference to interactive ones, including lectures, seminars, trainings, courses, schools, practice-oriented home assignments, live action role-playing games, research works, festivals, experience exchange, trainee programmes, e-learning, experiential learning, mentorship, international exchanges, camps, competitions, publishing programmes (journals, books), web-sites, and so forth. Training in CSOs can differ in length, ranging from one-hour lectures to year-long educational programmes. Civil society organizations prefer training courses (usually lasting around 3 months) that not only lead to the acquisition of knowledge but also forge attitudes, skills and competences (OEEC, 2013, p. 32).

The content of educational programmes may be quite diverse, depending on the organization's mission, the aims of specific projects, and the preferences of the target groups. Most NGOs that provide educational services emphasize their commitment to democratic and civic values and seek to ingrain active citizenship skills in their participants.

Some civic education programmes can also be regarded as non-formal learning to develop professional skills. Since 1997, for example, the NGO Centre for informational support of public initiatives, 'The Third sector', has been conducting a school for young journalists designed to train full-time and freelance correspondents for private mass media and publishing houses, as well as press secretaries for NGOs located in the Grodno region. Young people attend a course called 'Basics of Journalism' and participate in a trainee programme led by the Internet portal 'Your style'.

As part of the programme, 'Your style' youth journalism festivals are conducted (2007, 2010, 2012, 2014), and study visits to other Belarusian cities and foreign countries are organized.[6]

Non-political programmes by NGOs help activate citizens and strengthen their involvement in the development of local communities, the execution of human rights, or the promotion of common interests. For example, a school of environmental activists seeks to raise environmental awareness and develop a 'green' movement in Belarus. The school is organized by the 'Green Network'[7] association. The curriculum includes a two-day seminar, a week-long summer academy, and projects implemented by the participants themselves.

Certainly, the range of educational programmes goes far beyond the scope of civic education. Non-governmental organizations have pioneered the promotion of seniors' education, education for sustainable development, equal access to education for children and youths with disabilities, and the like.

Apart from that, Belarusian civil society made a significant contribution to the emergence of new professions and additional qualifications. The seminars, conferences and other programmes of 'Country Escape', the Belarusian Association of Agro- and Ecotourism, contributed greatly to the development of agro-tourism in Belarus. The work of the 'Renewable Energy Sector' association and the NGO 'Ecohome' led to the inclusion of environmental competences in the portfolio of certain construction and power industry professions. Training programmes by the International Association of Real Estate Management laid the basis for the development and introduction of standards for a new profession: building-service supervisor (housekeeper).

Another peculiarity of Belarusian civil society activities is the creation of an alternative to formal academic (university) education. Since the late 1990s, Belarusian authorities have increased ideological control in higher education institutions, which resulted in mass dismissals of teachers who did not support the official political course (Kryvoj, Smok, 2015, p. 15). This led to the launch of some alternative projects:

Belarusian Collegium (founded in 1997) positions itself as a forum for discussions and lectures, a place for intellectual and cultural dialogue, contacts and cooperation. Educational activities are organized during the traditional academic year and cover four directions: Journalism, Recent History, Philosophy and Literature, and European Studies. The core curriculum can be complemented by attending seminars, special courses and workshops.

Flying University (founded in 2009) positions itself as a 'programme to create a real contemporary university in Belarus and for Belarus'. Teaching in Flying University is conducted at two levels: the first offers a number of courses in humanitarian subjects; the second offers courses at four schools: the History of Ideas School, the

6 http://3sektar.by/dzeynasts

7 http://ecoschool.by/o-shkole

Methodological School, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania School, and the Social-Philosophical Analytics School.

The European College of Liberal Arts in Belarus (ECLAB) (founded in 2014) is a project that provides an opportunity to get a supplementary education within the liberal arts education system as a non-formal alternative to formal Belarusian higher education. ECLAB offers programmes in five interdisciplinary departments (concentrations): Contemporary Arts and Drama Studies, Internet and Society, Public History, Contemporary Society, Ethics and Politics, Mass Culture and the Media. Studying one discipline includes attending six core courses and three elective courses.

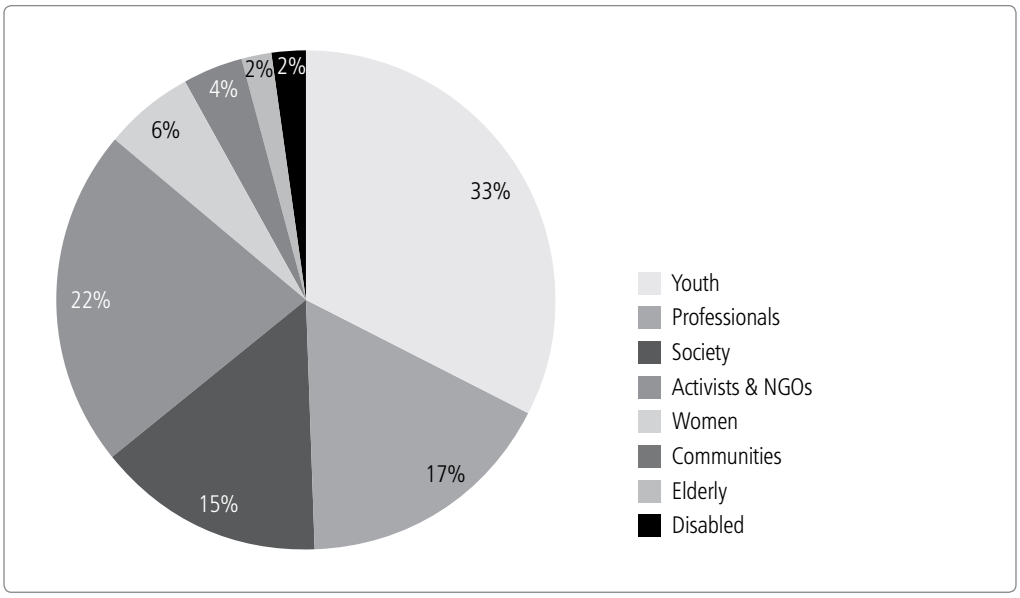

Figure 7. Consumers of non-formal learning services provided by CSOs.
Source: OEEC, 2015, p. 33

Figure 7 shows the breakdown of CSOs/providers vs. the populations these CSOs target with civic education services, based on the interpretation by the research team of activities of over 40 CSOs, named by the providers to be the most recognized in the civic education field.

According to the respondents, over the past 5 years, 10 CSO respondents provided civic education programmes to a total of nearly 25,000 participants. The provided data shows that the average annual coverage by a single CSO is about 300 participants, including one-time trainees. The data say that even if all mentioned CSOs/providers of civic education were equally effective in outreach as the CSOs responding to the survey, the overall outreach by civic education programmes would not exceed 100,000 participants over 5 years, which is about 1.2 percent of the population aged 14 years and older. Considering the fact mentioned by respondents that most pro-active citizens attend trainings more than once at more than one CSO, coverage tends to be even lower (OEEC, 2015).

7. Personnel and professionalism

Personnel

The existing legislation stipulates that when elaborating staffing plans, organizations of any form of ownership, among other things, have to comply with the list of personnel positions presented in wage rates and skills reference books. These books are structured by types of activities and relate to the professional standards underlying the training of such specialists.

When analysing this system from the perspective of adult education, it must be noted that Belarus lacks special formal education programmes to train of teaching staff with a major in adult education. Wage rates and skills reference books do not contain any positions representing this type of activity.

Despite the absence of a holistic approach to single out this type of activity as an independent field, there are lots of organizations with dozens of regular and freelance staff involved in adult education.

Below, we try to outline the professional roles in adult education that are most widespread in Belarus. The classification criteria include affiliation with governmental/non-governmental and commercial/non-commercial organizations.

Organizations providing adult education services are generally headed by a *rector* (possible only in educational institutions) or a *director* (accepted in organizations of any type).

Common for all types of organizations is the profession/job position of a *manager* of educational programmes. This is easiest explained by the following:

1. a manager is a relatively modern and extremely popular profession;
2. this profession is acknowledged by the government and therefore included in the official register of professions;
3. the position of a manager can be introduced to organizations at different levels (e.g. project manager, sales manager, etc.);
4. the government does not regulate all the possible activities a manager can deal with; therefore, employers can supply this position at their own convenience.

Some people are employed as *specialists*. This position, like that of a manager, can refer to different types of activities. However, the official register of professions does not contain the category of adult education specialist – most probably because the developers of professional standards presumed that traditional teaching positions such as a *teacher, lecturer, associate professor, head of department* and the like will be enough to cover the educational activity.

All other positions, such as a *trainer, coach, trainer-adviser, or group leader,* aren't acknowledged as professions, although they are rather popular in non-governmental organizations. It is fair to assume that, by using different terms, non-governmental providers try to disassociate themselves from the educational practice of formal institutions. This way, they underline both their new understanding of the professional roles of those who teach and the special character of adult learning.

The non-governmental, non-commercial sector, apart from the position of trainer, often uses the Belarusian word *adukatar*, which is close in meaning to the English 'educator' and can be used as a collective term for those who are involved in organizing and teaching in adult/non-formal education contexts.

At the same time, it should be noted that the prevailing term in research is *andragogue*, which will most likely be used as a term to define a new pedagogic profession in case a new special programme for training adult education staff is introduced.

There are different forms of employment in adult education. Despite the absence of precise data, the following types of employer-employee relations can be identified:

- Regular staff working under labour contracts with functions such as management, planning, teaching, evaluation and so on. Such form of employment is generally typical of formal and mostly public educational institutions.
- Honoraria-based freelance staff members who are involved in teaching. Such type of relations can be found in each of three sectors. The distinctive features in comparison with other European countries, such as Germany, are as follows: 1) the number of such workers isn't high, 2) the majority of teachers often hold these honoraria-based positions as a supplement to their main occupation – as an additional assignment to their permanent employment at other educational institutions.
- Entrepreneurs. This is a fairly new example from the sphere of non-governmental commercial adult education. Self-employed people providing services in the sphere of adult education have become more and more popular over the last five years. The main driving force for that was that the 2011 amendment to the Education Code contained a regulation allowing private entrepreneurs to provide training services alongside other organizations, including a low tax level and initial capital.
- Volunteer educators working on a free-of-charge basis can be found primarily in civil society organizations. However, over the last decade, certain public institutions have started using this type of relationship with leaders of study circles, trainers, and the like. The best illustration here is the activity of territorial centres for social services, where non-formal education for their target groups (seniors, people with special needs, people released from prisons, etc.) is seen as a necessary addition to social care.

Developing professionalism

As stated above, the profession of andragogue (adult educator) is not included in the official register of pedagogical professions and specialities. Therefore, the question regarding the competencies that an adult education specialist should possess is still open. The formal system of adult education in the Republic of Belarus does not provide any courses about the phenomenon of an adult in his or her socio-psychological and pedagogical interrelations.

For instance, a compulsory subject for all specialities in the first year of a study at a college of education is 'pedagogy', but the pedagogical approach is limited only to school education. The topics 'andragogy' and 'adult education' are only included in the training curriculum of social workers and presented in the course 'Socio-anthropological foundations of social work'. Generally, the training of students enrolled in education programmes – both teachers and those to be involved in social care (e.g. social care teachers), special education teachers (speech pathologists) – in Belarus is focused on these specialists' work with children (Koschel, 2011).

In this case, a legitimate question arises: How is staff training organized, and what are the ways of ensuring the professional development of specialists working in this sphere?

First, let's consider formal educational institutions. It has already been mentioned that these types of institutions quite strictly follow the requirements set in standard wage rates and skills reference book. Most important here is compliance with the following three principles:

1. subject teachers: the corresponding thematic/vocational education, teachers' training and/or experience in teaching;
2. administrative officers: work experience in his or her field of expertise, experience in teaching and management, additional training as a manager;
3. scientific staff: the corresponding/allied education, academic degree and publications.

Further training of staff at formal adult education institutions, as a rule, is organized in two major lines: improving subject competencies and enhancing the quality of general pedagogical training.

The situation, however, has recently been changing slowly. The curriculum of different programmes in further education and the retraining of pedagogical staff now more often include topics related to adult education. The activity of the Academy of Postgraduate Education ought to be noted here. It works to incorporate andragogic topics into various advanced training courses for staff at pre-school, general secondary, special and supplementary education institutions for children and youth. However, they are largely represented in the following courses:

- Competence-based approach in the further education of pedagogical staff';
- 'Pedagogy of distance learning';
- 'Contents and organization of work on identification, analysis, accumulation and distribution of pedagogical experience';
- 'Improving methodological support of staff within the competence-based approach' (for headmasters, deputy head teachers of secondary education institutions (gymnasiums and schools), pedagogical workers – heads of city methodological formations of teachers, methodologists of education department of Orsha City Executive Committee) (Koschel, 2011).

In 2011, the Academy of Postgraduate Education, with the support of the Belarusian office of DVV International, developed and implemented a week-long further education course on 'Modern Models of Adult Education' that, so far, has been the only

course offering participants a certificate in a state-approved format. Additionally, the Academy has been organizing webinars and online seminars for specialists interested in the topic of adult learning since 2012.

The activities of the Academy of Postgraduate Education raised awareness about the issue at the level of the Ministry of Education. As a result, in 2015, the Ministry of Education suggested that three leading institutions in postgraduate teacher training – Academy of Postgraduate Education, Republican Institute of Higher Education, and Republican Institute of Vocational Education (RIPO) – draft a number of proposals for introducing a new profession. In 2016, RIPO came up with the suggestion to launch a programme based on a modular approach that could be implemented either at the second level of higher education (master's degree) or at the level of advanced training courses. Piloting of this programme has not started yet, as the recognition process of andragogy as a new pedagogical speciality is still underway.

Meanwhile, the sphere of non-formal education, which is poorly institutionalized and receives little attention, deals with the issue of staff professionalization by itself. There are no strict regulations and standards for improving competences. Different forms of short-term activities (round tables on sharing experiences, thematic trainings and seminars, meetings in the format of an 'educational café', etc.) and long-term programmes (Flying University, School of Educators, trainings of trainers, international study visits, etc.) are held (Laboda, 2012, p. 40).

As for the commercial sector, advanced staff training is ensured mostly by trainings of trainers. It should be noted that programmes for advisers and coaches, including MBA degrees, are very popular in the commercial sphere.

Finally, it is worth noting that specialists of different organizations not only use different terms for their activities but also choose different professional development strategies. Whereas the staff members of public institutions are mostly focused on participating in the programmes of further education and broadening their subject-related knowledge, those engaged in the non-governmental sector pay attention to the andragogic competences of a teacher. Thus, obtaining a certifying document is not of primary importance. However, the non-governmental sector also provides different strategies with lots of traceable impacts. Whereas trainers from civil society, in their professional activities, introduce the approaches and expertise of their European colleagues, trainers from the business community maintain close relations with training centres and unions in the Russian-speaking environment (Russia, Ukraine and other CIS countries).

8. Research and higher education

Teaching

At the beginning of 2015, the National Classification System of the Republic of Belarus, 'Specializations and Qualifications', educational profiles A ('Pedagogy') and B ('Pedagogy: Professional Education'), included 30 specializations of higher education at stage I and 7 specializations of higher education at stage II (culminating in the award of a Master of Pedagogical Sciences Degree). The programmes in which pedagogical qualifications are awarded are offered by 25 Belarusian higher education institutions: 4 specialized institutions (Maxim Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University, Mozyr State Pedagogical University named after I.P. Shamyakin, Minsk State Linguistic University, Belarusian State University of Physical Culture) and 9 classic institutions (Belarusian State University, Brest State University named after A.S. Pushkin, Mogilev State University named after A.A. Kuleshov, Grodno State University named after Yanka Kupala, Gomel State University named after Francisk Skorina, Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov, Polotsk State University, Baranovichi State University, Polesye State University) as well as Belarusian National Technical University, etc. (Concept for development of teacher education, 2015).

However, as mentioned in the Personnel and Professionalism section, pedagogical education programmes do not lead to the qualification 'andragogue' or any other qualification reflecting the specificity of adult education in the Republic of Belarus. In fact, the country lacks a system of training specialists in adult education or andragogues at an academic level. The efforts of the past few years to include the profession of 'andragogue' in the list of professions and jobs, as well as the testing of a modular programme within the framework of formal education, are still ongoing.

Yet the processes of modernizing the vocational education system and the integration of Belarus into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA or the Bologna Process) in May 2015 are encouraging developments. To complete the aforementioned process, the Ministry of Education adopted Order No. 628, 'On adopting measures to incorporate EHEA principles and instruments into the national education system in the period 2015–2018'. In accordance with that document and with the Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform, the government must incorporate key EHEA principles into the national educational system between 2015 and 2018. Most notably, the order calls for completing the process of developing and launching the National Qualifications Framework, creating a multi-level higher education system (bachelor-master-doctorate/research), introducing independent quality assessment principles, transforming transcripts into higher education diplomas, providing support for student and staff mobility, expanding academic freedoms, and so on.

Creating a multi-level higher education system involves the revision of current training curricula. In this regard, the 'Education for Sustainable Development' as-

sociation and the Association of Lifelong Learning and Enlightenment suggested that Maxim Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University develop special courses on 'Education for Sustainable Development' and 'Lifelong Learning' reflecting the specificity of adult learning and includes them into the standard curricula for students of pedagogical specialities.

Research

The National Academy of Sciences is the highest scientific organization of the Republic of Belarus. It organizes and coordinates fundamental and problem-oriented research conducted by all scientific actors, fundamental and problem-oriented research and development activities conducted in the key areas of science, technology, social sciences, humanities and the arts.

Today, the National Academy of Sciences consists of seven departments: agricultural sciences; biological sciences; humanities and arts; medical sciences; physics, mathematics and informatics; physics engineering sciences; chemistry and Earth sciences.[8]

The humanities and arts department consists of 6 academic institutions, none of which is engaged in adult education research; nor is this aspect of education included in priority areas of research and scientific work conducted in the Republic of Belarus in 2016–2020, specified in Presidential Decree No. 166 of 22 April 2015 (Decree, 2015).

The development of pedagogical sciences is under the authority of higher education institutions. Today, more than 200 scientific schools operate at Belarusian higher education institutions engaged in fundamental scientific research in mathematics, informatics, physics, biology, social sciences and humanities, as well as problem-oriented research in nano- and biotechnologies, information and communication technologies and electronics, architecture and construction, developing new materials, robotechnics and automation, mechanical engineering, and so on. Only 30–40 of them are engaged in pedagogical research.

This research can roughly be divided into two groups: scientific research (usually upon the request of a specialized Ministry), and research culminating in defence of the PhD thesis and a doctoral degree.

The Ministry of Education is a state customer under a variety of state scientific research programmes uniting universities conducting around 700 assignments. The majority of research is not related to adult education.

Thesis research is conducted within the framework of a master's course (culminating in the award of a Master of Pedagogical Sciences degree), postgraduate course (culminating in the award of a Candidate of Sciences degree) and doctoral course (culminating in the award of a Doctor of Sciences Degree). The Supreme Attestation Commission of the Republic of Belarus is coordinating thesis research. It works in

[8] More about the Academy http://nasb.gov.by/rus/organizations/departments/ogum.php

cooperation with 8 Councils on pedagogical sciences. Regulations for thesis defence have been created at various educational institutions. Thesis defence is conducted in the following specialities:

- Theory and Methods of Education (in aspects and levels of education) (13.00.02);
- General Pedagogy, History of Pedagogy and Education (13.00.01);
- Theory and Methods of Professional Education (13.00.08);
- Correctional Pedagogy (Surdopedagogy, Tiflopedagogy, Oligophrenopedagogy and Logopedia) (13.00.03);
- Theory, Methods and Organization of Social and Cultural Activities (13.00.05);
- Library Science and Book Science (05.25.03);
- Theory and Methods of Physical Education, Sports, Health and Adaptive Physical Education (13.00.04).

The majority of thesis research is focused on children and youth education challenges. The few works dedicated to adult education are focused primarily on advanced training and retraining and, in rare cases, on the historical development of national pedagogy and comparative studies.

Broadening the andragogy research spectrum is hampered by the lack of adult education faculties at Belarusian universities and the shortage of academic staff specializing in this field.

In the situation described above, the most active civil society actors try to fill this research gap. Their research is usually oriented at certain thematic priorities or needs of the target groups and is a part of wider projects.

The following are good examples of the aforementioned:

- One of the first attempts to analyse the Belarusian adult education system was made by the specialists of the Republican Institute for Vocational Education (Kalitskij, E., Krichevskij J. 2008);
- Research on education and social activity in senior age conducted in 2013 by the Territorial Social Services Centre of the Pervomajsky district of Minsk (Voitova, 2013);
- Analysis of the Civic Education Sector in Belarus, conducted by the Office for European Expertise and Communication in 2013 (OEEC, 2015);
- The book *Non-formal Education for Regional Democratic Transformation*, prepared by the experts of the EaP 6 countries within the Education sub-working group of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The aim of the study was to show the actual situation of non-formal education in the Eastern Partnership states (EaP SCF, 2012);
- Study of the educational needs of people in the Vitebsk and Minsk regions, conducted within the framework of a joint project implemented by DVV International and the Association of Lifelong Learning and Enlightenment (Koshel, 2014);
- Research regarding the availability of education to prisoners in correctional facilities of the Gomel region, conducted within the 'Education Opens Doors' project in 2015–2016;[9]

[9] Reports in Russian are available under http://www.dvv-international.org.ua/belarus/publications

- Non-formal Education in Belarus: Broadening Educational Space, conducted by experts of Ostrogorsky Centre (Kryvoj, Smok, 2016).

9. International contexts

Within the structure of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus, there is a department for international cooperation, responsible for international activities in education. Certain measures are taken to develop cooperation with international organizations such as the United Nations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank, the International Visegrad Fund, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Council of Europe and others. The Ministry has signed 93 international agreements so far; half of them are intergovernmental. However, the majority of agreements and efforts are targeted at broadening cooperation in the sphere of higher and vocational education. Here, the Ministry's key objective is not merely to support student and teacher mobility but also to increase the number of foreign students at Belarusian universities.

At the same time, it is evident that the system of adult education, just like the country in general, is subject to the influence of diverse impulses, traditions and approaches.

Due to a long period of common history and a shared language environment, cooperation in the sphere of education among the former Soviet Union republics continues. The position and approaches of Russia and the supranational body – the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – have a profound influence, if not on the educational policy of the Republic of Belarus directly, then at least on the way of thinking among the professional community and decision-makers.

As mentioned in the section dedicated to the history of adult education development, the Interstate Committee of the CIS on the spread of knowledge and adult education in the 1990s was one of the major agencies promoting the ideas of lifelong learning within the post-Soviet environment. Besides, the Institute of Pedagogy and Adult Education of the Russian Academy of Education became the leading organization in the sphere of adult education and enlightenment in the CIS countries. The responsibilities of the leading organization include coordination of fundamental and problem-oriented research in the sphere of adult education conducted in the CIS member states, issues of training, retraining and upskilling of specialists, including the design of educational programmes for postgraduate professional education, innovative pedagogical technologies and methods of training the staff, as well as developing scientific recommendations (CIS, 2017). Hence, due to the absence of academic departments of andragogy and specialized research institutions, the results of scientific research of the Russian Institute were actively used.

Over time, however, the issues of adult education and enlightenment took second place in the Council's activities regarding cooperation in the sphere of education among CIS member states. In the past five years, no question on the matter of adult education was submitted for discussion at the joint working sessions. Therefore, the position of the CIS in adult education is now rather weak.

In 1954, Belarus joined the UNESCO. As stipulated in the Statute of UNESCO, the National Commission operates in Belarus with the members from among heads of

ministries of education, culture, information, sports and tourism, Academy of Sciences of Belarus, representatives of the Presidential Administration and Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, rectors of the leading higher education institutions, heads of museums and managing directors of public associations.

Today, eight UNESCO departments and eleven associated UNESCO schools operate in the country. Besides, Belarus participates in a number of other programmes and projects focused on the maintenance of intangible cultural heritage and the like.

At the same time, cooperation with UNESCO structures in the sphere of adult education, such as the Institute of Lifelong Learning in Hamburg, is practically absent. The Republic of Belarus did not submit the national report and decided not to participate in the preparation of CONFINTEA VI. It was only in 2015 that the country took part in the GRALE III monitoring survey.

Having borders with the European Union, the Republic of Belarus has rather complicated relations with Europe, but a certain upturn in relations has recently fostered cooperation in the sphere of adult education.

In 2014, for instance, the European Commission approved substantial financial assistance to Belarus to modernize its vocational education and training (VET) and employment system. In May 2015, the Republic of Belarus joined the Bologna Process. Nevertheless, the European vector of influence on the transformation of the adult education system remains quite limited and rather indirect, which is the result of:

- the activity of the European Training Foundation (where adult education is seen from the perspective of acquiring vocational skills and developing entrepreneurial activity);
- facilitating the process of developing the national framework of qualifications, which in turn ensures the review of attitudes to non-formal and informal adult education;
- funding of the projects of certain non-governmental organizations within the framework of thematic programmes such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, Non-state Actors and Local Authorities and the like. Such projects are targeted at the development of adult education as a whole and incorporate educational components for certain population groups to attain other goals;
- broadening participation of young people in youth exchange programmes and projects for volunteers within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme.
- Unfortunately, the key action of the Erasmus+ programme, which is targeted at adult education development, remains inaccessible for Belarusian organizations.

However, the non-governmental, non-commercial sector, represented mostly by public associations, shows a distinct pro-European vector and intention to develop cooperation both with partners from specific countries and with Europe in general. The closest bilateral relationships were established with partner organizations from Nordic countries (Sweden and Denmark) and Germany.

After launching the project office of DVV International in 2009 (Institute of International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association) in Belarus,

the number of projects targeted at developing non-formal adult education, facilitating the creation of adult education centres, and professionalizing adult education teaching specialists has increased considerably. So far, DVV International has established partner relations with several dozen organizations, key ministries and the Parliament. At the same time, it supports local partners in their interactions and with establishing partnerships with German and other European organizations.

Two Belarusian civil society organizations became members of the European Adult Education Association (EAEA), which fostered information exchange and cooperation. As a result, the EAEA President attended the festival of non-formal education in 2016. Besides, the Belarusian version of the Manifesto on Adult Learning in the 21st century was presented to the participants of the Festival. Moreover, thanks to the projects of DVV International, contacts with the European Prison Education Association were also established.

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Service

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Summary

The international arena of lifelong learning offers rich country-specific portfolios of historical trajectories, policy frameworks and practical evidence of adult and continuing education. This book provides an introduction to the case of Belarus and outlines the key features of its system alongside issues such as political and legal agendas, schemes of participation, provision and financing or trends in professionalization, research areas and transnational linkages. Through the lens of adult and continuing education, the author invites researchers, practitioners, students and persons interested in international-comparative perspectives to a tour d'horizon of the Belarusian lifelong learning landscape.

» LÄNDERPORTRÄTS «

Adult and Continuing Education in Belarus

This publication gives an overview of central aspects of adult and continuing education in Belarus. Galina Veramejchyk presents a range of data and information regarding adult and continuing education institutions, financing, provision, participation, staff and international relationships. She describes adult and continuing education in Belarus taking into consideration the political, geographical, and cultural context as well as the current economic situation.

This book offers a brief and systematic introduction and guides the reader through the system of adult and continuing education in Belarus.

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