2020

New Folk University Support Programme for 2020-2030

Status: adopted by the Polish Government, 18 June 2020

The new programme aims at supporting existing Folk Universities, reformulating their educational mission and establishing new institutions.

Folk universities by definition prepare for active involvement in social life and help their learners to cope with contemporary challenges. The programme covers a wide scope of intervention including: development of professional and social competences of the young unemployed, education and counteracting of digital exclusion of senior citizens, promotion of employability, validation of qualifications, support to folk culture as a means of building local communities’ identity, shaping of responsibility for „local homelands“ and development of local leaders.

The folk university settings are to be institutions based on the so called Grundtvig concept with an open, friendly atmosphere aiming to support personal development and social activity. Such settings will become attractive to less active individuals and offer them an opportunity for a better life. The Programme corresponds with the basis of current policy on development of adult education, which aims to support, among other things, active involvement and cultural creativity understood as a learning outcome.

Basic Outline of the Folk University Support Programme for 2020-2030 (Program Wspierania Rozwoju Uniwersytetów Ludowych na lata 2020-2030 (PWRUL):

- The Programme’s Budget: 100.000.000 PLN (9.3 million PLN a year for the period of 2020-2030)
- Five priorities:
  - Priority 1. Infrastructural and programme support to the existing folk universities
  - Priority 2. Support for the establishment of new and reactivation of former folk universities
  - Priority 3. Support for networking and cooperation between folk universities and promotion of Grundtvig type education
  - Priority 4. Support for the development of civic education and preservation of heritage in local communities
  - Priority 5. Technical support.

All the current information on the Programme will be available at the web page (and on social channels) of the National Freedom Institute – the Centre for Development of Civil Society [1] (Narodowy Instytut Wolności – Centrum Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego).
A Chance – New Opportunities for Adults

Status: under implementation, June 2020

The Foundation for the Development of the Education System in partnership with the Educational Research Institute are implementing the project “A Chance - New Opportunities for Adults [2]”. The project is in line with the 2016 Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults; it is co-financed by the European Social Fund and will be completed at the end of 2021.

The main aim of the project is to support adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences who are not eligible for support under The Youth Guarantee programme.

The project will offer beneficiaries flexible opportunities to improve their literacy, numeracy, digital and social competences, and the option to progress to higher levels of the Polish Qualifications Framework. These objectives will be achieved by developing effective models that will reach and motivate individuals from selected target groups, and by offering them tailored-made learning programmes, skills assessment and the validation of achieved learning outcomes.

The project has three phases:

1. The first phase (1.10.2018–31.07.2019) included qualitative research and an analysis of current initiatives (e.g. projects, surveys, reports, strategy documents), the selection of priority target groups as well as the development of specifications and requirements for tailored models supporting adults with a low level of basic skills.
2. The second phase (1.08.2019–30.06.2021) is focused on developing these tailored models by eligible entities chosen in an open call for grants; the best ones will be piloted.
3. The third phase (1.07.2021–31.12.2021) will focus on preparing recommendations to the government to be used in developing coherent strategies for raising adults’ basic skills. They will include conclusions from the piloted models and will cover such aspects as the effectiveness of the pilot projects, the cost effectiveness of the interventions, and best practices.

The main products developed during the project’s first phase are presented below. This phase had a conceptual and research character, its objective was to develop the main premises for implementing the next phases of the project “A Chance - New Opportunities for Adults”.

2019

Local Knowledge and Education Centres - continuation

Reform status: continuation of a successful project launched as a pilot in 2017, October 2019

Continuation of a project initiated by the Ministry of National Education in 2017 and co-funded with European funds. In the framework of the pilot project, 50 Local Knowledge and Education Centres have been created in 13 provinces across the country. After a very good reception of the first 50 centres, the Ministry decided to continue the project and establish 100 more centres from 2020 on.

Local Knowledge and Education Centre is an additional function adopted voluntarily by a school, which involves activation of the local environment to improve the skills of its adult population. Schools are one of the widest existing networks of social services. The task of the centre is to use this natural position of a school and open access to programmes for adults especially to people living in small and
remote towns and villages or neglected city districts. Schools act as local centres and offer parents and other adults opportunity to develop basic skills and key competences, which are the foundation for lifelong learning. The offer is based on prior identification of the specific needs of adults in the local environment. The quality of the needs analysis has a direct effect on the social response to the programme.

**Governmental Programme for the Social Activity of Seniors in years 2014-2020 - update 2019**

**Reform status: programme, 2014-2020**

Governmental Programme for the Social Activity of Seniors in years 2014-2020 is a major multiannual initiative. Its aims at the improvement of level and quality of life of the elderly for good ageing with the involvement in social activities. The Programme aims to involve NGOs to work with seniors and encourage their engagement. In total the Programme’s budget includes 280 million PLN, 40 million a year.

NGOs and other entities working for the elderly can apply for funding between 20 and 200 thousand PLN in the framework of 4 priorities:

- **Education of seniors (15% of allocated funds)** - this priority includes development of educational offer for seniors, using the potential of peer to peer learning, development of innovations in education, including non-formal and informal forms of education, promotion of so-called competences voluntary work, encouragement of use of new technologies and counteracting e-exclusion among the elderly.
- **Social activity promoting integration within the senior community, and integration between old and young (25% of allocated funds)** - it includes development of various forms of activity by the elderly with the use of existing social infrastructure (e.g., public libraries, cultural centres) and involving the younger generation in common initiatives which helps to build mutual understanding and development of social skills.
- **Social participation of the elderly (20% of allocated funds)** - it includes implementation of various measures towards increasing involvement of the elderly in public, social, economic, cultural and political life, contributing towards development of civic society.
- **Social services for the elderly (40% of allocated funds)** - it includes implementation of various measures towards development of different forms of support via increased accessibility and improved quality of social services for the elderly.

Legal basis

Uchwała Nr 237 Rady Ministrów z dnia 24 grudnia 2013 r. w sprawie ustanowienia Rządowego Programu na rzecz Aktywności Społecznej Osób Starszych na lata 2014-2020  

Competition results 2019:


**New regulation on vocational examination and vocational qualification examination procedures**

**Reform status: approved, 28 August 2019**
New regulation applies to all forms of vocational examinations. Main differences between the new regulation and previous regulations in force are as follows:

- Written part of vocational examination will be implemented exclusively with the use of the electronic examination system.
- Practical part of the vocational examination and vocational qualification examination will involve participation of technical assistants. Technical assistants are to be nominated by school/training institution heads, and employers. They can be either teachers, or not, but in any case should be holding relevant qualifications or skills necessary to operate the examination stations. Technical assistant is responsible for proper functioning of specialist equipment, machines and all necessary equipment used during the practical part of the exam.
- Before taking the practical vocational examination students will have open access to exam questions/ tasks database.

The regulation stipulates two dates for declaring the will to take the vocational and vocational qualification exams - 15 September and 7 February.

First vocational exams in one separate qualification (based on the classification of vocations for sectoral vocational schools) will take place in 2020.

Legal basis:

**Regulation on core curricula for trade occupations and additional vocational skills**

**Status: approved in May 2019**

On May 16, 2019, the Minister of National Education signed the regulation on core curricula for trade occupations and additional vocational skills in the scope of selected trade occupations. The regulation will enter into force on September 1, 2019.

The regulation defines core curricula for 215 occupations included in the classification of trade occupations divided into 32 sectors as well as additional vocational skills in the scope of selected occupations.

The new core curriculum regulation differs from the previous one in terms of its structure and contents. The new document covers the criteria for validation of learning outcomes, as it features the requirements, which validate the achievement of learning outcomes in a given occupation. The new structure is transparent both for students and teachers. Students can learn the requirements taken into consideration during examinations leading to the award of qualifications, i.e. what knowledge and skills they need to acquire. Teachers also have clearly set requirements, which will help them develop the assessment criteria.

The new core curriculum introduces new occupations postulated by employers, such as computer programming technician, catering assistant, flexo print machine operator, and yacht and boat fitter. The document also features a proposal for additional vocational skills, which schools can choose as an optional offer for a given occupation. For example, students undergoing training to become hairdressing technicians can learn the basics of make-up artist occupation or master the basics of barbering. IT technicians can acquire additional skills in the scope of web security or Python programming. A waiter can obtain additional qualifications as a bartender, and gardener can master viticulture. Students preparing for obtaining qualifications in printing occupations can learn 3D modelling.

The provisions of the regulation will be applied starting on:
• school year 2019/2020 -- the first grade of lower secondary trade schools, which starts on September 1, 2019 or on February 1, 2020; semester 1 of post-secondary schools; first grade of the four-year secondary technical schools and first grade of five-year technical schools;
• school year 2020/2021 -- semester 1 of upper secondary trade schools.

In subsequent years, the core curricula will be taught in subsequent grades and semesters of the above mentioned schools. The regulation has been signed and sent for publication. The document has been posted on: https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12321762 [6].

Local Knowledge and Education Centres

Reform status: pilot project completed, new phase to be announced in 2019

Local Knowledge and Education Centres is a project focusing on preparing schools in disadvantaged areas for the operation in the capacity as education and activation centres for adults. Schools participating in the project develop: (1) lifelong valid universal skills (key competences); (2) non-formal education offer, the contents of which are based on the diagnosis of adult learners’ needs in the local community. Flexible offer caters for limitations to adult participation in education; (3) cooperation networks of individuals, organisations and institutions promoting adult skills. These activities are based on the potential of formal education. However, their effectiveness may depend on abandoning the school-centric approach, which discourages adults from participating in training based on solutions, which they know from schools.

Local Knowledge and Education Centres is a project initiated by the Ministry of National Education and co-funded with European funds under Knowledge, Education, Development Operational Programme. The project focusses on preparing selected schools in disadvantaged areas to function as local education and activation centres for adults. Their target group are adults with limited access to education who find it difficult to adapt their basic skills and other key competences to the changes in the labour market and society. It also aims to develop effective models for taking action in local community on behalf of adults in need of support in terms of skills and to develop methods and tools for the teaching staff at schools, which expand their education offer to parents and other adults in local community.

Since autumn 2017, 50 such centres have been established in 13 provinces. The highest concentration of them (6-8) can be found in the following provinces: Dolnośląskie, Lubelskie, Podkarpackie and Wielkopolskie. The majority of centres were established in small localities. The establishment of these centres was coordinated by three promoters with experience in running projects on a regional scale. The promoters were selected in a competitive procedure (in accordance with the rules for implementing KED OP). The establishment of the centres was preceded by a pilot project. Based on the experience gained, a new competition will be launched in the first half of 2019 with the aim to establish 100 more such centres.

VET reform continues

Reform status: approved for implementation, March 2019

The proposed amendment to the „Law on School Education” Act has been approved for implementation. The amendment includes, among others, the right to establish and supervise schools and settings for all the ministers responsible for particular vocations. The Ministry of National Education explains this measure in terms of co-responsibility of economy-related ministries for vocational education. New settings for vocational education in out-of-school forms will be established
within the education system – Vocational Education Centres (Centra Kształcenia Zawodowego). They will be established starting 1 September 2019 on the basis of existing Practical Education Centres and Professional Development Centres.

2018

VET reform

Reform status: proposed amendment of the Act „Law on school education”, September 2018

The Council of Ministers has approved a proposal of amendment to the „Law on School Education” Act as formulated by the Minister of National Education.

The new measures aim at improving prestige of vocational education in Poland, mostly through improving quality and effectiveness of VET in schools and other institutions.

Changes are planned starting in the school year 2019/2020.

According to the proposal local authorities will receive an increased subvention for students enrolled in vocational courses for which an increased demand at the labour market is observed. This prognosis will be announced by the Minister of National Education.

Students of sectoral vocational schools stage I who are not young employees (as well as technikum students) will be able to undertake employment on the basis of an agreement with their employer. Practical placements will help students with learning their trade in real employment situations, collecting experience in different enterprises and different jobs. The employer will have an opportunity to test and prepare his/her potential employee. Costs of student’s remuneration during placements will be tax deductible.

Students will be obliged to take vocational exams in schools.

Further training is planned for vocational teachers who will upgrade their skills during obligatory sectoral placements organized by the school heads. This solution will contribute towards upgraded skills and competences of the teachers, offer them access to new technologies and enterprises in a given branch of industry.

Schools will be given tools for more flexible approach towards needs of adult learners, mostly via short vocational courses.

According to the proposal schools and institutions in charge of vocational training will be able to collect funds coming from the services offered as part of vocational training. Funds will be collected in separate bank accounts.

Regional educational authorities (kuratorzy oświaty) will be responsible for coordination of theoretical part of education for juvenile workers. This will lead to optimum use of resources and will help juvenile workers to study as close to home as possible.

Financing of the above mentioned reforms will be coming from several sources: e.g. from the Labour Fund (637 million PLN in 2019 – 2020), National Training Fund (co-financing of placements for teachers), general subvention for education, EU funds and support by the governmental programmes.
The proposal will be directed to the Parliament.


**Measures by the Ministry of National Education focusing on VET conducted since 2016**

**Reform status: implemented, April 2018**

In the field of VET the following measures have been implemented since 2016:

1. Making the structure of education more flexible and ensuring access to further education and training thanks to the introduction of first and second cycle trade schools. Such a model ensures full permeability of vocational education and training and allows for taking the Matura (final secondary education leaving) examination.
2. Enhancing practical training by allowing schools to increase the number of hours for practical training implementation.
3. Introducing compulsory career guidance at schools in order to increase the validity of decisions related to the choice of a career.
4. Modifying the model of financing vocational education with taking into account the cost intensiveness of training in individual occupations.
5. Abolishing the limit on remuneration paid to labour market specialists employed at schools.
6. Acquiring partners to work together on behalf of vocational education and training - management boards of special economic zones have declared their cooperation with the Ministry of National Education and support for schools teaching specific occupations; 12 seminars have been organised during which discussions were held on how vocational education and training can respond to the need for educating staff working in in individual industries; a joint letter from the Prime Minister and Minister of Education was addressed to employers, including state treasury companies, in which they encouraged to support trade and technical schools; ministries competent for specific occupations were included in the cooperation.
7. More than 1000 employers actively participate in the development of curricular amendments (including the development of state-of-the-art core curricula, which will take effect on 1 September 2019).
8. A new tool for monitoring the demand for VET graduates is developed in cooperation with the Central Statistical Office.
9. The Ministry of National Education announces competitions for employers to present the best solutions in the area of practical training.
10. Companies (e.g. PGE, KGHM) conclude agreements with schools, which provide for the formation of forms sponsored by such companies.
11. Representatives of individual industries conclude agreements with the Ministry of National Education aimed at the development of vocational education and training (e.g. electric power and power sector, rail and road transport sector).
12. Each employer interested in starting cooperation with a given school can use the services of VET Coordinators appointed for this purpose at each education authority.
13. The Council of Vocational School Headmasters appointed by the Ministry of National Education participates in the development of reforms of vocational education and training and public consultation on them in the school environment.

**Third Age Universities - II edition**

**Reform status: approved, February 2018**
The Ministry of Science and Higher Education has announced the results of the second edition of the competition for support to the Third Age Universities. 49 applications were submitted for the II edition of this competition out of which 20 best ones were selected for funding. The total support to all projects amounts to nearly 6 million PLN.

The programme supports projects devoted to organisation of educational and research classes at existing or newly formed Third Age Universities in the framework of Social Responsibility of Science which form a part of Gowin’s Strategy.

Third Age Universities help learners to become familiar with the new scientific discoveries and encourage them to undertake intellectual, social and cultural activity. The competition allowed the best institutions organizing such activities to gain additional funds.

**New core curriculum for post-primary schools - new regulation by the Minister of National Education**

**Reform status: approved**

The new regulation on core curriculum for general education for 4-year general upper secondary school, 5-year technical upper secondary school and 2-year stage II sectoral vocational school was signed on the 30 January 2018.

New core curriculum for post-primary schools is to be implemented starting in 2019/2020 (in grade I) of:

- 4-year general upper secondary school;
- 5-year technical upper secondary school;
- 2-year stage II sectoral vocational school.

The following educational aspects have been addressed in the new core curricula:

- Focus on the development of key competences;
- Improving the efficiency of mother tongue teaching through introducing pupils to cultural tradition and literature, which serves rooting in the past, developing one’s identity and cultural continuity;
- Improving the efficiency of modern foreign language teaching giving pupils a framework for continuing and systematic foreign language learning (two languages) and a possibility of bilingual education;
- Return to learning of history as a separate subject for all pupils taking into consideration a wide context of internal and international situation;
- Development of entrepreneurship, creativity and ICT skills not only for educational purposes but also for everyday life, with a focus on all aspects of ICT teaching and introduction of coding for all pupils;
- Development of knowledge and skills in maths and science through teaching of separate subjects of biology, chemistry, physics and geography at the II educational stage – with continuation at the III educational stage;
- Return to the growth based learning approach through repetition, enhancement and development of knowledge on the subsequent levels of education;
- Replacing of subject integration concept with a subject correlation one (in the field of humanities and in the field of science).