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:
https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12322834

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, 2010; 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 [4].

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 focussing 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).

2017

A series of seminars related to the currently implemented reform of vocational education and training

Status of the reform: during the implementation

From October 2017 to January 2018, the Ministry of National Education organises a series of seminars addressed to employers, which provide an opportunity to learn about the changes in vocational education and training, which the Ministry plans to introduce in close cooperation with employers.

Regulation on the classification of occupations of vocational education and training signed

Status of the reform: signed on 13 March 2017

The Regulation lists 213 vocational education and training occupations, which will be taught as of 1 September 2017. It refers to education provided in the 1st year of 1st cycle trade schools, 1st year of four-year technical secondary schools and the 1st semester in post-secondary schools. The document features both the occupations that already exist and new ones.

At the same time, it is the previous Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 13 December 2016 on the classification of occupations of vocational education and training (Official Journal of 2016, item 2094) that applies to the remaining years of four-year technical secondary schools, the remaining years of previous vocational schools provided within 1st cycle trade schools and to the remaining semesters of post-secondary schools, until the end of such education.

The Regulation offers an opportunity to provide school-based education in the case of the following new occupations:

- structural finishing technician, which is a continuation of structural drywall installer and finisher training;
- warehouse attendant and logistically, which is the foundation for logistics technician training

and in five so-called auxiliary occupations intended for people with light intellectual disabilities:

1. tailor’s assistant,
2. mechanic’s assistant,
3. locksmith’s assistant,
4. carpenter’s assistant,
5. hairdresser’s assistant.

The Regulation also offers an opportunity of school-based education to acquire qualifications for a
new occupation – that of a steel industry machinery and equipment operator. This occupation is a result of the process of regrouping and integrating previous occupations, such as plastic thermoforming machinery and equipment operator, and metallurgical machinery and equipment operator.

The Regulation also introduces changes to the names of some existing occupations.

Moreover, as a result of the adaptation of the vocational education and training offer to the needs of the labour market in cooperation with social partners - a process that started in 2016 - the Regulation introduces changes to the number and names of qualifications identified within individual occupations. This is the outcome of 54 occupations included in the classification of occupations of vocational education and training being reviewed and updated, which was performed as part of the project entitled Partnership for Vocational Education and Training.

The structural reform of the education system approved for implementation

Reform status: approved for implementation

The reform will be implemented between 1 September 2017 and the school year 2022/23. On the 1 September 2017 pupils graduating from year 6 of the primary school will become pupils of grade 7. At the same time gymnasia will be gradually phased out. In the school year 2018/19 gymnasia will cease to operate as the last cohort of pupils will graduate.

The new structure includes:

- 8-year primary school
- 4-year general upper secondary school
- 5-year technical upper secondary school
- 3-year trade school (stage I)
- 3-year special school preparing for employment
- 2-year trade school (stage II)
- Post-secondary school.

The restructuring will take place on the basis of an Act of 14 December 2016 “Law on School Education” and an Act “Legislation introducing the Act – Law on School Education”.

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