


Development Groups Summary

Country: Latvia



 www.partnerup-project.eu

 [partnerupeu](https://www.facebook.com/partnerupeu)

 [partnerupeu](https://twitter.com/partnerupeu)



Stakeholders involved

State Education Development Agency (hereinafter - VIAA) and Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA) implemented four development group meetings in Riga and in Limbaži municipality, with the total number of 105 participants. The Development Group sessions were conducted in both online and in-person formats.

In all events implemented online participation opportunities (ZOOM) were provided, thereby 18 participants out of 105 participated online. Participants represented different types of stakeholders:

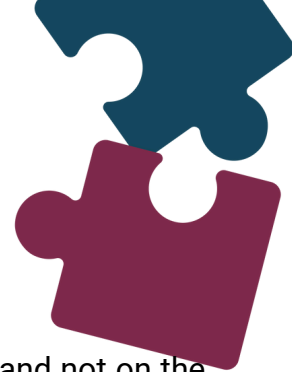
- Representatives from the project partner - State Education Development Agency, implementing ESF project Nr. 8.4.1.0/16/I/001 «Improving the professional competence of employed persons» (2017 – 2023) – and Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia - 8 participants.
- Latvian Adult Education Association - promotes development of non-formal education system in Latvia - 4 participants.
- Municipalities, mainly represented by officials, responsible for adult education development in their territory - 33 participants.
- Private and public adult education providers - 37 participants.
- Non-governmental organisations, involved in adult education - 12 participants.
- Libraries - 5 participants, 6 entrepreneurs, 3 representatives of social services providers in municipalities, 1 hospital and 1 local newspaper representative.

Activities and methods for stakeholder engagement

During the development group meetings several proposals were made concerning on how to move from the fragmented and termed project approach to a permanent and comprehensive stakeholders cooperation system in the field of adult education. This should require wider involvement of stakeholders, such as municipal planning regions, aimed at ensuring a balanced educational offer taking into consideration territorial and sectoral aspects in relation to target groups' educational needs. The tasks and responsibilities of each stakeholder involved must be more precisely defined in order to ensure the availability of learning opportunities everywhere and for everyone, prevent duplication of functions, and create a user-friendly, inclusive and motivating informative learning environment. Specialization of education providers should be promoted in order to increase the variety of education services and reach more target groups.

To promote training at the workplace and to develop work-based learning for adults, there should be determined incentives for employers in the form of tax relief.





Cooperation should be focused on ensuring the continuity of adult learning and not on the implementation of a single particular activity or a project. For this purpose, it is necessary to create common educational quality criteria and user-friendly databases, which allow to evaluate the overall benefits of learning in the dimensions of the individual and society development in a certain period, to predict the future needs of individual development and career growth opportunities, and to design the next stages of the skill development pathways.

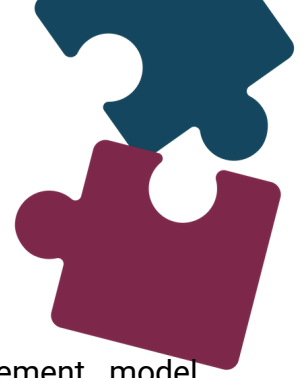
Opportunities

It should be highlighted, that during the period from 2016 to 2023 it has been possible to change previously widespread public opinion in Latvia that adult education is available only for a minor part of society, and only a limited circle of employers, municipalities or individuals with sufficient income can afford to use its opportunities. Revitalizing the culture of lifelong learning as one of the most important directions of EU skills policy has really experienced a significant development in Latvia during the previous six-year period. Data from the Central Statistics Office demonstrates, that the participation of adults in education in Latvia has increased significantly in 2023. In the age group from 25 to 64, the proportion of the adults who participated in education, has increased from 6.6% in 2020 to 10.7% in 2023, thereby exceeding the indicator (8%) set in the national education planning document - Education Development Guidelines 2021-2017 for the year 2024.

One of the factors that significantly influenced the increase described, was adult education opportunities, financed by ESF and state budget, in particular, ESF project Nr. 8.4.1.0/16/I/001 «Improving the professional competence of employed persons», 2017 – 2023 (hereinafter – “The ESF project”). Until then, free learning options were available only for unemployed and job seekers, provided by the State Employment Agency. The ESF Project started in 2017, implemented by the VIAA, involving municipalities as cooperation partners and, in collaboration with the State Employment Agency, involved career counsellor services for the participants. The total number of individuals, involved in the training was 74 949. Adults with low education level and skills was project priority target group and due to successful cooperation with municipalities, their involvement reached 19% of the total number of learners.

As it concerns the overall policy planning, in order to ensure faster and controlled changes in adult education at the national level, in 2023 a decision was made to establish the Human Capital Development Council, consisting of three ministers - Economy, Education and Science, and Welfare.





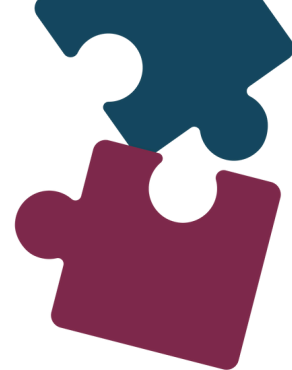
The Human Capital Development Council has supported the management model developed by the Ministry of Education and Science for more effective inter-ministerial cooperation, establishing an inter-sectoral Joint Adult Education Coordination Commission to ensure coordination for achieving the strategic goals of human capital development.

Challenges

Participating stakeholders identified several main challenges for implementation of Upskilling Pathways:

- 1. Insufficient motivation of stakeholders to engage adults with low basic skills in education**, both related to education and labour market. Employers are mainly interested in hiring young, educated and motivated specialists. Adults with low basic skills/previous low qualifications, who have recently obtained or upgraded qualifications, in many cases are not considered as relevant due to their negative previous experiences. Low skilled adults are more likely than others to drop out before completing the full program, resulting in financial losses for the educational institutions involved. Educational institutions, both public and private, offering adult learning opportunities, are willing to engage in educational projects with their program offerings, but usually do not implement significant efforts to involve adults with low skills and learning difficulties.
- 2. Project based approach in implementation of adult education activities.** The administration of particular funds is delegated to a certain ministry or its subordinate institution and is not always directly linked with projects and adult learning initiatives implemented by other ministries or governmental agencies. As a result, there is a risk that the offer of similar content programs can be repeated in several projects, without creating complementary learning opportunities and causing unnecessary competition. At the same time, adults do not have opportunities to access to a common and single source of information about learning opportunities. The necessary data for evaluating the usefulness of the projects are collected (number of participants, number of participants who finished the program, etc.). However, at present the respective data is not collected in the dimension of the individual's continuous skill improvement path.
- 3. Uncertainty of the cooperation mechanism of the involved parties.** The cooperation mechanism of the involved parties is created for each project separately, defining the tasks of each partner.





Solutions

During the discussions, several proposals were made to address the challenges described.

- For the purpose of reaching various target groups of adults and providing personalized communication throughout all territory of municipality it is necessary to create **local cooperation networks in each municipality, involving specialists** of municipal institutions, representatives from non-governmental sector, community activists and local enterprises.
- A solution that provides an answer to several challenges could be **a creation of a unified web platform of educational opportunities**, aimed to combine all information about adult educational programs available, their content, implementation time, venue, conditions of participation, career counsellor services, opportunities to receive a job offer after completing the program.
- In order to strengthen learning outcomes with the labour market needs, a competent **assessment of skills and knowledge of learner** should be implemented, as well as provision of career guidance services, ensuring link between the needs of employers and learning offer, directly related to needs of a particular enterprise and requirements for a particular position.

Stakeholders' cooperation should be focused on **ensuring the continuity of adult learning** and not on the implementation of a single particular activity or a project.

