

# **3**

## **Raising adults' and enterprises' participation in learning in Lithuania**

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Across all countries, participation in adult learning has significant benefits for individuals, employers and society as a whole. There is a growing need to upgrade and reskill regularly in adulthood in the context of technological change, more frequent transitions between jobs and the lengthening of working lives. In Lithuania, increasing participation in adult learning can also help employers and individuals recover from the COVID-19 crisis in the short term, and move towards higher-value added industries and occupations in the long term. This chapter explains the importance of raising participation in adult learning in Lithuania and provides an overview of current practices and performance. It then explores three opportunities to raise participation in adult learning in Lithuania by: 1) raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities; 2) removing barriers to participation in adult learning; and 3) strengthening the recognition and quality of non-formal adult education and training.

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## The importance of raising adults' and enterprises' participation in learning

Raising adults' and enterprises' participation in learning is increasingly important for Lithuania. The megatrends of automation, demographic change and integration into global value chains are transforming the skills individuals need to effectively participate in work and society. Lithuania has a higher proportion of jobs at risk of automation than most OECD countries and a rapidly ageing population (see Chapter 1). To adapt, people will need to upgrade their skills to perform new tasks in their existing jobs, or acquire new skills for new jobs (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>). Upskilling and reskilling can be pursued through formal, non-formal, and informal learning opportunities (Box 3.1).

### Box 3.1. Definition of formal education, non-formal education and informal learning

**Formal education/learning:** Formal education/learning is provided in schools, colleges, universities or other educational institutions, and leads to a certification that is recognised by the national educational classification.

**Non-formal education/learning:** Non-formal education/learning is defined as an education or training activity that does not necessarily lead to a formal qualification, such as on-the-job training, open or distance education, courses or private lessons, and seminars or workshops.

**Informal learning:** Informal learning relates to typically unstructured, often unintentional, learning activities that do not lead to certification. In the workplace, this is a more or less an automatic by-product of the regular production process of a firm.

Source: OECD (2011<sup>[2]</sup>), *PIAAC Conceptual Framework of the Background Questionnaire Main Survey*, [www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/PIAAC\(2011\\_11\)MS\\_BQ\\_ConceptualFramework\\_1%20Dec%202011.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/PIAAC(2011_11)MS_BQ_ConceptualFramework_1%20Dec%202011.pdf).

Participation in adult learning has significant benefits for individuals, employers and society as a whole. For individuals, participation in formal adult education and training can lead to better employment prospects, higher wages and upward social and/or occupational mobility (Midtsundstad, 2019<sup>[3]</sup>). For enterprises, training leads to higher productivity growth and is often a complement to innovation in the workplace (Acemoglu, 1998<sup>[4]</sup>; Dearden, Reed and Van Reenen, 2006<sup>[5]</sup>; Konings and Vanormelingen, 2015<sup>[6]</sup>). Participation in adult learning can also generate strong social benefits: higher-skilled adults typically report better health, feel more included in political processes and trust others more than low-skilled adults. Adult learning opportunities can help individuals achieve these higher levels of skills (OECD, 2016<sup>[7]</sup>).

Lithuania has identified adult learning as a priority for the country in several strategies including the Action Plan for the Development of Lifelong Learning 2017-2020, the National Plan for Progress (NPP) 2021-2030, and most recently the Programme of Government from December 2020 (Table 3.1). Combined, these strategies have promoted adult learning as an important part of the national skills landscape.

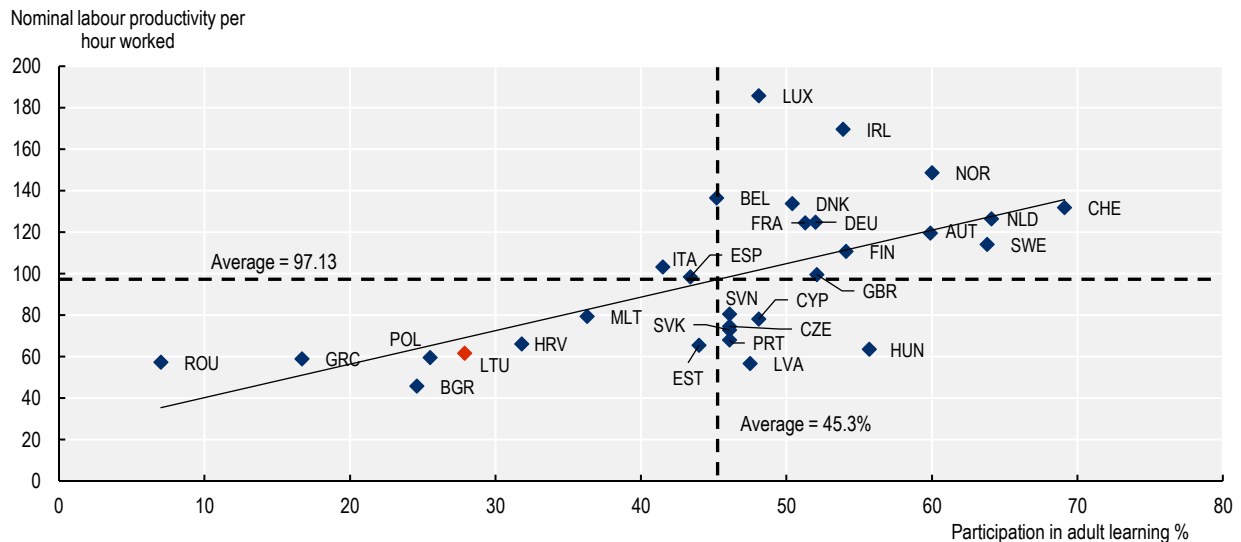
In Lithuania, the adult learning system can play a crucial role in addressing two cross-cutting challenges. In the short term, it can facilitate recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, which has led to a significant contraction in economic activity and is projected to lead to a sustained increase in unemployment for the foreseeable future (see Chapter 1). Adult learning can help people get back to work by providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

In the long term, a stronger adult learning system can help Lithuania strengthen its labour productivity. Raising participation in adult learning will support Lithuania's move towards high-productivity, high-skilled

activities by raising the supply of high-skilled adults, which in turn generates demand for highly skilled jobs and increases productivity. Currently, relatively few adults participate in adult learning to improve their skillset, which contributes to productivity remaining low (Figure 3.1).

### Figure 3.1 Participation in adult learning and labour productivity

Percentage of adults aged 25-64 who participated in formal and/or non-formal learning opportunities in the past 12 months, measured against nominal labour productivity per hour worked



Note: Year for all data is 2016. Labour productivity per hour worked is calculated as real output per unit of labour input (measured by the total number of hours worked). European Union (EU) average (excluding the United Kingdom) is the base = 100. Unit of measure is percentage of EU total based on million purchasing power standards (PPS). PPS is a common currency that eliminates the differences in price levels between countries.

Source: OECD calculations based on data from Eurostat (2020<sup>[8]</sup>), *Adult Education Survey 2016: Participation rate in education and training by age*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_aes\\_101/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_101/default/table?lang=en); Eurostat (2020<sup>[9]</sup>), *Labour productivity per person employed and hour worked*, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem160/default/table?lang=en>.

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## Overview and performance of Lithuania's adult learning system

### Overview of the current adult learning system

#### *Strategies and policies for adult learning*

Adult learning forms a key part of Lithuanian national strategies, and adult learning is the subject of several dedicated strategies (Table 3.1). The legal basis for Lithuania's adult learning system is spread across numerous laws and policies, with many notable reforms in recent years. These include: the Law on Non-Formal Adult Education in 2014, the Labour Code in 2016, the Law on Employment in 2016, and the Law on Vocational Education in 2017. Together these laws have expanded the adoption of modularity in vocational education, created the legal conditions for apprenticeships and work-based training, and introduced training leave.

**Table 3.1. Lithuania's strategic goals related to adult learning**

Strategy	Year	Description	Adult learning related objectives
Programme of Government	December 2020	The Programme of Government outlines priority projects for the government across a range of policy areas.	Government Priority Project: Lifelong learning opportunities for every Lithuanian resident. Key initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lifelong planning system.</li> <li>• Strong non-formal learning system.</li> <li>• Focus on those who do not want to learn.</li> </ul>
National Plan for Progress (NPP) 2021-2030	September 2020	The NPP outlines 10 strategic goals for Lithuania over the upcoming decade to ensure progress in social, economic, environmental and security policies.	Strategic Goal 3: Increase the inclusion and effectiveness of education to meet the needs of the individual and society: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To implement an efficient and effective adult lifelong learning system in order to match personal skills and qualifications with the needs of the individual, the labour market and the environment.</li> </ul>
Action Plan for the Development of Lifelong Learning 2017-2020	June 2017	The action plan outlines several objectives to increase lifelong learning.	Objective Two: To ensure a system of incentives and equal opportunities for lifelong learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and implementation of vocational standards and modular vocational training programmes.</li> <li>• Strengthening the contribution of municipalities and non-formal adult education service providers to the development of the non-formal adult education system.</li> </ul>
Development Programme for Non-formal Adult Education and Continuing Education 2016–2023	April 2016	The Development Programme aims to create and develop non-formal adult education and continuing education that meets the needs of the individual and society.	Objective One: To create and develop a sustainable adult education system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To create conditions for adults to acquire general competencies and form positive attitudes towards lifelong learning, to develop formal and non-formal education opportunities, digital learning content and programmes, to create mechanisms for the recognition of competencies acquired during non-formal and informal learning.</li> </ul>
National Education Strategy 2013-2022	December 2013	The National Education Strategy set the priorities for all aspects of education for the coming decade including adult learning.	Objective Four: Create a system of incentives and equal conditions for lifelong learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen motivation to learn by linking lifelong learning to learners' choices by creating a system of financial support.</li> <li>• Create a coherent system of adult education, including a mechanism for non-formal adult funding, inter-institutional co-ordination, information and counselling, quality assurance in non-formal learning and the recognition of non-formally acquired competences.</li> </ul>
Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030"	May 2012	Lithuania 2030 is a national strategy document that outlines the vision of Lithuania's future up to 2030. The strategy has three main progress areas: smart society, smart economy and smart governance.	Smart society: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To create an effective system for lifelong learning that successfully adapts information communication technologies and ensures the acquisition and development of the knowledge and skills required for an active society.</li> <li>• Ensure that access to non-formal education and lifelong learning is made available across Lithuania.</li> </ul>

Source: Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2020<sup>[10]</sup>), *Aštuonioliktosios Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės Programa [Programme of Government]*, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/3955e800388111eb8c97e01ffe050e1c>; Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2020<sup>[11]</sup>), *2021–2030 metų nacionalinis pažangos planas [National Plan for Progress 2021-2030]*, <https://ministraspirminkas.lrv.lt/uploads/ministraspirminkas/documents/files/NPP%20planas.pdf>; Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (2017<sup>[12]</sup>), *Mokymosi visą gyvenimą plėtros 2017–2020 metų veiksmų planą [Action Plan for the Development of Lifelong Learning]*, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/8d34ecd05c0411e79198fdb108a3753>; Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2016<sup>[13]</sup>), *Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo ir tęstinio mokymosi [Development Programme for Non-formal Adult Education and Continuing Education 2016–2023]*, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/3a34e780007811e6b9699b2946305ca6>; Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2013<sup>[14]</sup>), *Valstybinė švietimo 2013–2022 metų strategija [Lithuanian National Education Strategy 2013–2022]*, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.463390>; Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2012<sup>[15]</sup>), *Lithuania's Progress Strategy: Lithuania 2030 (Lietuva 2030)*, [https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/rs/lasupplement/TAP/TAIS.423800/45a6c4cce8a3835f3c3f3b4625587aff/format/ISO\\_PDF/](https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/rs/lasupplement/TAP/TAIS.423800/45a6c4cce8a3835f3c3f3b4625587aff/format/ISO_PDF/).

### *Roles and responsibilities in the adult learning system*

Adult learning is a cross-cutting priority area that requires direction from a range of stakeholders. In Lithuania, ministries with important responsibilities in this area include the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (SMSM), the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (SADM), and the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation (EIM) (Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2. Principle actors in the adult learning system**

Body	Responsibilities
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport	Formulates vocational training policy, and organises, co-ordinates and controls its implementation. Plans vocational guidance and is responsible for the quality of formal vocational programmes. Organises and co-ordinates the dissemination of information about vocational training schools and their vocational training programmes. Responsible for externally evaluating higher education institutes (HEIs). Co-ordinates activities of education departments of municipal administrations in the implementation of the state education policy.
Ministry of Social Security and Labour	Submits proposals to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for the implementation of employment support policy, and co-ordinates, analyses and controls the implementation of employment support policies in accordance with the EU employment strategy. Organises and finances the implementation of employment support measures and labour market services, and sets conditions and procedures for the provision of labour market services, the implementation of employment support measures, and labour market monitoring.
Ministry of the Economy and Innovation	Oversees European Social Fund (ESF) programmes to facilitate training in firms (see Opportunity 2). Formulates human resources development policy, and organises, co-ordinates and controls its implementation. Participates in the formation of vocational training policy, and develops, organises and implements measures aimed at attracting human resources to priority areas of the economy. Participates in the implementation of the activities of the development of the Lithuanian qualification system and the organisation of the assessment of competencies.
Municipalities	Responsible for implementing adult learning policy. This includes developing a network of vocational training providers to meet the needs of the region and plan, organise and administer vocational guidance in line with priorities set from the SMSM. Municipalities appoint adult learning co-ordinators who manage local initiatives, design action plans, and allocate budgets for adult learning initiatives and programmes.
Lithuania's public employment service (PES)	Implements employment support policy. The PES is a budgetary institution operating under the SADM. Some of the functions of the PES regarding skills and employment include setting the criteria and procedures for the selection of jobseekers eligible for participation in active labour policy measures and the selection of employers wishing to implement these active labour market policy (ALMP) measures, monitoring the national labour market and the labour market of individual regions, and implementing ALMPs and programmes on increasing employment.
Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (KPMPC)	Manages the Lithuanian qualifications system, oversees the quality of vocational training, and organises the preparation and/or updating of modular programmes.
Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC)	Implements external quality assurance policy in higher education (HE). Assesses the quality of institutions and qualifications and provides information on HE systems and qualifications recognition.
Non-formal Adult Education Council	Advises the government on the strategic priorities of non-formal adult learning in Lithuania and helps facilitate greater co-ordination among stakeholders for its successful implementation across the country. The council is made up of representatives from employers, employees, non-governmental organisations, and state and municipality institutions
The Lithuanian Association of Heads of Adult Education Centres	Promotes collaboration between institutions of formal and non-formal education and organises events for the continuing professional development of staff of adult education centres.
The Lithuanian Association of Adult Education (LAAE)	Brings together those working in the field of adult education (such as vocational institutions, adult learning centres and universities) to promote lifelong learning. Participates in the creation of policy documents and legal acts on education.

Source: Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2017<sup>[16]</sup>), *švietimo įstatymo (Law on Education)*, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/eedc17d2790c11e89188e16a6495e98c?fwid=qjs00elq1>; Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2016<sup>[17]</sup>), *užimtumo įstatymas (Law on Employment)*, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/en/TAD/5f0be3809c2011e68adcdca1bb2f432d1>; Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2017<sup>[18]</sup>), *Lietuvos Respublikos profesinio mokymo įstatymo [The Law on Vocational Education and Training]*, [www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/093a9010eb0b11e7acd7ea182930b17f/asr](http://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/093a9010eb0b11e7acd7ea182930b17f/asr); KPMPC (2020<sup>[19]</sup>); *About us*, [www.kpmpc.lt/kpmpc/en/apie-mus/about-us/](http://www.kpmpc.lt/kpmpc/en/apie-mus/about-us/); SKVC (2020<sup>[20]</sup>), *About us*, <https://www.skvc.lt/default/en/about>; Eurydice (2019<sup>[21]</sup>), *Adult Education: Distribution of Responsibilities*, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/distribution-responsibilities-43\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/distribution-responsibilities-43_en).

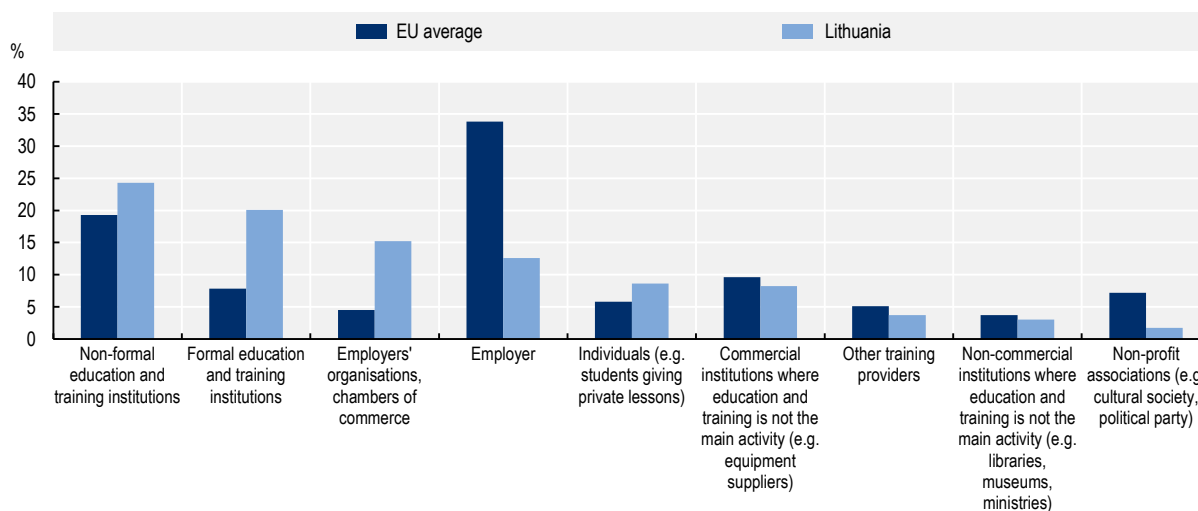
### Main providers in the adult learning system

In Lithuania, a variety of providers offer formal and non-formal adult learning opportunities. Formal education and training providers include adult general education centres, vocational education and training (VET) schools, and HEIs. According to the Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (AIKOS), there are 56 adult general education schools, 64 state VET institutions and 5 non-state VET institutions, and 41 HEIs (including universities and colleges) in Lithuania (Ministry of Education Science and Sport, 2020<sup>[22]</sup>; Eurydice, 2020<sup>[23]</sup>). Non-formal education and training takes place in HE and vocational institutions and with training providers, as well as in the workplace and through workshops, seminars and conferences. There are no statistics on the overall number of institutions providing non-formal training, however AIKOS indicates that there are 104 non-formal adult education schools (Ministry of Education Science and Sport, 2020<sup>[22]</sup>; Eurydice, 2020<sup>[23]</sup>).

In Lithuania, non-formal adult learning opportunities are concentrated within education institutions rather than employers. The highest percentage of non-formal learning takes place in non-formal education and training institutions (24.3%), followed by formal education and training providers (20.1%) and employers' organisations such as chambers of commerce (15.2%). This differs greatly from most other EU countries, where employers play a far more significant role in the provision of adult training opportunities (Figure 3.2). On average, around 35% of training across the EU takes place with employers compared to around 13% in Lithuania. The proportion of non-formal training provided by employers is lower in Lithuania than in any other EU country.

**Figure 3.2. Distribution of non-formal education and training activities by provider**

Percentage of non-formal education and training activities that take place by provider



Note: Formal education institutions also offer non-formal training. All EU averages calculated in this chapter exclude the United Kingdom.  
 Source: Eurostat (2020<sup>[24]</sup>), *Adult Education Survey 2016: Distribution of non-formal education and training activities by provider*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tmq\\_aes\\_170/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tmq_aes_170/default/table?lang=en).

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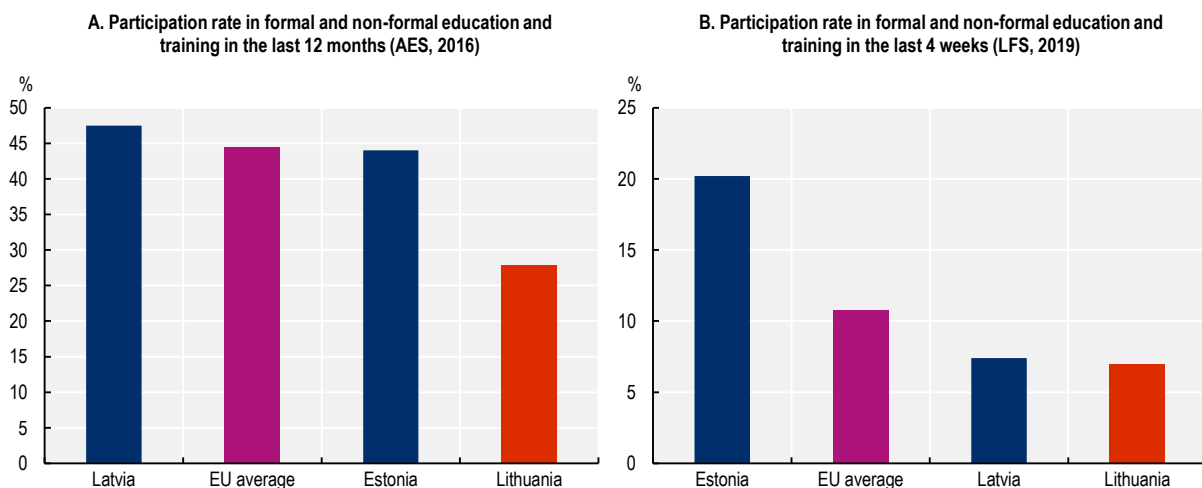
## Lithuania's performance

Relatively few adults and enterprises engage in adult learning in Lithuania. According to data from the Adult Education Survey (AES) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS), adults in Lithuania participate less in formal and non-formal learning opportunities than their counterparts in neighbouring Latvia and Estonia and in EU countries on average. Furthermore, adults under-participate compared to the EU average regardless of employment status, education level or age. Weak motivation is a key reason that participation rates in adult learning remain comparatively low. Similarly, according to data from the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS), firms in Lithuania provide fewer learning opportunities for their employees than most EU countries.

### *Participation in formal and non-formal education by individuals*

Relatively few adults in Lithuania participate in formal and/or non-formal education and training. In 2019, only about 7% of adults had participated in adult education and training on average over a four-week period. This was below the rates for Estonia (20.2%), Latvia (7.4%) and EU member states on average (10.8%) (Figure 3.3). It was also significantly below the rates of leading European countries such as Sweden (34.3%) and Switzerland (32.3%). Participation in formal and non-formal adult education over the past 12 months is also low in Lithuania (Figure 3.3). According to the AES, 27.9% of adults engaged in training over the past year compared to an EU average of 44.4%.

**Figure 3.3. Participation rate in adult learning in Lithuania and other countries**



Note: The differences in participation rates between the AES and LFS is because of their different time frames. The LFS is measuring participation in just the previous four weeks, whereas the AES is measuring participation across the previous year. It would therefore be expected that participation rates with the AES are much higher, as is the case here.

Source: Eurostat (2020<sup>[8]</sup>), *Adult Education Survey 2016: Participation rate in education and training by age*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_aes\\_101/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_101/default/table?lang=en); Eurostat (2020<sup>[25]</sup>), *Labour Force Survey 2019: Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex, age and educational attainment level*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_lfs\\_02/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_lfs_02/default/table?lang=en).

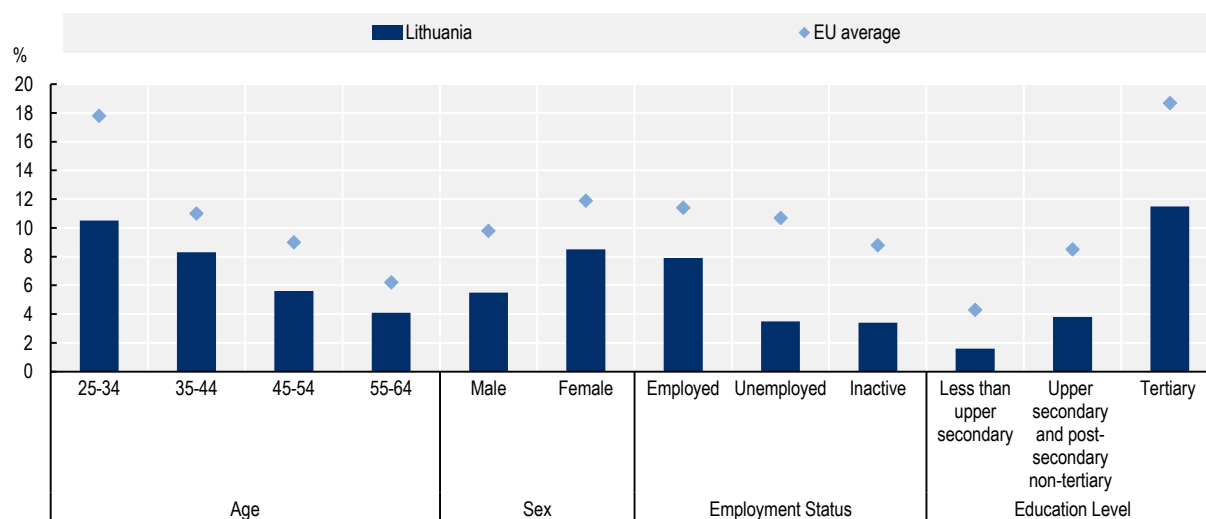
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In line with other EU countries, older, unemployed and lower-educated adults in Lithuania participate less in adult learning than young, employed and highly educated adults. However, participation is particularly low in Lithuania for adults aged 25-34, unemployed adults and individuals with a tertiary education (Figure 3.4). For example, just 3.5% of unemployed people participated in training over a four-week period in 2019 – one of the lowest rates in the EU.

**Figure 3.4. Participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training for different demographic characteristics**

Percentage of adults aged 25-64 who participated in formal and/or non-formal education over the last four weeks



Source: Eurostat (2020<sup>[26]</sup>), *Labour Force Survey 2019: Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex, age and labour status*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_ifs\\_03/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_ifs_03/default/table?lang=en); Eurostat (2020<sup>[25]</sup>), *Labour Force Survey 2019: Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex, age and educational attainment level*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_ifs\\_02/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_ifs_02/default/table?lang=en).

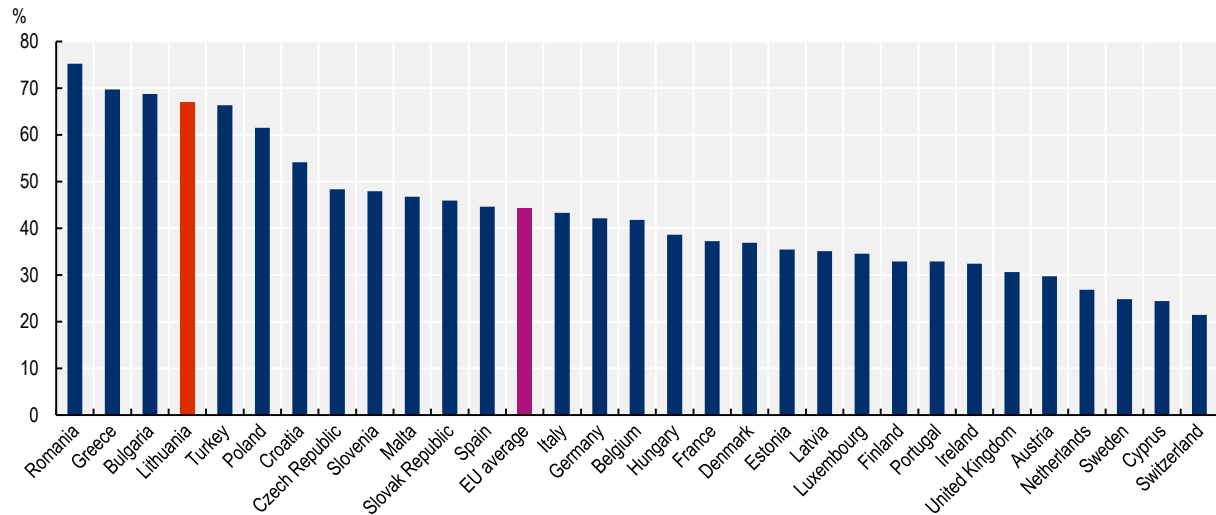
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Low participation in adult learning is driven by low levels of motivation to upskill and reskill throughout the life course. The percentage of adults who did not participate in training and did not want to is one of the highest in the EU (Figure 3.5). Around 67% of adults in Lithuania did not want to participate in training compared to an EU average of 44.3%, and rates of 35.4% in Estonia and 35.1% in Latvia. Overcoming low levels of motivation to engage in adult learning will require a multi-faceted approach that raises awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities (see Opportunity 1), reduces financial and time-related barriers (see Opportunity 2), and improves the quality of learning opportunities (see Opportunity 3).




**Figure 3.5. Motivation to participate in adult learning and training**

Percentage of adults aged 25-64 who did not participate and did not want to participate in training



Source: Eurostat (2020<sup>[27]</sup>), *Adult Education Survey 2016: Population by will to participate in education and training*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_aes\\_175/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_175/default/table?lang=en).

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### *Participation in training provided by employers*

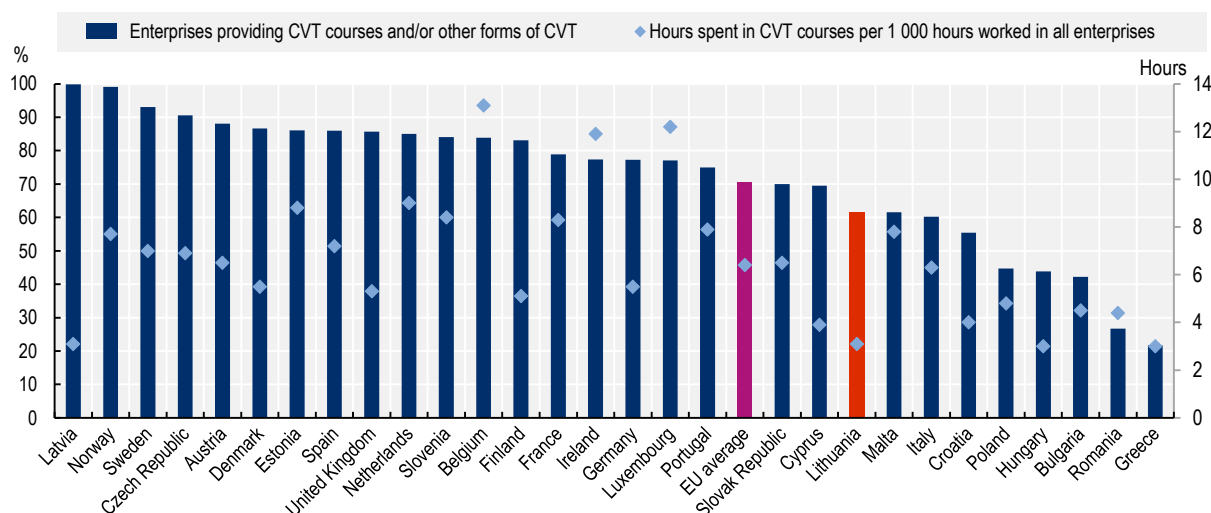
Participation in training by enterprises is also low. In Lithuania, 61.6% of enterprises (with 10+ employees) provide their employees with continuing vocational training (CVT) courses or another form of CVT such as guided on-the-job training or training at conferences and workshops (Figure 3.6). This is below the EU average of 70.5% and below the rates for Estonia, (86.1%) and Latvia (99.9%). Low participation in training is most pronounced among small firms (10-49 employees). Small firms in Lithuania are 10.6% less likely to provide training than the EU average, whereas large firms (250+ employees) are actually 1.2% more likely to provide such training (CVTS, 2015<sup>[28]</sup>). This is problematic, as Lithuanian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a comparatively greater role in the economy than in other EU countries. In 2017, SMEs generated 68.5% of value added and 76.1% of employment, compared to EU averages of 56.8% and 66.4% respectively (European Commission, 2019<sup>[29]</sup>).

The intensity of training in Lithuania could be improved. Only employees in Greece and Hungary spend less time in CVT than employees in Lithuania (Figure 3.6). For every 1 000 hours spent working, 3.1 are spent in training in Lithuania compared to an EU average of 6.4 hours.

Encouraging greater participation in adult learning among firms, and especially among SMEs, will require various policy initiatives that enable firms to understand their training needs (see Opportunity 1), reduce the cost of training (see Opportunity 2) and encourage the adoption of high-performance work practices (HPWP) by managers (see Chapter 3).

**Figure 3.6. Training provision and intensity in Lithuania and other countries**

Percentage of all enterprises providing continuing vocational training (CVT), and hours spent training per 1 000 hours worked in all enterprises



Source: Eurostat (2020<sub>[30]</sub>), Continuing Vocational Training Survey 2015: Enterprises providing training by type of training and size class - % of all enterprises, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tmg\\_cvt\\_01s/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tmg_cvt_01s/default/table?lang=en); Eurostat (2020<sub>[31]</sub>), Continuing Vocational Training Survey 2015: Hours spent in CVT courses by size class - hours per 1000 hours worked in all enterprises, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tmg\\_cvt\\_21s/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tmg_cvt_21s/default/table?lang=en).

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## Opportunities to raise adults' and enterprises' participation in learning

Lithuania's performance in raising adults' and enterprises' participation in learning reflects many factors. These include individual, institutional and system-level factors, as well as broader economic and social conditions in the country. However, three critical opportunities for improvement have been identified based on a review of literature, desktop analysis, and data and input from officials and stakeholders consulted in conduct of this OECD Skills Strategy project.

The OECD considers that Lithuania's main opportunities for improvement in the area of raising adults' and enterprises' participation in learning are:

1. Raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities.
2. Removing barriers to participation in adult learning.
3. Strengthening the recognition and quality of non-formal adult education and training.

### **Opportunity 1: Raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities**

Increased participation in adult learning is strongly linked to positive learning dispositions, whereby adults perceive that education brings tangible benefits for themselves, associate the experience of education positively, and believe that they are still young enough to engage in meaningful learning opportunities (Windisch, 2015<sub>[32]</sub>). When adults are not positively disposed to training opportunities it is very difficult to engage potential learners, even if financial and time-related barriers are minimised (see Opportunity 2) (White, 2012<sub>[33]</sub>). However, according to a recent lifelong learning survey in Lithuania, only 35% of adults

recalled having heard or seen information about the importance of participating in adult learning over the previous three years (STRATA, 2020<sub>[34]</sub>).

The lack of awareness about the benefits and opportunities of adult learning can lead to low levels of motivation to participate in adult learning, and indicates that Lithuania will need to more actively reach out and promote the benefits of adult learning to individuals, as Lithuania's government already recognises (Eurydice, 2015<sub>[35]</sub>; Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020<sub>[10]</sub>). The success of adult learning systems depends on providing individuals with the information to make informed decisions at all stages of the learning journey (OECD, 2019<sub>[11]</sub>).

An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies by the European Commission (EC) has identified a number of policy levers that can support these efforts, including the dissemination of information through awareness-raising campaigns and online portals (European Commission, 2015<sub>[36]</sub>). Targeted career guidance is also crucial for raising the awareness of adult learning benefits and opportunities. Especially in the context of increased unemployment resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, guidance services will be essential to encourage displaced workers to upskill and reskill where appropriate. Creating a lifelong career guidance system is discussed extensively in Chapter 5 and should form a core component of strategies to raise awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities among individuals.

Raising awareness about the benefits of adult education and training among enterprises is equally as important. Employers play a major role in facilitating non-formal education and training for employees, in addition to their role in providing informal learning on the job. Helping employers assess their training needs and put in place training plans can lead to increased participation in adult education and training.

#### *Raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities among individuals*

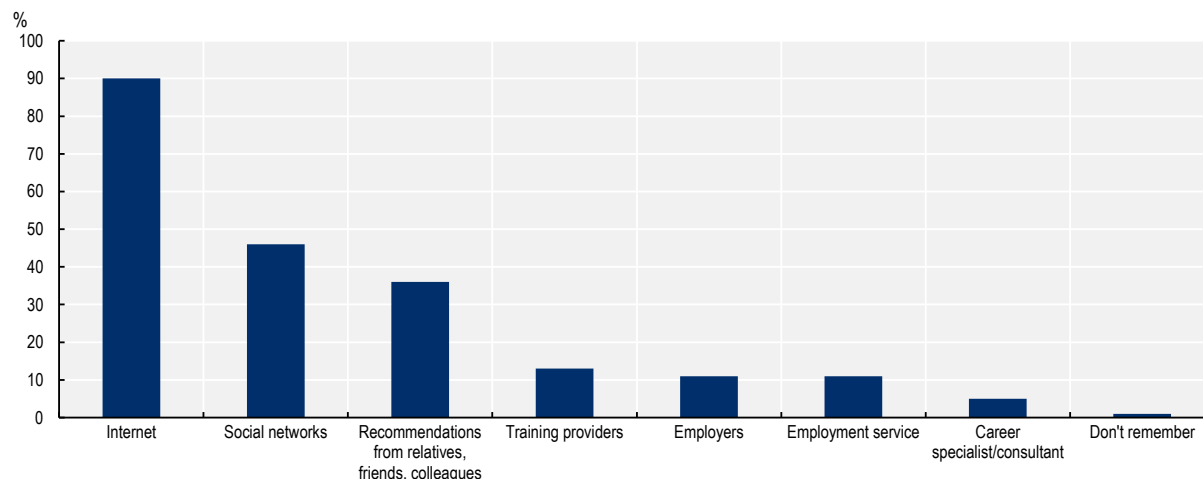
Low motivation to participate in training (see section on Lithuania's performance) suggests that Lithuania will need to raise awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities among both high and low-skilled adults. Consolidating information online through one-stop shop solutions can help individuals navigate their training options more easily (OECD, 2019<sub>[11]</sub>). However, to connect with lower-skilled adults a more targeted approach will be required that specifically reaches out to those with low levels of basic skills through a co-ordinated effort involving bodies that have direct contact with the adults concerned, such as employers and social partners (Windisch, 2015<sub>[32]</sub>).

In Lithuania, the overwhelming majority of adults actively seeking information on adult learning opportunities do so through the Internet: in a recent lifelong learning survey conducted between December 2019 and January 2020, 90% of adults surveyed who were actively seeking information did so online (Figure 3.7). The informational needs of adults searching are diverse. Of those adults who have studied in the last three years, 60% said that they wanted information on where to study, 57% wanted information on training costs, 40% wanted information on the benefits of training, and 38% wanted information on the quality of training (STRATA, 2020<sub>[34]</sub>). This means that there is a strong need for easily accessible and comprehensive information online for those interested in pursuing adult learning opportunities.

However, this information is not always readily available online. Currently, information relevant to adult learning is spread across numerous online portals (Table 3.3). Whilst it is relatively easy to find information on where to study, information on the costs and financing of learning, the benefits of training and the quality of courses is more difficult to find. The information that does exist online is not located in one place, meaning that adults interested in pursuing adult learning need to consult multiple portals and the websites of individual providers before being able to make an informed decision. Moreover, some information is lacking across all portals. For example, information about labour market trends that enable adults to identify which areas to reskill into, and indicators on the quality of the course (such as the relative earnings ratio and the employment rate of graduates or indicators on satisfaction with teaching) are largely non-existent. The benefits of learning for adults more widely are also not always clearly articulated.

**Figure 3.7. Sources used by adults for information on adult education and training**

Percentage of adults actively seeking information on training, by method



Source: STRATA (2020<sub>[34]</sub>), *Mokymasis visą gyvenimą. [pročiai, patrauklumas, barjerai, naudos suvokimas: Gyventojų apklausos ataskaita [Lifelong learning habits, barriers and perceptions: population survey report]*, <https://strata.gov.lt/images/tyrimai/2020-metai/svietimo-politika/20200108-MVG.pdf>.

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Lithuania should consider consolidating adult learning information into an online one-stop shop that enables adults to explore the benefits and opportunities of different training options in one online location. This will be crucial for the successful implementation of other recommendations in this chapter and to create an effective adult learning system.

An online one-stop shop should make clear how much training costs and the funding options available for individuals. In Northern Ireland, the Student Finance NI portal enables users to discover their financing possibilities in just a few clicks (Box 3.2). Such a portal should also enable users to compare not just basic course information (such as duration and entry requirements), but also indicators on the quality of the course, including labour market outcomes that graduates can expect, as is the case with Poland's graduate tracking system (*Ekonomicznych Losów Absolwentów*), (Box 3.2). Many of these portals in other countries focus predominantly on HE, but Lithuania should consider such tools for vocational and non-formal education too, where the data exist, and consider introducing new monitoring mechanisms where data are not available (see Opportunity 3). Providing quality labels for top performing training providers (see Opportunity 3) on the site would be another way to direct learners towards higher quality offerings. The success of this one-stop shop will depend on making information on the site user-friendly, clear and interactive, as other countries have done (Box 3.2).

Online one-stop shops are predominantly useful for adults already searching for information. This makes them an effective informational tool for high-skilled adults, but means that their impact is more limited among low-skilled adults: in Lithuania, 18.7% of adults with a tertiary education search for information on adult learning opportunities, compared to just 3.9% of adults with only upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (Eurostat, 2020<sub>[37]</sub>). Moreover, the total percentage of adults in Lithuania who seek information on adult education and training is one of the lowest in the EU (Figure 3.8).

**Table 3.3. Online portals with information about adult learning opportunities in Lithuania**

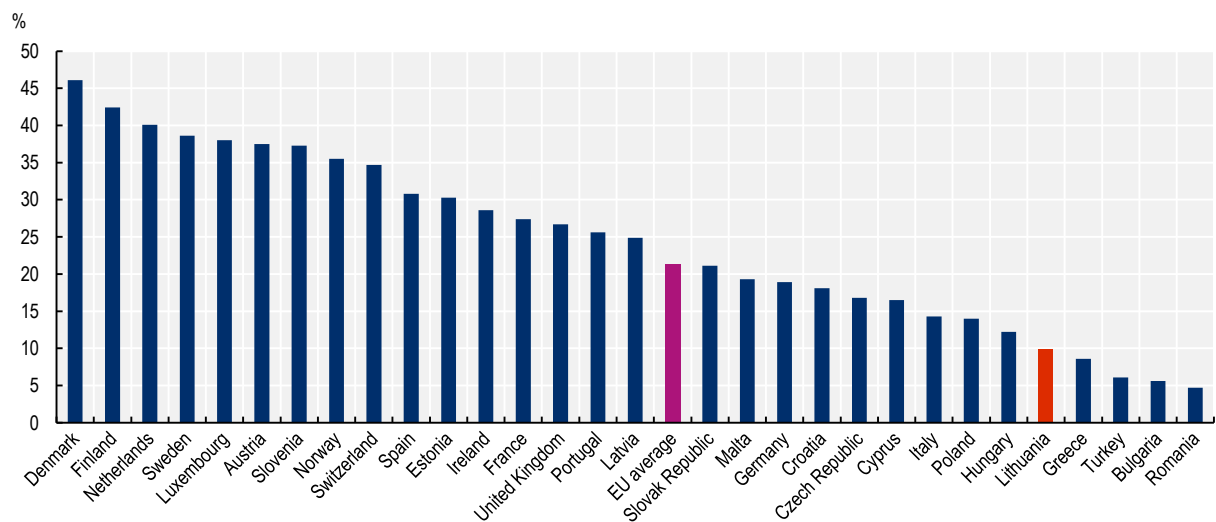
Platform name	List of adult learning courses/providers	Financing information	Indicators on course quality/labour market trends	Information about adult learning benefits	Application/learning embedded in platform	Career guidance tools
Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (AIKOS)	x					x
Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions to organise general admissions (LAMA BPO)	x	x			x	
Public employment service (PES)	x	x	x			x
Karjera.lt			x			x
Euroguidance Lithuania						x
Studijos.lt	x			x		

Note: An x in each cell indicates that the online platform provides information relevant to this particular area of focus.

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (2020<sup>[22]</sup>), *Aikos online portal*, <https://www.aikos.smm.lt/Puslapiai/Pradinis.aspx>; LAMA BPO (2020<sup>[38]</sup>), *LAMA BPO Homepage*, <https://bakalauras.lamabpo.lt/>; Employment Service (2021<sup>[39]</sup>), *Employment Service (Užimtumo tarnyba) homepage*, <https://uzt.lt/>; Karjera.lt (2021<sup>[40]</sup>), *For Students and Graduates*, <https://karjera.lt/web/guest/pradzia>; EuroGuidance Lithuania (2021<sup>[41]</sup>), *EuroGuidance Lithuania: About Us*, <http://www.euroguidance.lt/karjeros-planavimas>; Studijos.lt (2021<sup>[42]</sup>), *Studijos.lt homepage*, <https://studijos.tv3.lt/>.

**Figure 3.8. Percentage of adults seeking information on adult education and training**

Percentage of adults aged 25-64 who actively searched for information on adult learning in the past year



Source: Eurostat (2020<sup>[37]</sup>), *Adult Education Survey 2016: Search for information on learning possibilities by type of learning and sex*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tmq\\_aes\\_182/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tmq_aes_182/default/table?lang=en).

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The fact that low-skilled adults are less likely to seek out information on adult learning necessitates a targeted engagement approach. Adults with weak basic skills often struggle to recognise their own skill deficiencies and therefore see no need to participate in additional education and training (Bynner and Parsons, 2006<sup>[43]</sup>). Moreover, low-skilled learners have frequently had a poor experience of school and can therefore find the idea of returning to classroom-based learning daunting, even if they are aware of the need to upskill (Windisch, 2015<sup>[32]</sup>). Strategies are thus needed to encourage the participation of low-skilled workers, and this should start with effective outreach efforts and awareness-raising initiatives (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>).

Awareness-raising initiatives can more efficiently target adults in need when organised at the regional/local level in partnerships with local stakeholders. Without a focus on local skills needs and labour market conditions, public awareness campaigns can be less effective at identifying and reaching low-skilled individuals (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>). Developing and implementing local awareness-raising initiatives will therefore require working with bodies and partners that have contact with low-skilled individuals, including employers, trade unions, social partners and charities, and Lithuania's PES (Windisch, 2015<sup>[32]</sup>). Co-ordinating local outreach efforts and awareness-raising initiatives could become the responsibility of adult learning co-ordinators, who are currently responsible for managing local initiatives, designing action plans, and allocating budgets for adult learning initiatives and programmes (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016<sup>[13]</sup>).

Whilst social distancing measures remain in place because of COVID-19, emails, social media, radio and TV can all be effective ways to raise awareness among adults, as Belgium's PES has done (Box 3.2). When social distancing measures are lifted these methods can be supplemented by events (e.g. open days or drop-in sessions at the employer site supported by management) and testimonials from past learners. Career counselling for low-skilled adults should also form part of these initiatives. Creating a lifelong career guidance system is covered in Chapter 5. The appropriate awareness-raising measures should be based on local skills needs and the regional profile of low-skilled adults.

### **Box 3.2. Relevant international examples: Raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities among individuals**

#### **Online portals: Examples from Northern Ireland (United Kingdom, UK) and Poland**

In **Northern Ireland (UK)**, information on financing opportunities for students is clearly detailed on the Student Finance NI portal. Students are able to select their category of student (undergraduate or postgraduate, full-time or part-time) and see the options accordingly. It clearly details the residency and nationality requirements for funding, and divides funding by type of support so that students can see whether financial support is for the fees themselves or for related living subsidies such as childcare support. From the portal, adults can access more detailed documents on financing.

**Poland's** graduate tracking system (Ekonomicznych Losów Absolwentów) allows adults to compare courses by labour market statistics such as relative earnings, unemployment rate and time spent looking for a job. Users can create a ranking for all fields of study at Polish universities or for a selected subset, allowing them to see the top five performing courses for any particular indicator. The site also has a series of informative infographics on the labour market, and users can even create their own combining different statistics. For more in-depth analysis there is an "expert zone" with research articles and details on the labour market data used by the site.

### Raising awareness about online training: An example from Belgium

The PES in **Brussels** has developed an active campaign on its website called *Confiné mais connecté! Suivez une formation en ligne* (Confined but connected! Follow an online training course), and is using its newsletter to advertise its training offers and encourage people to participate. The PES in Brussels uses its newsletter to disseminate information about COVID-19 related measures, with a focus on such online training. The campaign directs adults to a range of online platforms and courses of all levels, and emphasises basic digital skills and language training that can be undertaken online. This complements existing outreach efforts on Youtube, Twitter and other social media platforms to disseminate information about measures for jobseekers, including upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

Source: Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (2021<sup>[44]</sup>), *Student Finance NI*, <https://www.studentfinancenl.co.uk/>; Ośrodek Przetwarzania Informacji – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy (2021<sup>[45]</sup>), *Ekonomicznych Losów Absolwentów [graduate tracking system]*, <https://ela.nauka.gov.pl/pl>; Actiris (2020<sup>[46]</sup>), *Confiné mais connecté ! Suivez une formation en ligne ! [Confined but connected! Follow an online training course]*, <https://www.actiris.brussels/fr/citoyens/details-d-une-news/5354-confine-mais-connecte-suivez-une-formation-en-ligne>.

## Recommendations for raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities among individuals

- 2.1. **Consolidate and expand online information about adult learning benefits, opportunities and funding into a one-stop shop (portal).** This portal should merge existing information from various portals currently operating in Lithuania. The one-stop shop should also expand on previous efforts in order to include more comprehensive information on funding opportunities for adults and include indicators on the quality of courses and the direction of the labour market. It should also detail the benefits of engaging in learning throughout the life course. Lithuania might take inspiration from portals in other countries such as Northern Ireland's Student Finance NI and Poland's graduate tracking system (Ekonomicznych Losów Absolwentów) for guidance on how to present data in informative and user-friendly ways for adults.
- 2.2. **Introduce local awareness-raising initiatives through co-operation with local stakeholders to engage low-skilled adults in education and training.** These initiatives could consist of outreach via emails, social media, radio and TV, and through in-person events and testimonials from past learners. Awareness-raising initiatives should be tailored to local job market conditions and allow for flexibility in design and delivery. They would benefit from being organised with all relevant stakeholders including the PES, employers, trade unions and social partners. Adult learning co-ordinators could take the lead in overseeing the design and implementation of these awareness-raising initiatives.

### *Enabling employers to understand their training needs*

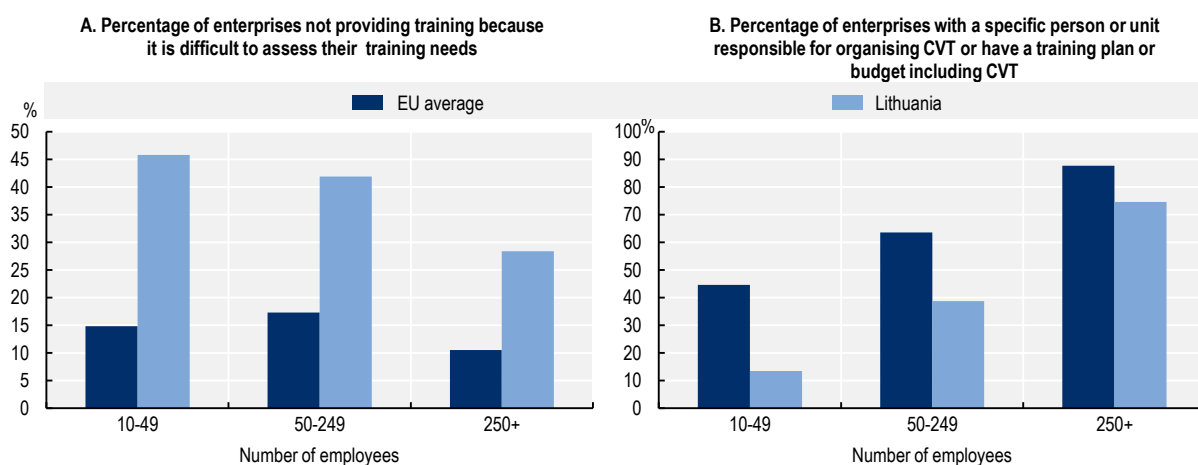
Low participation in adult education and training by employers (see section on Lithuania's performance) is partly the result of enterprises in Lithuania not knowing what training their employees need and as a result having no training plan in place. Difficulty assessing training needs is cited by enterprises not providing training as an important reason for the non-provision of adult education and training. Over 40% of all enterprises in Lithuania have challenges identifying their training needs, compared to just 15% of enterprises on average across the EU. This is particularly the case for SMEs in Lithuania (Figure 3.9). As



a result, even if financing conditions for firms are improved (See Opportunity 2), enterprises might not increase their provision of training unless they are better able to understand their training needs.

Once an enterprise has assessed its training needs, it then also needs to develop a training plan to enable the necessary training to take place over a suitable timeframe. A firm might hire a specific person (or unit for larger firms) to carry out this process, or devote a proportion of its annual budget to training assessment and planning, possibly bringing in external support. In Lithuania, very few enterprises undertake these types of measures. For all sizes of enterprise, fewer firms have a training plan, budget or team in place than the EU average (Figure 3.9). Nonetheless, the lack of provision is most noticeable among SMEs. Just 13.4% of small enterprises and 38.7% of medium-sized enterprises dedicate resources to planning training, compared to an EU average of 44.6% and 63.6% respectively.

**Figure 3.9. Assessment of training needs and prevalence of training plans among firms in Lithuania and the EU**



Source: Eurostat (2020<sup>[47]</sup>), *Continuing Vocational Training Survey 2015: Enterprises not providing training by reason for non-provision and size class - % of non-training enterprises*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_cvt\\_02s/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_cvt_02s/default/table?lang=en); Eurostat (2020<sup>[48]</sup>), *Continuing Vocational Training Survey 2015: Enterprises with CVT planning by type of planning, type of training provided and size class - % of all enterprises*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_cvt\\_07s/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_cvt_07s/default/table?lang=en).

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Unlike larger companies, SMEs often cannot afford to dedicate staff to assess training needs and design training plans for their employees, and lack the capacity to provide training directly. International evidence suggests that SMEs generally require tailored support if they are to make progress in assessing their adult learning needs (International Labour Organisation, 2017<sup>[49]</sup>). For instance, SMEs might benefit from free or subsidised skills and training needs assessments that help them to identify skills gaps in their workforce and develop training plans accordingly (Johanson, 2009<sup>[50]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[51]</sup>).

Lithuania does not currently support enterprises to conduct training planning, but should consider doing so. This support could cover both the assessment of training needs and the development of training plans and/or budgets. Tools to help firms calculate the return on investment made by training their staff could also be provided. Whilst all employers in Lithuania could benefit from support with planning, resources would be most efficiently spent helping SMEs assess their needs. The EIM could facilitate the hiring of training specialists who could then be utilised by SMEs to conduct training needs assessments and develop training plans. Lithuania might consider subsidising the cost of these training specialists through the creation of a skills levy (see Opportunity 2), as has been successfully undertaken in Korea (Box 3.3).

### Box 3.3. Relevant international example: Enabling employers to understand their training needs

#### Raising awareness of adult learning among SMEs: An example from Korea

In the mid-1990s, the Korean government introduced a training levy-grant scheme to fund training for firms. However, the take-up of training by SMEs remained low: only 4.7% of SMEs offered levy-supported training to their workers, compared to 77.6% of large enterprises. To address this challenge, in 2001 the Korean government piloted the Training Consortium Pilot Programme for SMEs, with the specific objective of raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities among SMEs. The pilot organised SMEs (within the same sectors/industries) into a training consortium (TC). The TC was managed and run by two training specialists who were responsible for conducting a skills and training needs assessments of each member SME, planning training programme activities of member SMEs, and carrying out evaluation studies upon the completion of training courses. These measures enabled SMEs to overcome informational restraints and understand what training options were best suited to their employees. The scheme accelerated the take up of financial incentives by SMEs, with the proportion of member SMEs offering training for their workers increasing from 11% to 50% within a year of the pilot's implementation. As a result, the scheme was scaled up and rolled out nationally.

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[51]</sup>), *Adult Learning in Italy: What Role for Training Funds?*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311978-en>.

## Recommendation for enabling employers to understand their training needs

**2.3. Support enterprises to undertake training needs assessments and develop training plans, starting with SMEs in economic sectors of strategic importance.** The EIM could support SMEs by hiring training specialists that SMEs can use to help them assess their training needs and design training plans. These measures could first be piloted for SMEs in sectors of strategic importance before being rolled out more widely. Funding for these support measures could come from the creation of a training levy (see Opportunity 2).

### Opportunity 2: Removing barriers to participation in adult learning

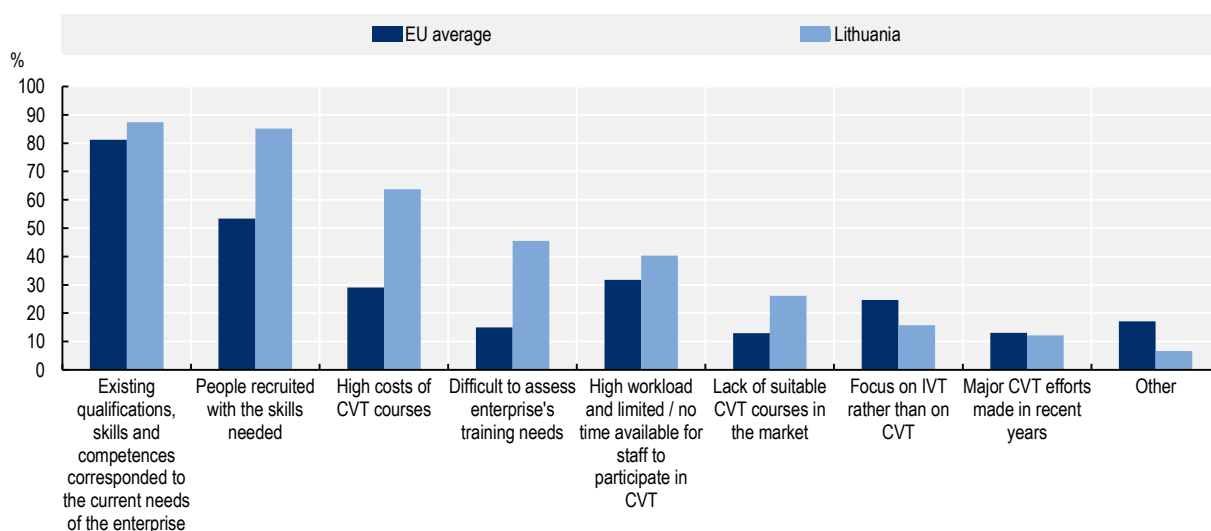
Raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities can only effectively increase participation if other barriers that individuals and employers face are also minimised. For enterprises, barriers to participation in training generally relate to cost, the fear of poaching, lack of time and lack of adequate supply (International Labour Organisation, 2017<sup>[49]</sup>). For individuals, situational barriers such as financial and time constraints are some of the main reasons that adults do not participate in education and training across OECD countries (Desjardins, 2017<sup>[52]</sup>; OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>). Even motivated adults will struggle to participate in adult learning if they cannot afford the training or have no time either because of work, children or other caring responsibilities.

Many enterprises in Lithuania do not perceive the need to engage in adult learning, citing the sufficiency of employees' skill levels. However, a disproportionate number of enterprises in Lithuania also list the high cost of continuous vocational training (CVT) and the difficulty of assessing training needs as reasons for not providing education and training opportunities for employees (Figure 3.10). Approximately 64% of firms

in Lithuania believe that the high cost of courses is preventing them from providing training to their employees, over double the proportion of EU firms, on average, who list similar concerns (29%). The high costs of training are a barrier for firms in Lithuania regardless of size. Among firms who do provide training, over 60% of small (10-49 employees), medium (50-249) and large (250+) enterprises cited high costs as a factor limiting provision (Eurostat, 2020<sup>[47]</sup>). This indicates a need to improve the availability of financial incentives for enterprises to facilitate training for employees, which should be combined with support for the assessment of training needs (see Opportunity 1).


**Figure 3.10. Barriers to the provision of training for enterprises**

Proportion of enterprises not providing training, by reason



Note: IVT (initial vocational training).

Source: Eurostat (2020<sup>[47]</sup>), *Continuing Vocational Training Survey 2015: Enterprises not providing training by reason for non-provision and size class - % of non-training enterprises*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_cvt\\_02s/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_cvt_02s/default/table?lang=en).

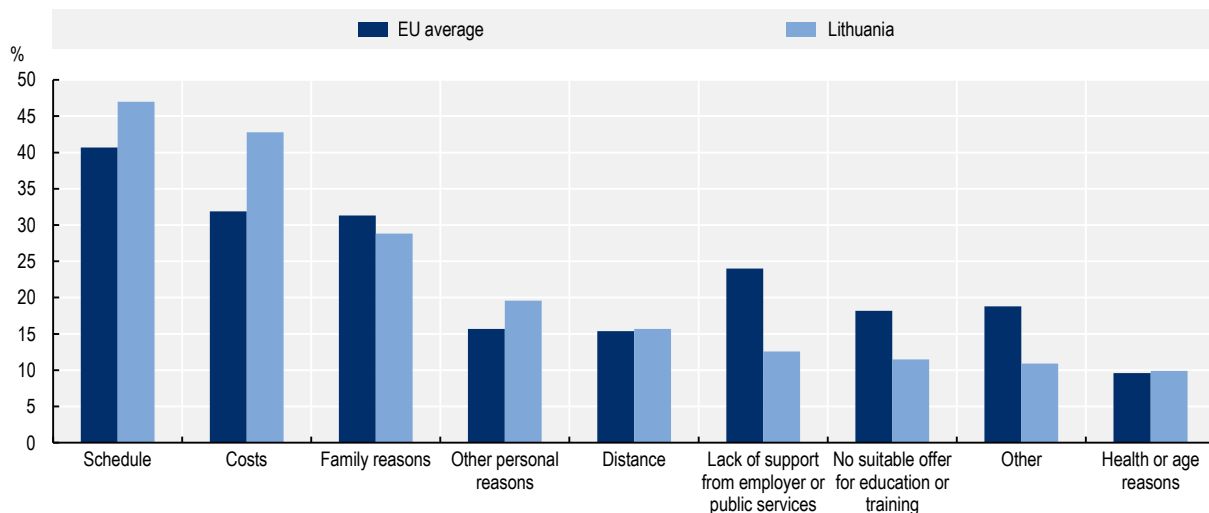
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The high cost of participation in adult education and training is also a barrier for individuals. In Lithuania, 43% of adults who want to but do not participate in training cite cost as a reason for their non-participation, compared to an EU average of 32% (Figure 3.11). Improving financial incentives for individuals will be necessary to reduce the number of adults who want to but cannot afford to participate in training.


However, financial incentives alone are likely to be insufficient to reduce barriers to participation in adult learning. In Lithuania, “schedule” and “family reasons” are the first and third most important reasons given by adults who wish to but do not participate in education and training (Figure 3.11). These terms encapsulate a variety of time-related barriers, such as the inability to fit training around personal and work commitments. As a result, improving the flexibility of adult learning provision is crucial to improving access to adult learning opportunities. This is confirmed by international evidence, which suggests that flexibility in format (e.g. part time, on line) and design (modular, credit-based courses) helps overcome time-related barriers, especially for medium- to high-skilled workers (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>).

### Figure 3.11. Barriers to participation in adult learning for individuals

Adults aged 25-64 wanting to participate in education and training, by reason for not participating



Source: Eurostat (2020<sup>[54]</sup>), *Adult Education Survey 2016: Population wanting to participate in education and training, by reason for not participating and sex*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_aes\\_176/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_176/default/table?lang=en).

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#### *Better using financial incentives to reduce barriers for employers*

Evidence suggests that employers in Lithuania face financial barriers to investing in training opportunities, and that current financial incentives are not entirely successful in minimising these barriers.

Employers are key providers of training opportunities, although less so in Lithuania than in other EU countries (see section on overview of current arrangements). Employers benefit from upskilling employees, as education and training can lead to more motivated, adaptable and productive workers. Employers are well placed to connect with and encourage workers to engage in the upskilling process when they have assessed their training needs (see Opportunity 1) and have adequate funding in place. From the government's perspective, targeting funding at firms is likely to ensure that training is relevant for adults, as employers require upskilling to meet specific labour market needs (OECD, 2019<sup>[55]</sup>).

In recent years, Lithuania has expanded the number of funding instruments that firms can use to finance training, but the impact of these instruments has remained limited. The majority of these initiatives are funded through EU Structural Funds (Table 3.4). In line with other OECD countries, the majority of current incentives take the form of subsidies for training (OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>). One of the most significant financial incentives that Lithuanian firms can now access are Competence Vouchers, which use financing from the European Social Fund (ESF) to subsidise training for firms. The measure, overseen by the EIM since March 2017, grants firms up to EUR 4 500 to purchase training services for employees. However, only 803 firms have benefitted from this funding so far, and the take-up of other financial incentives remains similarly limited.

**Table 3.4. Main financial incentives for employers undertaking adult learning in Lithuania**

Scheme	Type (subsidy/loan/ etc.)	Target group	Description	Total funding for the scheme	Number of firms that have received funding
Tax incentives	Tax incentives	Enterprises	Costs incurred while training of employees (with the exception of education leading to formal qualifications) can be deducted from payable taxes.	N/A	N/A
Human resources. Invest LT+ (Žmogiškieji ištekliai Invest LT+)	Subsidy	Foreign investors	Subsidies to support the training and professional development of employees of foreign firms investing in Lithuania.	European Structural Funds: EUR 7 168 469	49 firms
Training for staff of foreign investors (Mokymai užsienio investuotojų darbuotojams)	Subsidy	Foreign investors	Subsidies to support the training and professional development of employees of foreign firms investing in Lithuania.	European Structural Funds: EUR 25 881 098 Lithuanian state budget: EUR 2 600 000	112 firms
Competence voucher (Kompetencijų vaučeris)	Subsidy	Private or public for-profit enterprises	Subsidies for companies to purchase training for employees.	European Structural Funds: EUR 2 200 000	803 firms
Apprenticeships and improvements of qualifications at work (Pameistrystė ir kvalifikacijos tobulinimas darbo vietoj)	Subsidy	SMEs offering apprenticeships	The government will pay up to 40% of an apprentice's wage to encourage greater take up of apprentices by companies. Apprentices must be employees of the beneficiary company.	European Structural Funds: EUR 10 848 240 Lithuanian state budget: EUR 11 400 000	40 firms
Innotraining (Innomokymai)	Subsidy	SMEs engaged in research and development (R&D) activities	Provides funding for training of employees of innovative enterprises. Training to be carried out in foreign research and innovation centres/enterprises.	European Structural Funds: EUR 28 247	1 firm
Inno-fellowship (Innostažuotė)	Subsidy	SMEs engaged in R&D activities	Largely a follow-up to Innotraining. The aim is to increase the ability of employees to work with new technologies and provide opportunities to acquire the necessary skills in foreign research and innovation centres.	European Structural Funds: EUR 272 612	12 firms
Competencies LT (Kompetencijos LT)	Subsidy	Business associations, clusters	Subsidies to provide training on cross-cutting sectoral competences. The beneficiary is an association, which then organises training for the employees of its members.	European Structural Funds: EUR 19 691 036	59 associations

Source: Tax Information Department (2018<sup>[56]</sup>), *Šaunauų priskyrimas leidžiamiems atskaitymams. Numatomi PMI pakeitimai nuo 2019 m [Allocation of costs and allowable deductions. Changes to the PMI are planned from 2019]*, <https://www.vmi.lt/cms/leidiniai179>; Ministry of Finance (2020<sup>[57]</sup>), *2014-2020 Operational Programme for the European Union Funds Investments in Lithuania: Patvirtintos priemonės [measures adopted]*, [https://www.esinvesticijos.lt/lt/finansavimas/patvirtintos\\_priemones](https://www.esinvesticijos.lt/lt/finansavimas/patvirtintos_priemones).

Current research suggests that time-consuming administrative requirements may be one reason for the limited take-up of existing incentives, particularly for Competence Vouchers (Visionary Analytics, 2018<sup>[58]</sup>). Firms need to provide evidence on the costs of training, fill in the report on who participated, justify the need for training, as well as complete other details. Burdensome administrative requirements mostly affect smaller firms who may lack the resources to devote to completing the application process. Going forwards,

Lithuania could consider simplifying the procedures to apply for Competence Vouchers and other financial support mechanisms, as well as providing free support to SMEs to complete the administrative requirements. This support could come from training specialists hired to help SMEs assess their training needs and produce training plans (see Opportunity 1).

In the longer term, Lithuania could consider supplementing current subsidies with additional financial incentives. Across OECD countries, a variety of financial incentives are used to expand the role of employers in funding and delivering skills policies (Table 3.5). In addition to subsidies, tax incentives, training levies, payback clauses and public procurement can also facilitate training among employers. Tax incentives and public procurement are relatively uncommon in OECD countries (OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>). Payback clauses can be found in most European countries; however, it is not clear to what extent they are being used or enforced (OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>).

**Table 3.5. Mechanisms to increase employer engagement in skills policies**

Incentive	Description	Potential advantages	Potential disadvantages
Subsidies	Schemes that decrease costs of participation through a direct transfer of money to the employer (e.g. through a voucher) or the training provider.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct, as well as highly flexible (i.e. possibility of targeting specific groups or outcomes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeting generally increases administrative costs for government and participants.</li> <li>• Without targeting, deadweight losses can be high.</li> </ul>
Tax incentives	Tax allowances (i.e. deductions from taxable income); tax exemptions (income that is exempted from the taxable base); tax deferrals (the postponement of tax payments); and tax relief (lower rates for some taxpayers or activities).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration costs lower than other schemes due to reliance on existing tax infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring can be difficult and costly.</li> <li>• They tend to result in large deadweight losses as they are a relatively blunt measure.</li> </ul>
Training levies/funds	Used in some countries as a way to pool resources from employers and earmark them for expenditure on education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help overcome “poaching” concerns.</li> <li>• Allows increased contributions by employers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy-in from employers is critical for the success of levy-like schemes.</li> <li>• Large employers might benefit disproportionately.</li> <li>• Employers could spend money on training without too much thought, resulting in low-quality provision.</li> </ul>
Payback clauses	Contractual arrangements that permit employers to recover at least part of their investment in training in the event that the trained employee leaves soon afterwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the risk of a loss of investment in training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-suited for employees enrolling in formal education and training programmes, but not for those engaging in non-formal learning.</li> <li>• Less suitable for small companies that do not tend to invest in expensive training.</li> </ul>
Public procurement	Making the award of public contracts to firms conditional on the provision of certain types of training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not costly for the government to provide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shifts the burden of training provision on to employers.</li> <li>• Might “distort” the procurement process in an unforeseen way.</li> </ul>

Source: OECD (2017<sup>[53]</sup>) *Financial Incentives for Steering Education and Training*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264272415-en>.

Given Lithuania’s reliance on external funding for financial incentives directed at employers, introducing a training levy could be an effective way of raising additional funds for training by employers. The introduction of a training levy could then finance the creation of regional or sectoral training funds. Training levies are collected from employers as a share of payroll and are then used to fund training for enterprises and possibly general training programmes (OECD, 2020<sup>[59]</sup>). Countries differ widely regarding the percentage of payroll that employers have to pay. In Italy, firms pay 0.3% of their payroll as a levy, whereas in the Netherlands the amount paid by firms can be as high as 2%. Many countries require different contributions depending on the size of the firm or the sector in which the firms operates (OECD, 2019<sup>[11]</sup>).

Money raised from a training levy on employers can be pooled to finance training for enterprises through a training fund. These are associations run by social partners that use resources collected through a training levy to finance training for enterprises, and are normally organised on a regional or sectoral basis



(OECD, 2019<sup>[51]</sup>). For example, firms in Italy pay their levy to one of 19 sectoral training funds and can then request funding to pursue training that is in line with the strategic priorities of the fund (Box 3.4).

Implementing a training levy to finance training via a fund has several notable advantages for Lithuania. First, a training fund can tailor the level of funding provided to firms based on size. This allows for the redistribution of funding from larger to smaller enterprises, which may face larger financial barriers to training (OECD, 2020<sup>[59]</sup>). Second, by setting objectives for training in their sector or region, funds can help ensure that firms are able to access the most labour market relevant training for their employees. Third, a common training agenda can help to reduce the fear of poaching when employers train their workforce (OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>). Finally, training levies raise money specifically for adult learning that is ring-fenced for that purpose and cannot be used by other competing public sector needs. To ensure the successful participation of SMEs in training funds, it is important to include support for the assessment of training needs and the development of training plans (see Opportunity 1).

Implementing the training levy successfully will require employer buy-in for the scheme. A detailed review of training levy schemes by the World Bank has concluded that extensive consultations and consensus with employers is essential before introducing a levy scheme (Johanson, 2009<sup>[50]</sup>). Countries that allocate a leading role to employers tend to be successful, whereas excessive control by government can have deleterious results (Johanson, 2009<sup>[50]</sup>). Increasing employer involvement in skills policies is discussed in-depth in Chapter 5. Specifically, a training levy could form part of a tripartite funding agreement between enterprises, government and employee representatives, with the governance of the levy/fund overseen by a Tripartite Council (see Chapter 5 for further details).

### **Box 3.4. Relevant international examples: Better using financial incentives to reduce barriers for employers**

#### **Designing effective training funds: Examples from Ireland and Italy**

Training funds have been implemented successfully in Ireland and Italy to increase participation in training. In Ireland, Skillnet operates as a facilitator and funding agency for enterprise-led training networks across the country, providing half the total cost for network activities. There are currently 65 Skillnet training networks active in Ireland. These are all funded through a mixture of government funding and the National Training Fund (NTF), which is financed through a levy on employers of 0.9% of the reckonable earnings of employees in certain employment classes. In 2016, 14 263 firms received employee training through Skillnet-funded networks. A survey of employers suggested that half of the training undertaken through the Skillnet networks would probably not have happened without the programme, and that the vast majority of employers would not have found training of similar quality.

In Italy, training funds were established by law in 2000 and have been operational since 2004. They are associations run by social partners that levy funds from companies to finance the organisation of training activities for the companies themselves or, more rarely, for individual workers. By law, firms are levied 0.3% of workers' payroll, and can decide to channel these resources into one of the training funds. The funds then deploy these resources to support companies' training activities, usually covering only a share (approx. 60-65%) of the total training cost. From 10 training funds in 2004 to 19 in 2017, training funds today cover almost 1 million firms with 10 million workers, a threefold increase in the number of firms covered by funds since 2004. With a combined budget of EUR 603 million in 2017, training funds are a crucial source of support for upskilling workers in Italy.

Source: OECD (2020<sup>[59]</sup>), *Increasing Adult Learning Participation: Learning from Successful Reforms*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/cf5d9c21-en>; OECD (2019<sup>[51]</sup>), *Adult Learning in Italy: What Role for Training Funds?*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311978-en>; OECD (2019<sup>[55]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to Shape a Better Future*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en>.



## Recommendations for better using financial incentives to reduce barriers for employers

- 2.4. Streamline the application process for Competence Vouchers and other existing financial incentives directed at enterprises.** The EIM should ease the administrative burden of applying for financial incentives as this can deter enterprises, especially SMEs, from applying. This could include providing free support to help SMEs understand and fulfil the requirements. The training specialists introduced to help SMEs assess their training needs and produce training plans (see Opportunity 1) might be well placed to provide this support to SMEs applying for financial incentives.
- 2.5. Introduce regional or sectoral training funds financed through a training levy.** The EIM should consider moving to a more sustainable training funding model for enterprises by introducing a training levy that can raise money from employers specifically for adult education and training. This levy could be used to finance the creation of regional or sectoral training funds that would distribute training grants to firms in their sector or region in line with the fund's strategic priorities. Employer buy-in both for the design and implementation of this scheme will be crucial to its success. This could be facilitated through a tripartite funding agreement governed by a Tripartite Council (see Chapter 5).

### *Overcoming financial and time-related barriers for individuals*

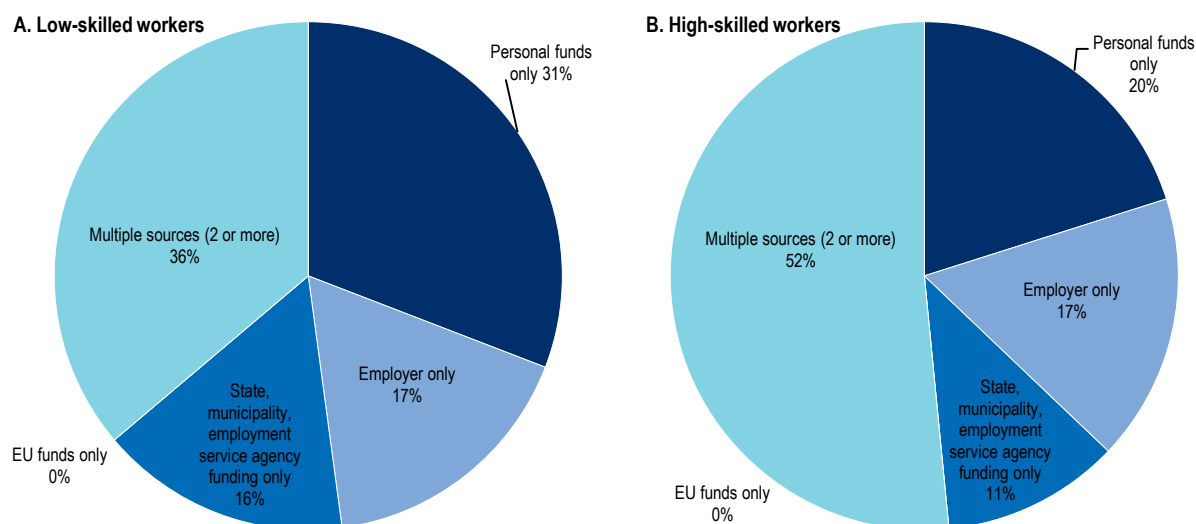
Even if financial incentives for employers are improved, adults will still need alternative and independent sources of funding for accessing education and training. Targeting financial incentives solely at employers may not be an effective way to reach disadvantaged workers, such as those who are low skilled, and may disproportionately fund firm-specific skills (OECD, 2019<sup>[55]</sup>). This is especially true for Lithuania, as only 13% of non-formal adult education and training activities takes place with employers, compared to 34% on average across the EU (see section on overview of the current adult learning system).

The cost of education and training is a larger barrier for adults in Lithuania than in other EU countries (Figure 3.11). Lithuania has recently conducted a survey on lifelong learning and found that 65% of adults aged 15-75 used personal finances to fund their learning opportunity (STRATA, 2020<sup>[34]</sup>). Whilst the majority of all learners (56%) covered the cost of learning from several sources of funding, some were reliant solely on their personal finances. Low-skilled workers are more likely to finance training only through state funding; however, they are also considerably more likely to have to rely on their personal finances to afford training (Figure 3.12). Low-skilled workers are also less likely than high-skilled workers to be able to combine funding from various sources to undertake training. Expanding state support for low-skilled workers' training in particular could reduce financial barriers and increase their motivation to participate in training.

Lithuania has relatively few financial incentives for individuals to engage in training; however, these options have expanded in recent years (Table 3.6). The most significant source of funding for learning opportunities is provided to unemployed and employed jobseekers by the Lithuanian PES. After registering a jobseeker, the PES carries out an assessment of the adult's employability before assigning them into groups of those needing high, medium or limited support. It then offers active labour market policies (ALMPs) accordingly, such as support for learning. Training is organised as either a tripartite agreement (between the PES, an employer and the jobseeker) or a bipartite agreement (between the PES and the jobseeker). The course of training is agreed to by the employer in a tripartite agreement and chosen by the individual (from a list of formal and non-formal vocational programmes in priority sectors) in a bipartite

agreement. Unemployed and employed jobseekers receive a subsidy (voucher) that covers the cost of the training, and unemployed jobseekers can also benefit from a training stipend, travel reimbursements and accommodation subsidies (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016<sub>[17]</sub>). These vouchers have helped overcome financial barriers, particularly for unemployed adults, and improved the match between the supply of vocational courses and demand from jobseekers (OECD, 2018<sub>[60]</sub>).

**Figure 3.12. Sources of funding for low- and high-skilled adults in employment undertaking learning opportunities**



Source: OECD calculations based on STRATA (2020<sub>[34]</sub>), *Mokymasis visą gyvenimą. Įpročiai, patrauklumas, barjerai, naudos suvokimas: Gyventojų apklausos ataskaita [Lifelong learning habits, barriers and perceptions: population survey report]*, <https://strata.gov.lt/images/tyrimai/2020-metai/svietimo-politika/20200108-MVG.pdf>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/ojuryt>

Under the Law of Employment, which came into force in 2017, the only employed adults who can benefit from vouchers for vocational training are those planning to leave their current job. The law stipulates that employed individuals must be employed by another employer or take up self-employment within six months of the end of the vocational training to gain financial support (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016<sub>[17]</sub>). Since the COVID-19 crisis began, the eligibility criteria for these vouchers have been expanded among employed adults. They can now be accessed for those upskilling within the same company if their contractual salary becomes at least 20% higher than their salary before training. Adults warned of dismissal can also now claim support for vocational training.

Other current incentives include tax incentives for initial education and financial support during training leave (Table 3.6). Nonetheless, cost has remained a barrier for individuals, particularly for low-skilled adults in employment (Figure 3.11 and Figure 3.12).

**Table 3.6. Main financial incentives in Lithuania for individuals undertaking adult learning**

Scheme	Type (subsidy/loan/etc.)	Target group	Description
Tax incentive to compensate for the costs of acquisition of formal qualifications (VET or HE)	Tax incentives	Permanent residents/ citizens	Adults can deduct up to 25% of their income for costs related to education and training when calculating income tax due. This only applies to adults acquiring their first vocational qualification and (or) the first HE degree, as well as first doctoral studies.
Study/training leave	Study/training leave	employees	According to the Labour Code, employees may be granted training leave for up to five working days per year to participate in non-formal adult education. Employees in formal education can also take study leave to prepare for examinations. During leave, employees are entitled to be paid at least 50% of their wage if they have worked at the company for over five years.
Vouchers	Subsidy/voucher	jobseekers	Since 2012, the PES has funded vocational training for all unemployed (and since 2017 for certain employed) adults through a voucher system where jobseekers use the voucher for training at a provider licensed by the SMSM.

Source: Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2016<sup>[17]</sup>), *užimtumo įstatymas (Law on Employment)*, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/en/TAD/5f0be3809c2011e68adcd41bb2f432d1>; Government of the Republic of Lithuania (2016<sup>[61]</sup>), *Darbo kodeksas [Labour Code]*, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/f6d686707e7011e6b969d7ae07280e89/asr>; Cedefop (n.d.<sup>[62]</sup>), *Lithuania: Tax incentive for individuals*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/FinancingAdultLearning/DisplayCountryDetails5688.html?countryName=Lithuania&instrumentType=tax%20incentive%20for%20individuals&instrumentID=tax%20allowance>.

A range of financial incentives are used by other OECD countries to increase participation among individuals (Table 3.7). Training schemes that are attached to individuals (rather than to a specific employer or employment status) and which are accessible at various point along an individual's working life can broadly be categorised as individual learning schemes (ILS), and include subsidies (such as vouchers) and individual learning accounts (ILAs) (OECD, 2019<sup>[63]</sup>). The majority of ILS come in the form of subsidies (OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>). ILAs have remained relatively uncommon, possibly because they can be costly to administer, frequently only provide limited financial support, and are disproportionately used by highly skilled individuals (OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>). Other types of financial incentives for individuals include loans, tax incentives and training leave measures. Tax incentives and training leave are available in most countries, but their take-up and effectiveness vary substantially.

Lithuania could consider expanding existing financial incentives or introducing new financial incentives for individuals to overcome the cost of training. Expanding tax incentives to include retraining and upskilling opportunities, in addition to only covering initial qualifications (Table 3.6), might be one way to provide adults with additional financial incentives. However, tax incentives can be less effective at facilitating retraining and upskilling for low-skilled workers as it is difficult to steer the direction of training. Tax incentives are also less effective for adults with immediate liquidity restraints or who do not earn enough to pay a significant level of income tax (Table 3.7).

Expanding the existing voucher system, as has started to happen during COVID-19, or introducing new subsidies targeting low-skilled adults in employment might be a more effective way to reduce costs for education and training. Subsidies for individuals can also be a more efficient way to reach vulnerable adults than subsidies directed at employers (OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>). Therefore, introducing new subsidies for adults would complement the expansion of financial incentives for enterprises (see previous section) and ensure that adults can train through their employer or independently.

Lithuania will need to carefully consider the trade-off between simplicity and greater targeting when designing subsidies for individuals. Subsidies that offer adults a voucher of the same amount benefit from being easy to apply for with reduced administration costs, but they risk increasing deadweight loss with more high-skilled than low-skilled adults applying. Subsidies targeted at specific groups (such as those who are low skilled) would reduce this deadweight loss; however, they would increase administration costs and make vouchers more difficult to apply for, potentially putting off some of the target group (OECD, 2017<sup>[53]</sup>).

**Table 3.7. Financial incentives for individuals to participate in adult learning opportunities**

Incentive	Description	Potential advantages	Potential disadvantages
Subsidies	Schemes that decrease costs of participation through a direct transfer of money to the individual (e.g. through a voucher). Subsidies can take the form of scholarships, grants, bursaries, allowances, vouchers and training cheques.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct, as well as highly flexible (i.e. possibility of targeting specific groups or outcomes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeting generally increases administrative costs for government and participants.</li> <li>• Without targeting, deadweight losses can be high.</li> </ul>
Individual learning accounts (ILAs)	Schemes where rights for training are accumulated over a certain period of time. Publicly financed, the account is virtual in the sense that the resources are only mobilised when training is actually undertaken and paid for.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linked to individual regardless of their labour market status – can be accessed throughout life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively costly to administer and frequently only involve small amounts of money.</li> <li>• More likely to be used by high- than low-skilled individuals.</li> </ul>
Tax incentives	Tax allowances (i.e. deductions from taxable income); tax credits (sums deducted from the tax due); and tax relief (lower rates for some taxpayers or activities).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax incentives are part of the annual tax return process and therefore are relatively easy to access for individuals and cheap to administer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to use tax incentives to steer the direction of education and training (e.g. in areas of economic priority).</li> <li>• Individuals must generally wait until after the end of the tax year to be able to claim the incentives.</li> </ul>
Loans	Include guarantees, interest rate subsidies, loan guarantees, income-contingent repayments, and student loan remission and/or forgiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost-efficient way of financing investments in skills.</li> <li>• Shift some of the cost of education and training to those who benefit the most, namely individuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can require a developed and expensive infrastructure for providing support to borrowers, administration and servicing.</li> <li>• Less effective for those on low incomes who are likely to be more averse to taking on debt.</li> </ul>
Study/training leave	Schemes that give employees a right to study leave (and guarantee the right to return to their job after course completion) and reimburse employees/employer for the lost working time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps alleviate both financial and time-related barriers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility criteria to take leave can be limiting and can depend on employer consent.</li> <li>• Needs to work in tandem with other financial incentives (often insufficient on its own).</li> </ul>

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[64]</sup>), Individual Learning Accounts: *Panacea or Pandora's Box?*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/203b21a8-en>; OECD (2017<sup>[53]</sup>), *Financial Incentives for Steering Education and Training*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264272415-en>.

Lithuania could take inspiration from how other countries have managed to design subsidies that incorporate targeting at specific groups. In Singapore, eligibility for training vouchers extends to all Singaporeans aged 25 and above, but the government also provides top-ups for specific target groups (Box 3.5). In Flanders, training vouchers, *Opleidingscheques*, have stricter eligibility requirements: low- and medium-skilled employees are able to access vouchers for the full range of pre-approved training programmes, whereas high-skilled adults can only access them if the training is deemed necessary as part of a personal development plan drawn up during career counselling (Box 3.5).

Expanded financial incentives for individuals will need to be accompanied by a comprehensive information system. Information regarding financial incentives and the application process should be brought together under an online one-stop shop (see Opportunity 1). Financial incentives for low-skilled adults will also need to be supplemented by awareness-raising initiatives to ensure that individuals are aware of the new funding options available (see Opportunity 1).

Time-related barriers are another significant obstacle to adult learning for individuals (Figure 3.11). These can be overcome in various ways. First, processes to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning can help to limit the time and costs needed to complete a formal credential (OECD, 2019<sup>[11]</sup>). Improving these processes for Lithuania is discussed in Opportunity 3. Second, statutory training leave can ensure that adults have time for learning around work commitments. Lithuania has already introduced a training leave policy with wage compensation (Table 3.4). Third, increasing the flexible delivery of

education and training through providing modular courses, part-time options and online and distance learning opportunities can be crucial to minimising time-related constraints (OECD, 2019<sup>[11]</sup>).

Increasing the flexible delivery of education and training has been a priority for the Lithuanian government in recent years. These efforts have so far focused predominantly on expanding modular education. The Action Plan for the Development of Lifelong Learning 2017-2020 made the development and implementation of vocational standards and modular vocational training programmes a key area to improve (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2017<sup>[12]</sup>). The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (KPMPC) is responsible for designing and updating national modular VET programmes, and in the last few years the design and uptake of modular education in VET has expanded rapidly (Cedefop, 2019<sup>[65]</sup>).

In the current climate, with the COVID-19 pandemic ongoing and social distancing measures in force for at least the near future, progress in modularity will need to be supplemented with an increased supply of online and distance courses. Online learning can be an effective way to open up vocational and HE to more students and to a broader range of socio-economic groups (OECD, 2019<sup>[66]</sup>). Distance learning is popular in Lithuania, and there have been extensive investments in distance learning infrastructure in recent years. A number of digital initiatives have also responded effectively to the COVID-19 crisis. The project *Prisijungusi Lietuva* (Connect Lithuania) has been providing digital skills courses in libraries across the country since 2018. Throughout COVID-19 it has compiled independent digital skills resources online for adults to access (Prisijungusi Lietuva, 2021<sup>[67]</sup>). Lithuania's PES also partnered with the massive open online course (MOOC) provider, Coursera, to provide free courses for unemployed adults during the summer and autumn of 2020. By 23 September 2020, Lithuania's PES had sent invitations to 35 041 unemployed adults to participate in free courses, with 15 619 people taking up the offer (Employment Service, 2020<sup>[68]</sup>).

Nonetheless, there is still an insufficient supply of online courses from vocational and HEIs delivered in the Lithuanian language. Reliance on off-the-shelf education platforms to provide training can exclude those without excellent secondary language skills. On Coursera, most training courses are in English, and there is a wide selection of Russian courses, but courses in Lithuanian are more limited (Employment Service, 2020<sup>[68]</sup>). The officials and stakeholders consulted during this OECD Skills Strategy project also indicated that Lithuanian vocational and HEIs do not currently provide extensive online offerings in either formal or non-formal courses.

Lithuania's SMSM should consider doing more to encourage institutions to develop their online and distance offerings. In particular, it could provide technical support to enable vocational and HEIs to deliver courses online cheaply and efficiently. The creation of an online learning platform that brings together courses from Lithuanian education institutions would be one way to enable the SMSM to help institutions build digital training materials, deliver programmes online and gather student feedback. For example, in Australia, TAFE Digital acts as a consolidated online learning platform that hosts courses from various vocational training institutes. The platform provides substantial methodological support to help institutions develop digital training materials that are consistent between providers (Box 3.5). An online learning platform could be hosted either independently or as part of an online one-stop shop that brings together online education and training with information on financing, the quality of courses and the benefits of learning (see Opportunity 1).

### Box 3.5. Relevant international examples: Overcoming financial and time-related barriers for individuals

#### Targeting subsidies: Examples from Flanders (Belgium) and Singapore

In **Flanders (Belgium)**, the Opleidingscheques are training vouchers for employees. Before 2015, the vouchers were freely accessible by high-skilled individuals, with the result that almost half of participants were highly educated. Subsequently, the eligibility criteria was tightened. Highly skilled individuals can only access the vouchers for career-oriented education that is deemed necessary as part of a personal development plan drawn up during career counselling. Low- and medium-skilled employees can use these vouchers for any course in the Education Database for Flemish training incentives. The vouchers provide half the cost of the course, with the individual required to co-finance the remaining half. The full cost of courses is subsidised for certain courses such as those in basic literacy, numeracy or ICT skills, or courses in priority sectors. The full subsidy is also provided for any adult who does not have a secondary education diploma.

In **Singapore**, the SkillsFuture Credit gives every Singaporean aged 25 and above a training credit of SGD 500 (Singapore dollar) (approximately EUR 310) that can be topped up by the government at various intervals. These top-ups represent a way to channel additional funding to target groups. Currently an additional 500 of credit is available to adults aged 40-60. The voucher can be used for any type of training, whether formal (basic education, VET or HE) or non formal from a list of eligible programmes. The vouchers are one of many initiatives falling under SkillsFuture, a comprehensive adult learning initiative launched in late 2014, with the vouchers rolled out in 2016. SkillsFuture Credit was introduced to depart from the traditional employer-centric approach to training, and provide individuals with some autonomy in choosing their training. Crucial to this is an online portal from which adults can choose their courses. As every adult receives at least the basic subsidy, the awareness of the initiative throughout Singapore has been high, helping increase usage rates. In 2019, 86% of trainees surveyed by SkillsFuture Singapore using the Training Quality and Outcomes Measurement system indicated that they were able to perform their work better after training using SkillsFuture Credit.

#### Common learning virtual platforms: An example from Australia 2

In **Australia**, Technical and Further Education in New South Wales (TAFE NSW) is the largest vocational education and training provider. In 2017, the three individual online learning platforms from TAFE institutes were merged into a single digital delivery entity, TAFE Digital, to offer online courses from across TAFE's educational and training providers. The existence of one platform enables TAFE Digital to ensure that online course content is consistent across all locations and is easily accessible for students. As part of the merger, four teams work across institutions to provide an integrated service: the Digital Delivery team oversees student assessment, feedback and progression; the Digital Learning Lab consists of a group of learning analytics, innovative technology and immersive media specialists to trial new technologies for online programmes; Digital Design helps build the digital training materials; and Digital Project Management provides project support and digital advice. At the end of 2019, 50 014 students were enrolled in TAFE Digital across 250 different online courses. According to the 2018 National Student Outcome Survey, over 90% of students who completed their online studies would recommend TAFE Digital as a training provider, and over 89% were very satisfied with their experience.

Source: Vlaanderen.be (2021<sup>[69]</sup>), *Opleidingscheques voor werknemers [Training vouchers for employees]*, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/opleidingscheques-voor-werknemers>; OECD (2019<sup>[64]</sup>), *Individual Learning Accounts: Panacea or Pandora's Box?*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/203b21a8-en>; SkillsFuture (2020<sup>[70]</sup>), *SkillsFuture Credit*, <https://www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/credit>; TAFE NSW (2020<sup>[71]</sup>), *About TAFE NSW*, <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/about>.



## Recommendations for overcoming financial and time-related barriers for individuals

- 2.6. Expand financial incentives for adults to participate in adult learning, focusing on target groups such as low-skilled workers.** The SADM, the SMSM, and the EIM should come together to determine which groups of adults would benefit from additional financial incentives for training (such as low-skilled adults in employment) and decide whether an individual learning scheme such as subsidies (vouchers) or financial mechanisms such as loans or tax incentives are most appropriate for reaching the target groups. Lithuania could either expand the coverage of existing tax incentives and vouchers or introduce new incentives, such as subsidies for target groups like low-skilled workers. Information on these financial incentives should be brought together in one place so that adults are able to easily understand their financing options (see Opportunity 1).
- 2.7. Improve the supply of online adult learning in the Lithuanian language by providing technical support to vocational and higher education institutions.** Lithuania should build on its work so far to guarantee a sufficient supply of online courses during COVID-19 and into the future. The SMSM could consider providing vocational and HEIs with technical and methodological support to cheaply and efficiently design and deliver courses on line. As part of this support, Lithuania could consider creating a common online learning platform that would bring together online courses from Lithuanian education providers. This platform could be hosted independently or incorporated into an online one-stop shop that brings together for individuals in a clear and engaging manner the provision of online training and information on all aspects of the adult learning system (see Opportunity 1).

### ***Opportunity 3: Strengthening the recognition and quality of non-formal adult education and training***

In Lithuania, as in other OECD countries, the majority of structured adult learning takes place within non-formal education and training. Roughly 28% of adults in Lithuania participated in non-formal learning over the past 12 months, compared to just 3% who participated in formal learning and another 3% who participated in both non-formal and formal learning (OECD, 2019<sup>[72]</sup>). Non-formal learning forms a core part of the adult learning system because it is more flexible in duration and delivery than most formal learning. Non-formal courses are typically shorter than formal courses, enabling adults to take individual modules rather than full courses. These courses can take place via on-the-job training, open and distance education, courses and private lessons, seminars and workshops, as well as in vocational and HEIs (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>). The government has made strengthening the non-formal learning system a key objective over the next few years (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020<sup>[10]</sup>).

The diversity of non-formal offerings can present a challenge to ensure that learning outcomes are recognised and that training is of high quality. Learning is most rewarding for individuals when their achievements are visible and understood by employers. This matters for skills acquired in both non-formal and informal learning environments. Recognising learning outcomes can be encouraged by certifying non-formal education and training and recognising non-formal and informal learning in national qualification frameworks (OECD, 2019<sup>[55]</sup>). This recognition of prior learning (RPL) can also mean adults are able to re-engage with formal learning by limiting the amount of time required to complete a qualification, which helps to overcome time-related barriers to participation in training for individuals (see Opportunity 2) (OECD, 2019<sup>[55]</sup>). For employers, having a better understanding of the skills of their employees can help to avoid skills mismatches and lead to higher productivity and reduced staff turnover (OECD, 2019<sup>[55]</sup>). Lithuania has taken important steps towards creating a national system of RPL over the past few years;



however, the quality of processes to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning is still unequal between providers.

Ensuring the high quality of non-formal adult education courses can also be challenging (OECD, 2021<sup>[73]</sup>). Whilst Lithuania has robust quality assurance mechanisms for formal learning in both higher and vocational education, these are lacking in publicly funded non-formal adult education. Lithuania should consider strengthening *ex ante* and *ex post* quality assurance mechanisms to improve the quality of publicly funded non-formal education. Higher quality learning opportunities can lead to strengthened learning outcomes and increased motivation to participate in education, which is low in Lithuania (see Opportunity 1).

### *Improving the processes to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning*

Whilst Lithuania has taken significant steps in recent years to develop the legal framework for an RPL system, the quality of skills validation could still be improved by providing education institutions with clearer guidelines and standards for RPL processes.

Since 2016, the processes to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning for vocational and HEIs have been developed through two orders from the SMSM. The Law on Employment has also made the recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning one of the learning support measures that the Lithuanian PES can provide to jobseekers (Employment Service, 2020<sup>[74]</sup>).

Currently the process to recognise and validate non-formal education for the purposes of acquiring a HE degree is outlined in the SMSM order: General Principles for the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formal and Informally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions. This order sets out the four stages that individuals need to go through to have their competences recognised in line with European guidelines: 1) informing the individual about the process; 2) consulting with the individual to prepare the necessary evidence; 3) evaluating the portfolio; and 4) deciding which modules from the study programme can be credited in advance (Cedefop, 2015<sup>[75]</sup>; Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2017<sup>[76]</sup>).

The procedure to conduct RPL in vocational institutions is stipulated in the second SMSM order: Description of the Procedure for Crediting Prior Learning Achievements. This order details the types of documents considered as evidence by vocational institutions to recognise non-formal or informal learning (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2018<sup>[77]</sup>). Vocational training diplomas, certificates and learning achievements from non-formal education can be used, as can recommendations from employers testifying to the development and use of skills in the workplace. An individual can have their learning recognised in preparation for undertaking a formal vocational programme or to simply have their existing non-formal training validated. Lithuania's PES provides a subsidy to unemployed adults wishing to engage in this process (Employment Service, 2020<sup>[74]</sup>).

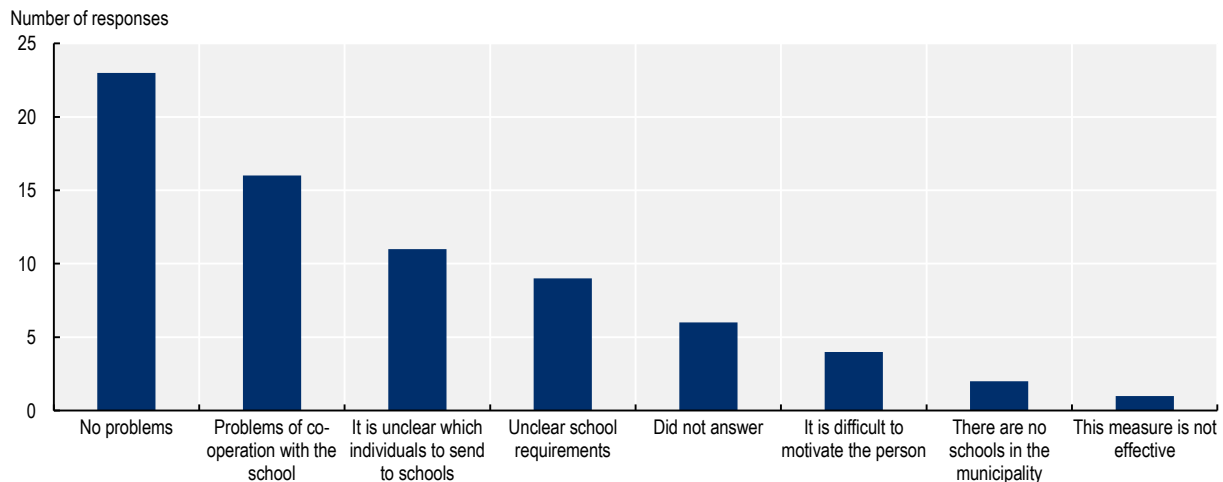
Nonetheless, the EC has found that there is insufficient validation reference material, methodologies and tools to help guide education institutions in the processes required to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning, which is leading to differing validation quality between providers (Beleckiene, 2019<sup>[78]</sup>). This conclusion is supported by a recent survey led by KPMPC, which found unequal professional requirements, unequal processes and duration requirements, and other inconsistencies in the validation process between providers (Kalvaitis, 2020<sup>[79]</sup>). For example, different vocational institutions require different levels of work experience as part of the skills certification process. The majority of institutions prefer one year of experience for a competency to be recognised, but some require more than two years and others have no minimum requirements (Kalvaitis, 2020<sup>[79]</sup>).

This creates two policy problems for Lithuania. First, it can make co-operation between stakeholders involved in the RPL system more difficult. Currently, local PES can refer jobseekers to education institutions to have their skills validated. The majority of these interactions proceed smoothly, but where problems occur these are related to co-ordination issues which stem, in part, from unclear RPL standards (Figure 3.13). In a recent survey of 66 local PES (out of 70 across Lithuania), 16 cited co-operation with

the VET provider as problematic, 11 reported that it is unclear which individuals are in need of RPL services, and a further 9 cited unclear school requirements. Second, it can mean that the quality of RPL provision differs depending on the provider and its use of validation methodologies and tools.

### Figure 3.13. Barriers to recognising prior learning for local PES

The number of local PES that cited specific barriers to conducting the recognition of prior learning for those unemployed



Source: Kalvaitis, (2020<sup>[79]</sup>), *Suaugusiųjų neformaliųjų būdu įgytų kompetencijų vertinimas ir pripažinimas Lietuvoje: profesinio mokymo teikėjų ir Užimtumo tarnybos atstovų apklausos rezultatai [Recognition of prior learning in Lithuania: Results from the survey of professional training providers and local public employment services]*, [https://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PM-tyrimo-ataskaita\\_Albinas\\_Kalvaitis.pdf](https://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PM-tyrimo-ataskaita_Albinas_Kalvaitis.pdf).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/pofj07>

KPMPC is currently leading an EU funded project to improve the processes of recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning: Improvement of the System for Assessment and Recognition of Competences and Qualifications Acquired in Different Pathways (SKVC, 2020<sup>[80]</sup>). This project aims to improve the capacity of institutions to assess competences and qualifications acquired. The SMSM should build on the work of this project to develop a clear set of guidelines in conjunction with KPMPC, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and education institutions that outline how to effectively recognise prior learning in Lithuanian education institutions. Lithuania could look at how other OECD countries, such as Norway, have developed guidelines that incorporate best practices, tools and methodologies to support the high-quality validation of skills across all providers (Box 3.6).

The success of this RPL system to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning will also depend on raising awareness of skills validation as an option among adults. At the moment, publicly available information on validation options for adults, particularly in vocational institutions, is lacking (Beleckiene, 2019<sup>[78]</sup>). Improving the guidelines available to institutions should enable providers to more clearly state to adults the processes involved in having their skillset certified. Information about the RPL system could be included in an online one-stop shop and feature in awareness-raising initiatives (see Opportunity 1). Career guidance counsellors should be made aware of validation processes to effectively advise adults on whether and how to have their skills certified (see Chapter 5 for discussion on creating a lifelong career guidance system).

Lithuania could also consider developing digital tools for the recognition and validation of prior learning. Digital/open badges are a relatively new and promising way to harness technology to record and validate people's skills (OECD, 2019<sup>[55]</sup>). They can enable individuals to present their skills in a more flexible way than full qualifications, or to signal specific interests or knowledge (OECD, 2019<sup>[66]</sup>). First developed in 2011 by Mozilla and the MacArthur Foundation, open badges consist of a series of metadata such as the

recipient of the badge, the issuer of the badge and the criteria for earning the badge; this information together forms a verifiable claim (Ravet, 2017<sup>[81]</sup>). These badges can be stored online in digital “backpacks” and shared on social media platforms, incorporated into CVs or used to create and visualise meaningful learning pathways. The EC offers support for the creation of open badges through the use of the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (Luomi-Messerer, 2019<sup>[82]</sup>).

### **Box 3.6. Relevant national and international examples: Improving the processes to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning**

#### **Developing RPL guidelines: An example from Norway**

Skills Norway is an agency of the Ministry of Education and Research that works on various aspects of adult learning policy. It has developed guidelines, one for vocational institutions and one for HEIs, on how to conduct RPL effectively. The guides first discuss the relevant domestic legal documents and European-wide initiatives before outlining processes for assessing prior learning and examples of methods and tools that institutions can use. Included are the necessary stages that an institution will need to follow, as well as tasks (to be delegated appropriately) that may be relevant to the applicant, administrative staff and academic staff at various stages of the process. The guides analyse various types of documentation that can be presented, discussing how they should be interpreted and the amount of evidence each is considered as offering, as well as providing a range of methodologies for assessment. A series of checklists are provided so that institutions can measure the extent to which they follow the procedures outlined in these documents. The guide for RPL in HE also provides a series of best practice on which institutions can base their assessment.

#### **Designing digital badges: An example from Lithuania**

Between 2015 and 2017, The Lithuanian Association of Non-Formal Education, in co-operation with the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists and international partners, developed a series of digital badge systems through an Erasmus+ initiative. In Lithuania, the achievement programme for the Youth Volunteer Service’s initiative, Discover Yourself, was created. Discover Yourself was co-ordinated by the Department of Youth Affairs under the SADM and the Lithuanian Labour Exchange (now called the PES). It provided one to four months of voluntary service to any young person between the ages of 15 and 29 who was not in education, employment or training. The achievement programme created a series of badges that participants could receive throughout their volunteering. Eight key competences for lifelong learning such as cultural awareness, entrepreneurship and mathematical competence were identified, with each competency having its own 3-level badge. To achieve a Level 1 badge in a particular competency there was one mandatory task to complete, whereas to achieve a Level 3 badge a participant had to complete at least three. Badge earners could manage their achievements using a Badge Wallet application and choose which achievements to share, and where to share them. For example, the platform offered a feature to share badges and achievements with friends via social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or LinkedIn.

Source: Kompetanse Norge (2013<sup>[83]</sup>), *Fritak for deler av universitets-/høyskolestudium på grunnlag av dokumentasjon av realkompetanse [exemption from university modules on the basis of RPL]*, [https://www.kompetansenorge.no/contentassets/5f2020b0d0ab41bdb5dabe9eab0bfd44/fritak\\_uksektoren\\_veiledning2.pdf](https://www.kompetansenorge.no/contentassets/5f2020b0d0ab41bdb5dabe9eab0bfd44/fritak_uksektoren_veiledning2.pdf); Kompetanse Norge (2020<sup>[84]</sup>), *Opptak til høyere yrkesfaglig utdanning på grunnlag av realkompetanse [Admission to higher vocational education on the basis of prior learning]*, [https://www.kompetansenorge.no/contentassets/58c112900db245a194cccfadfa83fd7/veileder\\_opptak\\_til\\_hoyere\\_yrkesfaglig\\_utdanning.pdf](https://www.kompetansenorge.no/contentassets/58c112900db245a194cccfadfa83fd7/veileder_opptak_til_hoyere_yrkesfaglig_utdanning.pdf); Lithuanian Association of Non-formal Education (2018<sup>[85]</sup>), *Trusted Badge Systems: Building Trust and Recognition with Open Badges*, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8TgWdLuv6eTeUJaQIFxQ2MwSVE/view>

Lithuania already has experience developing open badges. The Lithuanian Association of Non-Formal Education, in co-operation with the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists and international partners,

developed open badges for young adults volunteering with the Youth Voluntary Service (Box 3.6). Lithuania could leverage on this experience to develop open badges more widely across non-formal courses and informal learning experiences. As a starting point, expanding the supply of online learning opportunities from Lithuanian education institutions (see Opportunity 2) presents an opportunity to introduce open badges for online non-formal courses.

## Recommendations for improving the processes to recognise and validate non formal and informal learning

- 2.8. Develop guidelines to support Lithuanian education institutions in implementing high-quality recognition and validation processes for non-formal and informal learning.** The SMSM, in conjunction with the KPMPC, the SKVC, and vocational and HEIs, should develop guidelines and standards for the RPL system to ensure that all education institutions carrying out RPL have access to the methodologies, tools and reference materials needed to effectively certify prior learning. These guidelines could be informed by input from the ongoing project, Improvement of the System for Assessment and Recognition of Competences and Qualifications Acquired in Different Pathways. Adults will also need to be made aware of the RPL system and how they can have their skills recognised. This could be done via an online one-stop shop (see Opportunity 1) and through career guidance counsellors (see Chapter 5).
- 2.9. Consider introducing digital/open badges for non-formal and informal learning.** The SMSM, the EIM and the SADM, in co-operation with representatives of the non-formal education sector and employers, should consider working with education institutions to develop open badges that would enable adults to visualise their skillset online. For example, the completion of non-formal courses could be awarded with a badge that adults can incorporate into online portfolios or CVs indicating the skills taught and developed on the programme. Lithuania could begin by introducing such badges for online non-formal courses delivered through a common learning virtual platform (see Opportunity 2).

### *Strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in non-formal adult education and training*

In order to attract more adults and employers to engage in non-formal education and training, Lithuania will also need to ensure the high quality of publicly funded non-formal adult education. Good training quality is fundamental to guarantee that adult learning opportunities lead to the development of labour market relevant skills and the increased employability of participants (OECD, 2020<sup>[59]</sup>). An effective quality assurance regime can be broken down into three components: 1) *ex ante* recognition and certification of adult learning providers; 2) *ex ante* monitoring of adult learning providers; and 3) *ex post* monitoring of learning outcomes (Box 3.7). These work in tandem to guarantee that providers and courses are providing quality training opportunities and that adults are able to choose the education that most responds to their needs.

Quality assurance mechanisms are well-established in formal education. In HE, SKVC oversees external quality assurance policy. It provides *ex ante* recognition and certification of both providers and study programmes, and according to the Law on Higher Education and Research, only accredited courses can be taught (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015<sup>[86]</sup>). HEIs are required to complete self-evaluation reports, and SKVC provides guidance to institutions on what these should include (SKVC, 2020<sup>[87]</sup>). Once a report has been submitted, SKVC forms an expert team to analyse the report, visit the institution and outline any follow-up activities that need to be undertaken to meet quality criteria. Accreditation of institutions factors in the effectiveness of internal quality assurance mechanisms, the management of the institute, and the impact of the institute on regional and national development (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2019<sup>[88]</sup>).

### Box 3.7. Key elements of a quality assurance system for adult education and training

A quality assurance regime for adult learning includes the following elements:

- **Ex ante recognition and certification of adult learning providers:** Introducing quality standards for the recognition, certification and accreditation of adult education programmes and/or institutions.
- **Ex ante monitoring of adult learning providers:** Assessing whether providers adhere to the quality standards through a combination of desk-based analysis and on-site audits, which may lead to follow-up measures in case of non-compliance.
- **Ex post monitoring of learning outcomes:** Tracking adult learners following course completion to assess whether learning opportunities lead to measurable skills gains, for instance through the use of administrative data and surveys.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[99]</sup>), *Strengthening Quality Assurance in Adult Education and Training in Portugal: Implementation Guidance*, [www.oecd.org/skills/centre-for-skills/Strengthening-Quality-Assurance-in-Adult-Education-and-Training-in-Portugal-Implementation-Guidance.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/skills/centre-for-skills/Strengthening-Quality-Assurance-in-Adult-Education-and-Training-in-Portugal-Implementation-Guidance.pdf).

In formal vocational education, KPMPC is responsible for external quality assurance (KPMPC, 2020<sup>[19]</sup>). KPMPC establishes the procedure for the development, modification, evaluation and validation of formal vocational training programmes for initial and continuing vocational training. The procedure for this approval process is detailed in the Description of the Procedure for the Development and Validation of Formal Vocational Training Programmes. As with HE, vocational institutes are required to develop their own internal quality assurance mechanisms and self-evaluate. KPMPC provides methodological support in this regard (KPMPC, 2020<sup>[90]</sup>). KPMPC has also developed mechanisms to support the *ex post* monitoring of learning outcomes of formal vocational education through a set of questionnaires designed to measure the satisfaction of students, teachers, graduates and employers (KPMPC, 2020<sup>[90]</sup>).

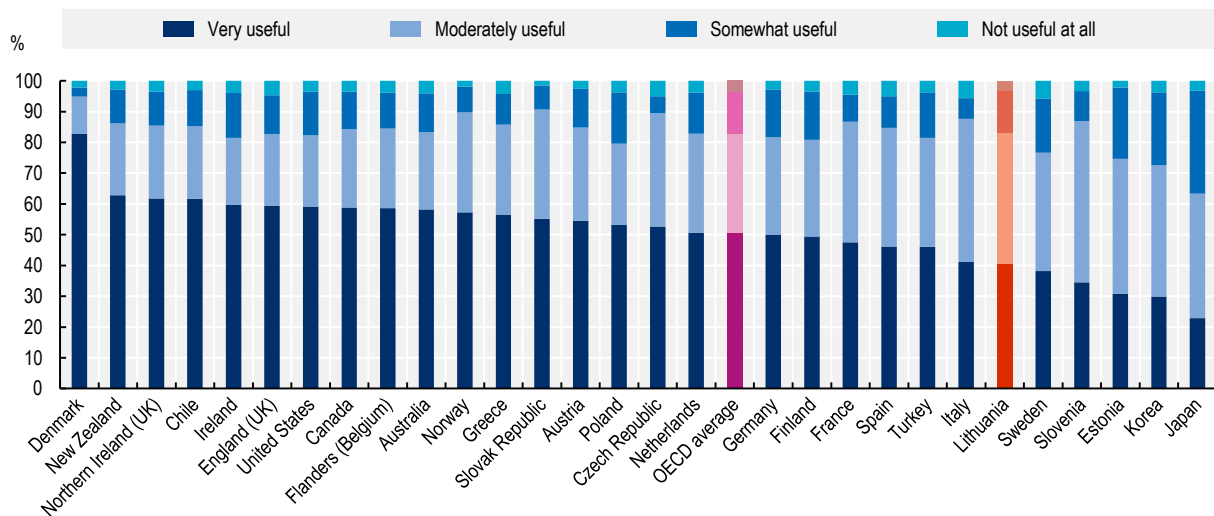
Regarding non-formal education, however, activities are not subject to comprehensive external regulation, with responsibility for quality largely down to the provider (Eurydice, 2018<sup>[91]</sup>). The main *ex ante* recognition and certification of providers is overseen by KPMPC which, as of 2019, registers non-formal vocational training programmes alongside formal programmes in its online database. Nonetheless, getting placed on this register of programmes is relatively easy, with few objective criteria required (Visionary Analytics, 2019<sup>[92]</sup>). Lithuania's PES also provides some *ex ante* recognition and certification by only financing jobseekers who wish to participate in non-formal adult education that corresponds to labour market needs (Employment Service, 2021<sup>[39]</sup>).

The *ex post* monitoring of both adult learning providers and learning outcomes in non-formal education is largely inexistent, as a recent evaluation of non-formal adult learning opportunities funded by the ESF found (Visionary Analytics, 2019<sup>[92]</sup>). ESF financing is used to fund training aimed at jobseekers, as well as the majority of training for firms (see Opportunity 2). The *ex post* monitoring of learning outcomes for ESF-funded non-formal learning is not systematically undertaken. There are no surveys or other forms of feedback collected from participants immediately upon finishing training, and as a result there is no system in place to allow the comparison of training quality between different providers. The training indicators that do exist fail to measure the impact of learning opportunities effectively, partly because they lack specificity and as a result are hard to measure (Visionary Analytics, 2019<sup>[92]</sup>).

Insufficient *ex ante* and *ex post* quality assurance mechanisms in non-formal education can lead to education that is not always relevant. In Lithuania, only 41% of adults found their training to be "very useful" (Figure 3.14). This is lower than the average across OECD countries (51%), and significantly below the top performers of Denmark (83%), New Zealand (63%) and Northern Ireland (62%).

**Figure 3.14. Percentage who found education and training useful for their job**

25-65 year-olds participating in formal or non-formal education and training for job related reasons



Source: OECD (2019<sup>[72]</sup>), *Survey of Adult Skills Database (PIAAC, 2012, 2015, 2018)*, <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/data/>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/wf5rpo>

The EIM and the SMSM should consider strengthening the *ex ante* recognition and certification of non-formal adult education providers. To guarantee that training providers and programmes comply with minimum quality requirements, many countries have put in place certification mechanisms or quality labels. Quality labels can be a useful, often voluntary, way to signal the top-performing training providers according to the necessary certification and accreditation criteria defined by the state (OECD, 2021<sup>[73]</sup>). For example, in Switzerland the EduQua quality label is used to inform adults of training providers that provide quality learning experiences (Box 3.8). KPMPC could apply a quality label to non-formal courses on its register that meet a more stringent set of quality criteria, thus signalling to adults the top-performing training providers. Non-formal training providers could be required to meet this criteria in order to benefit from public funding.

Lithuania should also consider developing a more comprehensive *ex post* monitoring of learning outcomes for publicly funded non-formal adult education. This could be achieved through standardised and systematic post-participation surveys of participants that consist of a common set of indicators measuring labour market outcomes and satisfaction with the course. It could also be organised through the collection of administrative data about labour market outcomes from individuals in further education and work-based learning, as England does through Individualised Learner Records (ILR) (Box 3.8). Communicating outcome indicators to adults in an accessible way, for example through a systematic rating system, can then improve the quality of education by empowering individuals to judge courses according to outcomes that matter to them (OECD, 2018<sup>[60]</sup>). This could be undertaken via an online portal (see Opportunity 1) or by career guidance counsellors (see Chapter 5).

The process of developing more comprehensive *ex ante* and *ex post* monitoring of non-formal education should be a cross-ministry effort that actively seeks input from a range of stakeholders such as education institutions and employers. Facilitating ministerial co-operation and stakeholder engagement is discussed extensively in Chapter 5. Consensus should be sought on criteria for quality labels and the indicators to be included in a monitoring framework to ensure the success of these new quality assurance mechanisms across non-formal education in different sectors.



### Box 3.8. Relevant international examples: Strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in non-formal adult education and training

#### Quality assurance labels: An example from Switzerland

In **Switzerland**, EduQua defines six criteria that are key to the quality of an adult education institution: 1) the course offer; 2) communication with clients; 3) value performance; 4) staff/educators; 5) learning success; and 6) quality assurance and development. EduQua stimulates quality development through issuing certification, on-site audit, certification reports and yearly intermediate audits, as well as through the renewal of the certification every three years. EduQua is the first Swiss quality label for adult education. It provides certified institutions with a considerable advantage in the eyes of their clients. The quality management also supports improvement through the certification process. The certification can be advantageous when dealing with the authorities, with an increasing number of cantons requiring the certification for public funding. The Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Educating Directors recommends that the cantons check “the quality of the providers in the education sector in all of Switzerland based on the same criteria and make national subsidies dependent on a proof of quality (EduQua)”. EduQua is made up of over 1 000 schools, institutions and academies in the non-formal sector of the adult learning system, and has proved very successful in signalling the quality of non-formal education and training. Its main strengths lie in the fact that its scope is well defined and that it is managed by a well-respected main actor (the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning, SVEB), which represents the interests of all stakeholders involved.

#### Monitoring learning outcomes: An example from England

In **England**, the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) is the primary means of data collection about further education and work-based learning. Information about learners is collected from publicly funded colleges, training organisations, local authorities, employers and further education providers. The ILR is an electronic data return, submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), used to calculate funding for training providers. It also informs wider policy through the data collected. The ILR is an important part of the quality assurance system as it is used to monitor training delivery against funding allocations and as a pre-inspection analysis of performance. The data collected include the type of work experience/placement that learners engage in (if applicable), the number of study hours and student grades, as well as employment status monitoring. It does not, however, include more subjective criteria on participant satisfaction with courses.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[73]</sup>), *Improving the Quality of Non-Formal Adult Learning: Learning from European Best Practices on Quality Assurance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f1b450e1-en>; OECD (2019<sup>[93]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/74fe3bf8-en>; Broek and Buiskool (2013<sup>[94]</sup>), *Quality in the Adult Learning Sector*, <https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/Quality%20of%20Adult%20Learning%20final.pdf>; UK Education and Skills Funding Agency (2020<sup>[95]</sup>), *ILR specification, validation rules and appendices 2019 to 2020*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ilr-specification-validation-rules-and-appendices-2019-to-2020>.



## Recommendations for strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in non-formal adult education and training

- 2.10. Establish quality labels for providers of non-formal adult education and training that exceed minimum certification requirements.** To strengthen the *ex ante* recognition and certification of non-formal adult education and training providers, Lithuania should consider introducing quality labels for the best-performing providers in the certification process. Establishing quality labels should be a cross-ministry effort also involving the KPMPC, the SKVC, and other stakeholders such as education institutions. These labels could help to drive quality improvements by encouraging providers to exceed minimum requirements. Publicly funded non-formal providers could be required to meet this more comprehensive set of criteria.
- 2.11. Introduce a monitoring framework for the learning outcomes of publicly funded non-formal adult education and training.** Ministries and stakeholders should together decide on standardised indicators for a monitoring framework across publicly funded non-formal adult education courses. These could consist of labour market outcomes as well as the satisfaction of participants with the provided training. The KPMPC and the SKVC could arrange this through post-participation surveys or through the collection of administrative data from training providers. The results of these learning outcomes should be communicated clearly to adults, perhaps through an online portal (see Opportunity 1).

### Summary of policy recommendations

Policy directions	High-level recommendations
<b>Opportunity 1: Raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities</b>	
Raising awareness about adult learning benefits and opportunities among individuals	2.1. Consolidate and expand online information about adult learning benefits, opportunities and funding into a one-stop shop (portal). 2.2. Introduce local awareness-raising initiatives through co-operation with local stakeholders to engage low-skilled adults in education and training.
Enabling employers to understand their training needs	2.3. Support enterprises to undertake training needs assessments and develop training plans, starting with SMEs in economic sectors of strategic importance.
<b>Opportunity 2: Removing barriers to participation in adult learning</b>	
Better using financial incentives to reduce barriers for employers	2.4. Streamline the application process for Competence Vouchers and other existing financial incentives directed at enterprises. 2.5. Introduce regional or sectoral training funds financed through a training levy.
Overcoming financial and time-related barriers for individuals	2.6. Expand financial incentives for adults to participate in adult learning, focusing on target groups such as low-skilled workers. 2.7. Improve the supply of online adult learning in the Lithuanian language by providing technical support to vocational and higher education institutions.
<b>Opportunity 3: Strengthening the recognition and quality of non-formal adult education and training</b>	
Improving the processes to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning	2.8. Develop guidelines to support Lithuanian education institutions in implementing high-quality recognition and validation processes for non-formal and informal learning. 2.9. Consider introducing digital/open badges for non-formal and informal learning.
Strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in non-formal adult education and training	2.10. Establish quality labels for providers of non-formal adult education and training that exceed minimum certification requirements. 2.11. Introduce a monitoring framework for learning outcomes of publicly funded non-formal adult education and training.

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