

REPORT

LIFE LONG LEARNING POLICY

IN ARMENIA

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Introduction

The overall objective with this project is to tackle the unemployment and lack of innovation due to a gap between labor market needs and skills of labor force. Changing conditions in the labor market must be better matched by a continued development of the competencies of the workforce and enhance the social inclusion of people into active work life. This could mean learning new and appropriate skills within a current work field, re-education into new profession, or providing transversal skills that enables easier career shifts. Therefore, activities within this project include work with university and national policies, focusing on organization and work with life long learning (LLL) approaches.

LLL is directed to the increase of person's competence level overall; for example development of his/her general outlook, communication skills, language proficiency, ethical education, conducting negotiations, topical skills in any given area, and so on. LLL fills the gaps left off by formal education and provide a person additional competences, personal growth and increasing chances of employability. The employer is more interested in hiring a multi-profile employee. The combined result of formal, non-formal and informal education is intended to increase a person's life quality overall and also make him/her more productive in work life and thereby more demanded in the labor market. Our vision is to have a nationally and legally regulated LLL field, which implies recognition at country-level and measurability through allocating credits. The goal of this national report is to convey this idea to the employer to encourage them to hire employees with additional education. The employers should reinforce the culture of LLL on their initiatives and direct their employees to LLL.

This report has several addresses: the state, ministry, government, universities, academic institutions providing LLL, citizens, employers and society at large, as LLL is, first of all, a tool for a social development.

The European Union Tempus project underlying this report has produced a plan for implementation of a framework for LLL in the three partner countries (Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine). For achieving this, our activities have focused on:

1. Proposition of a legal and administrative framework within which the educational institutions can act.
2. Providing a set of guidelines for the educational institutions to actually implement LLL.
3. Enhancing social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development, competitiveness and employability of Armenian, Georgian and Ukrainian citizens through quality LLL policies and programs.

Existing initiatives in the partner countries are often locally based in a single institution. Even when the government has initialized nationwide programs, the implementation suffered from lack of experience, support and resources at the implementing institutions. Through the planning meetings and questionnaires we have developed a clear picture of the needs within the partner countries. Therefore, we have directly focused on elevating these differences and difficulties in order to achieve a cross-country LLL strategy. The basic facts of the project and project actors are as follows:

Project title:

A Network for Developing Lifelong Learning in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine (LeAGUe), 543839-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-SE-TEMPUS-SMHES (www.tempusleague.eu).

EU partners:

Linnaeus University – Sweden
Technical University of Denmark – Denmark
University of Coimbra – Portugal
Angel Kanchev University of Ruse – Bulgaria

Armenia partners:

Armenia National Agrarian University (ANAU)
Gavar State University (GSU)
Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University (RAU)
Vanadzor State University
Armenian Lifelong Learning League
Ministry of Education and Science

Georgia partners:

Ilia State University
Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University
The University of Georgia Adult Education Association of Georgia
Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

Ukraine partners:

Kharkiv National University of Radioelectronics
National Technical University of Ukraine
National Technical University of Ukraine Kyiv Polytechnic Institute (NTUU KPI)
Odessa National Polytechnic University
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

Chapter 1: Situation Analysis

The role of education has always been crucial for human development and social and economic progress of society. In the ever-changing and developing world the new challenges are directed to the person whose priority goal is to react to changing conditions of the external environment and to increase her/his competence. From this relation, receiving fundamental education only once cannot be regarded as a satisfactory basic condition.

Beyond this base, the concept of LLL is put forward serving as a mean for restructuring and reforming national education systems in order to better cope with educational needs beyond the basic education received at young ages. More technically, LLL is defined as learning outcomes acquired through formal, non-formal and informal education throughout the person's life enabling the person to improve her/his knowledge, skills, abilities and value system over the course of her/his life span.

The official claim that there is generally a sufficient policy and legal framework for LLL in Armenia seems to be well founded, as several key documents, both strategic concepts and laws have been ratified for the recent decade. Within the context of LLL, the educational system of Armenia is based upon two columns:

1. **Formal education** system,
2. **Additional and continuing education** being conducted in **non-formal** and **informal** formats.

Formal education is provided by education institutions and has a structure in the context of education goals and terms and implies conferring a diploma or qualification based on officially recognized results.

Non-formal education is provided by education institutions, organizations and services established to fill in the gaps of formal education and normally does not imply any officially recognized results.

Informal education is linked to the daily routine and everyday work. It is considered to be the result of daily activities connected with family or leisure. Unlike the formal and non-formal education, the informal education is not necessarily targeted and may even not be perceived by individuals as being an input to the development of their knowledge and skills.

Within the context of LLL, formal education is considered to be a necessary but not satisfactory condition for a person's harmonious development and competence in the labor market. Public and state organizations, as well as civil society institute (NGOs, social and political organizations and associations, international organizations, private and trade organizations, etc.) add to the results of formal education through certain academic programs (also meet the demands conditioned by some abilities) and/or fill in the system gaps. In Armenia, additional and continuing education is conducted in several formats:

Training programs

- Training programs are stipulated by laws, primarily funded by the state budget and aim at assisting the employee to take part in certification. This mainly refers to occupations available in the public service system.
- Certificates granted at the completion of these training programs enable the participant to take a certain position or fulfill some duties. This mainly refers to the cases when the condition of being certificated is defined legislatively.

Mandatory structured training programs are implemented by infrastructures provided by different ministries, offices, education institutions or authorized organizations of Armenia under the condition of mandatory participation of an associate or employee for at least once per 3 or 5 years.

Professional teaching

- Is conducted within social assistance programs and is primarily funded by the state budget. They are directed to the unemployed or those seeking for job, socially disadvantaged family members or persons with disabilities.
- Is initiated by employers within the scope of their needs and objectives.

Armenian higher education institutions and vocational training institutions, local offices of international organizations, NGOs and private teaching centers implement academic programs in this direction.

Extracurricular education (up to 18 years)

- Is conducted through the organization of learners' leisure for the development of their interests and targets their spiritual, aesthetic and physical development, military and patriotic education, acquisition of ecological and applied knowledge.
- Such programs are implemented by children's creativity and aesthetic centers, musical and art schools, clubs, young patriots, technicians, naturalists, tourism centers, sport schools, recreational camps and other organizations implementing extracurricular education.

Legislative framework

There are a number of laws, policies and strategies regulating this field or comprising provisions related to citizens' formal, non-formal and Lifelong Learning issues. The documents signed by Armenian and international institutions, make necessary references to additional and continuing education issues observing them in the context of adult education.

In May 19, 2005 the Minister of Education and Science signed the Bergen Communiqué of education ministries of Bologna member states; consequently Armenia officially joined Bologna process assuming a responsibility to accomplish the basic principles of Bologna process in accordance with separate activity directions and become a part of European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The continuing and additional education is one of the pillars of Bologna process aiming at meeting the educational demands of society, continuously increasing qualification improvement, as well as developing the ability of facing challenges. The Armenian government has always referred to the necessity and objectives of additional and continuing education through documents adopted in different years.

The “Armenia law about Education” adopted by the National Assembly in 1999 includes basic principles and approaches of education management, funding and methodological guidance. However, only the 26th article of the law is semantically linked to the additional education: 1. “Additional educational programs are implemented to meet the educational demands of society. Within each level of professional education the main objective of additional education is the continuous increase in the person's professional qualities. 2. Additional education is conducted in secondary, professional and additional education institutions, as well as through individual pedagogical activities the order of which is stipulated by RA Government”.

In 2004 the RA Government approved “The Strategy of RA Primary and Vocational Education”. The same year, the National Assembly adopted the RA law “About Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education” which regulated the activities of the higher and postgraduate education system in Armenia partly making references to continuing education, specialists’ qualification improvement and training. Some principles of additional education /Lifelong Learning/ in the law are presented as additional extracurricular education improving professional qualities based upon professional education, providing professional retraining and ongoing accomplishment. As stated in this law, the structural subdivisions of universities are entitled to conduct trainings and specialists’ qualification improvement through additional academic programs.

In 2005, the RA National Assembly adopted the law on “RA Prior Learning and Vocational Education”. Here the term “Adult Education” was first used from the legislative point. The law provides for conducting adult education in prior learning and vocational education institutions along with other academic programs. Based upon this law, the RA Government approved the “Adult Education Policy and Strategy” by the end of 2015. The “RA Non-formal Education Policy” approved by RA Government in 2006 defines and regulates the main legal and organizational provisions and directions of non-formal education. “The Policy of Lifelong Learning in Armenia» was approved by RA Government to serve as a basis for the initiatives /to make changes and amendments in legal acts and laws in force, as well as/or adopting new laws// essential to legislative regulation of RA additional and continuing education.

Other policy documents include the “Strategy and concept of adult education” (2005); “Concept of non-formal education in the Republic of Armenia” (2006); “State program of education development of the Republic of Armenia 2008-2015 (2007); “Concept of lifelong learning in the Republic of Armenia”(2009); “Concept on social partnership in the field of preliminary professional (craftsmanship) and middle professional education” (2009); “VET Reform Program and Action Plan for 2012-2016” (2012); and the “Sustainable development program” (2008). Some of the key laws include the “Law on higher and postgraduate professional education” (2004); “Law on preliminary and middle levels of professional education”, (2005); and Draft “Law on supplementary and continuous education in the Republic of Armenia in 2013-2017” (2013).

Nevertheless this extensive amount of legislation around LLL matters, these legal acts and strategic documents are not sufficient to develop and implement a policy regulating the additional and continuing education in Armenia. Overall, being a part of EAHEA system, Armenia can consider the following perspectives when formulating LLL Strategy on national level:

- EU Political Perspectives: harmonizing education and approaches towards developing education particularly in enhancing lifelong learning education in the educational institutions and in the community overall.
- EU Civil Society Perspectives: Education that integrates non-formal and informal learning, encourages the exchange of knowledge, aims to build citizen’s voice on education and training issues in the country. As a result proposes concrete solutions to promote life-long learning for all the citizens.
- LLL for Entrepreneurial Perspectives: A scientific support for entrepreneurial leaning from its very roots to current approaches and methods used. Consider developing entrepreneurship centers which include entrepreneurial research and new program development.

Chapter 2: Gap Analysis

In order to analyze potential improvements of additional and continuing education in Armenia, we focus on two types of potential improvements:

1. Issues resulted by discrepancies and gaps in the **legal field**,
2. Issues resulted by mechanisms and content of **organizing and implementing additional and continuing education**.

Potential improvements in the legal field

The legal field regulating this area needs to be reviewed. The developed regulations and approved decisions mostly refer to formal academic programs. It is necessary to develop and implement respective normative documents related to the additional and continuing education.

The lack of regulation on recognizing the learning outcomes of non-formal and informal education also remains as a serious problem for continuing and additional education.

Potential improvements in the organizing and implementing additional and continuing education

A major issue with LLL in Armenia is the lack of effective collaboration between the labor market and professional education system. The education institutions of professional education system are not aware of all the structured information on the labor market. Particularly, the information on possible and expected unemployment, vacancies and people's migration, which could be based on while organizing the additional and continuing education, is not available to them.

The logistic replenishment of system's education institutions is also a serious obstacle on the way of continuing and additional education. Logistic replenishment is first of all for those specialties and qualifications within which formal academic programs are implemented. However, the stakeholders' requirements might include other qualifications. In such cases, the education institutions are simply not capable of implementing additional education programs.

The academic programs applied in the professional education and training system are designed for a whole specialty or qualification. This explains why they are not applicable to provide additional education. To provide LLL services, education institutions design short-term course programs which essentially repeat some part of the formal specialty's complete program. Suchlike programs are designed only in case of necessity and do not match to the concept of LLL. Implementation of modular academic programs would gradually lead to an education directed to capacity building, which also can be favorable for organizing additional and continuing education.

The mechanisms of qualification improvement of academic staff of education institutions is not legislatively regulated and each institutions solves this issue in its own way – either in the given institution or through agreements with local or foreign universities. However, being self-regulatory and liberal, the field of continuing and additional education needs some systemization to effectively use the invested means and to provide for the purposefulness of processes.

In terms of legal perspective, only formal education including public (preschool, elementary, basic and secondary) and professional (prior learning, vocational, higher and postgraduate) academic programs, are conducted in a structured, systemized way. The other types of academic activities are at most regulated as sheer economic activities: they are not accredited or recorded, the results are not normally recognized by the state, and their development is spontaneous and totally dependent on market demands. Meanwhile, they are not sufficiently available to the general public in terms of not being expedient, recognized, funded and to list a few.

The above-mentioned results in that the citizens completing their formal education and being conferred respective qualification degree often face an exposure situation before the challenges stemming from rapidly changing demands of society and labor market since their early age. Hence, it is necessary to provide the individuals with wide learning opportunities from early age to senility. That said, taking into consideration that formal education is not capable (and normally does not aim at) of providing for the person's multifaceted development and meet all his educational demands, it should be combined with additional learning and enhance the opportunity of continuing education.

A person's development and progress must have a political support stemming from social and economic development perspectives, a strong strategic base and undergo legislative regulation maintaining the principles of liberalism, flexibility, availability and continuity. The RA Government has already adopted a new strategy of social policy according to which the main objective is to strengthen the professional knowledge and abilities of young people having social woes.

In sum, the main challenges Armenia faces in its effort to adopt an integrated and coherent lifelong learning strategy, are as follows:

- a) Decentralized educational system,
- b) Lack of non-formal education criteria,
- c) Lack of general requirements for assessing and evaluating beneficiaries' knowledge,
- d) Lack of system recording the results,

- e) Lack of a general, integrated sample of certificates to be granted at the course completion,
- f) Lack of recognizing the results of non-formal education,
- g) The historical delay due to moderate marginalization from international educational framework during the Soviet times which resulted in the insufficient development of lifelong learning culture in Armenia;
- h) Lack of systematic approach in defining LLL. No reciprocal links and references exist between the new umbrella policy document “Concept of lifelong learning in the Republic of Armenia” and the actual legal framework regulating different types and forms of education. Thus, concrete policy adoption and legal frameworks limit the process of introducing a life cycle approach to LLL education and training;
- i) Lack of efficient partnership between public, private institutions and civil society;
- j) Access to all levels of education by different social and age groups;
- k) Existing gap between the formal qualifications and the changing labor market. This approach inherited from Soviet era still exists in many educational institutions, which offer less practical knowledge increasingly demanded by labor market. However this problem also strongly depends on lack of cooperation and solid partnership between universities and private businesses and organizations.
- l) Modernization of all levels of education;
- m) High rates of migration;
- n) Limit to digital education in most regions of Armenia.

Chapter 3: Gap Filling

We recommend the following activities to be directed to settling the gaps existing in LLL system in Armenia:

- 1) To review and develop the package on legislative initiatives of RA laws and statutes regulating the LLL system,
- 2) To create cooperation mechanisms to provide for the social partnership principle in the process of LLL management,
- 3) To increase the level of LLL attractiveness and public’s awareness of new learning opportunities,
- 4) To promote activities for professional orientation and consulting in line with strategic developments and labor market demands,
- 5) To enhance equal availability of education for all society members to promote social equality, employment problems and raise in employment rates,
- 6) To develop and implement pilot courses for capacity building of socially vulnerable groups and incompetent persons to increase the opportunities of their participation.

- 7) To create an open learning environment through applying traditional and non-traditional ways and modes,
- 8) To improve the education quality and efficiency through considering the ever-changing demands of society and changes of academic modules,
- 9) To elaborate short-term academic programs and a methodical base for LLL,
- 10) To ameliorate the skills of professors, specialists and experts conducting LLL courses and those of persons conducting monitoring and auditing,
- 11) To take into consideration the sectorial needs of human resource development and improvement and provide an equivalent proposal,
- 12) To conduct an evaluation of LLL demands, study programs and implementation process aimed at matching the demands, methodological provision and learning outcomes,
- 13) To officially recognize the results of non-formal and formal education,
- 14) To implement an accountability system for LLL (particularly, monitoring and collection of statistic data),
- 15) To promote the implementation, application and overall availability of information technologies in the process of conducting courses,
- 16) To study the labor market demands and available vacancies; to analyze the shift in the labor force and unemployment statistics,
- 17) To increase the investments in the human resource development.
- 18) Enshrining norms about additional education in the «RA Law about higher and postgraduate education»,
- 19) Possibly complete definition of continuing education legislation,
- 20) Legislative definition of requirements introduced to organizations and institutions implementing continuing education programs, adopting a decision by the Armenia government based on law,
- 21) Adopting administrative acts by the Ministry of Education and Science defining the minimal requirements set for the non-formal education, credits, amount of academic hours, curriculum and principles of learners' knowledge assessment and evaluation,
- 22) Defining credits in accordance with academic workload and hours, recording the credits gained through non-formal education in the credit accumulation system,
- 23) Defining an integrated sample of certificate to be granted at the completion of an LLL course for institutions providing non-formal educational services,
- 24) Establish stronger cooperation with the leading international industry and technological centres, which will lead to the accomplishment of the national goals in the educational sector.

Chapter 4: Forecast

Driven by the present situation in the LLL field in Armenia and the above conducted analysis, as well as based on the principle of retrospective analyses, we are issuing the following prospective forecast to envisage solutions for the gaps in Armenian LLL system:

- 1) Complete definition of LLL in the “Law about Higher and Postgraduate Education”,
- 2) Forming a registry of LLL courses and institutions implementing LLL courses in the territory of RA, as well as creating a web domain,
- 3) Implementing LLL courses based on module-credit principle,
- 4) Defining an integrated sample of a certificate comprising data about the type of LLL course, workload and credits,
- 5) Transferring the credits from non-formal education to formal education field which will result in the recognition of non-formal education results in formal education system,
- 6) Recognition of LLL program results in the labor market by employers,
- 7) Given that the non-formal education system is more flexible, a clear link should be established between LLL program providers and labor market taking into consideration the educational needs and labor market demands and consequently developing LLL programs based on those demands,
- 8) Providing continuous trainings,
- 9) Rating, status review and increase in salaries of specialists who have passed an LLL course, which will serve as a material motivation to register for LLL courses.

Vision for the adopted and implemented LLL norms and policies on national level are as follows:

- 10) LLL strategy is based on different civil and entrepreneurial perspectives, which lead to uniting actors from all sectors and levels of education and training, building citizen’s voice and own perception of education and professional training,
- 11) Concrete methods, mechanisms and strategy of stronger partnerships between public authorities, HEIs, students, employers and employees established by Ministry of education and adopted by universities,
- 12) Institutional and ongoing cooperation with international stakeholders who successfully implement LLL policy and strategy within their countries,
- 13) Events and knowledge exchange seminars that enhance the LLL importance and lead to its promotion worldwide.

From LLL to LLLU: Issues and goals

- 14) University activities in LLLU sphere are aimed at the development of both subject-specific and general competences, which are specific to the University level educational programs,
- 15) The entire system is built on the notion of lifelong and lifewide educational basis, University activities in LLLU sphere are aimed at the development of both subject-specific and general competences, which are specific to the University level educational programs,
- 16) The entire system is built on the notion of lifelong and lifewide educational basis,
- 17) University is an open, supportive, flexible network for students, which provides access, process and exit opportunities for the offered educational programs in different sectors and schedules.

From LLL to LLLU: Strategizing techniques

Inside the University

- 18) Design, launch and develop all basic components of LLLU,
- 19) Complete the infrastructural formation of all academic departments and other units,
- 20) Create action plans for the university body responsible for LLLU organization,
- 21) Develop financial policies directed at LLLU development and make thorough market research,
- 22) Develop QA mechanisms for LLLU-offered courses and educational programs.

Outside the University

- 23) Organize courses (including online delivery) in cooperation with LLL Universities in Armenia, the region and foreign University, forming an LLLU Consortia,
- 24) Help improve national policies and legislation in the field of LLL,
- 25) Create a network of Universities offering LLL course in Armenia and the region.

List of References and Sources

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