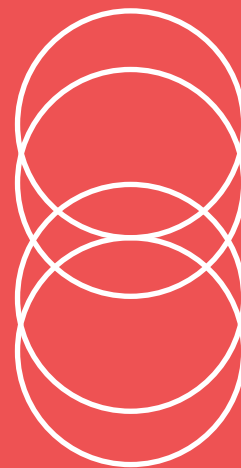




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Belarusian education on the way of change

Summary



COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Vilnius 2021



Reforming the education sector is a long and complex process that cannot be carried out in isolation from the transformation of other areas of the state socio-economic development. The need to solve the problems of the Republic of Belarus education system and its convergence with the European standards requires studying the reforms having been carried out in the EU countries aimed both at harmonizing legislation in education field on the basis of normative legal acts designed at the EU level, and at overcoming internal difficulties. The proposed study was organized with the aim of analyzing the conditions for harmonizing national efforts in the field of education with the main directions of improving educational policy in the European Union based on examining the repertoire of political decisions and analyzing their consequences.

The study consists of the Introduction, four Sections, the Conclusion and Annexes.

The first section «Methodology for selecting cases for the analysis» explains the principles of selecting cases, assesses the socio-demographic and economic features of Central and Eastern European countries.



∑ The analysis of the educational profile was carried out on the basis of the UN Education Index indicators that reflect the level of literacy of the adult population (two-thirds of the value) and the combined indicator of the cumulative share of students (one-third of the value), as well as the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) that assesses the functional literacy of schoolchildren in different countries and their ability to apply the knowledge in practice.

∑ The cases selection is based on multiple-case design using maximum variation strategies and deterministic selection (based on a given criterion).

∑ As a result of the comparison and assessment of the structural conditions for the education systems development (including cultural and historical, political, socio-demographic, economic and educational profiles), as well as the formal assessment results of the Central and Eastern European countries education systems development, the following cases have been selected: Lithuania, Slovenia and Hungary.

The second section «General overview of the educational systems» describes general documents of the European Union related to the field of education, national laws and regulations adopted in the analyzed countries, the specific features of the education systems structure and levels.

The documents analysis made it possible

to record that as the main goals in all the three countries are indicated:

∑ provision of quality education at all levels;

∑ development of skills for life-long learning and continuous personal and professional development;

∑ civic education and upbringing: “developing the ability to live in a democratic society” (Slovenia); “to upbringing and educate responsible citizens to be able to lead a moral and independent life and to combine private interests with the interests of society” (Hungary); “to provide opportunities for mastering the foundations of civil and political culture” (Lithuania);

∑ raising awareness of citizenship and national identity and increasing knowledge of the countries’ history and culture; inclusion in the European integration processes.

The national context defines specific objectives.

In Lithuania: value-based, to ensure the opportunity to act independently, to help develop skills important in modern life; to expand the potential of society to ensure sustainable development of the country, competitiveness, and national security.

In Hungary: to contribute to the harmonious spiritual, physical and intellectual development of children and young people, taking into account their skills,



knowledge, qualification, education and age characteristics; to prevent social isolation; to support the promotion of talents through educational mechanisms.

In Slovenia: ensuring optimal personal development, fostering mutual tolerance; developing language skills and raising awareness of the Slovenian language; providing quality education; raising awareness of human integrity; providing opportunities for choice at all the levels of education.

National context also largely determines the education levels organization, the models of transition from secondary to vocational education and from vocational to higher education.

The assessment of the education systems organization in the selected countries demonstrates a number of common features that include, among others, the autonomy of higher education institutions and the active development of non-formal adult education, the development of its systems' validation and recognition upon admission to higher education institutions or employment.

In the educational practice of Lithuania, Slovenia and Hungary, 4 spheres of university autonomy are traditionally analyzed: organizational, financial, staff and academic. The given principles find their normative consolidation in the relevant acts of the examined countries: the norms of the Higher Education Law in Slovenia, Republic of Lithuania law on higher education directly enshrine the principle and the scale of



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the university autonomy. In the educational legislation of Hungary this principle is not enshrined, however, it is implemented to certain degree in educational practices under fairly rigid centralized management functions. The legislation of Lithuania and Slovenia regulates the ability to independently choose, appoint and dismiss the head of a university, to determine the term of their office, but while Lithuanian universities have the right to independently determine the organizational structures, this is clearly regulated by law in Slovenia.



In all the studied states, the regulation on the obligatory presence of external actors in the governing bodies of universities is legally enshrined; whereas Lithuanian universities are free to choose external members, the appointment is fully controlled by the authorities in Hungary. Lithuanian universities can create legal entities of any type, Slovenian - only non-profit ones. The Hungarian legislation provides for a procedure for coordination with an external body when appointing some university employees; Lithuanian and Slovenian universities independently carry out the selection and promotion of personnel. However, in all the studied countries, there are legislative restrictions related to the determination of the remuneration amount, dismissal of teaching and other personnel (national labour and/or civil service legislation (in Slovenia) is applied).

In the field of adult education, an important step is the design and implementation of systems of confirmation (validation) of education received in non-formal education institutions.

However, none of the three studied countries has yet designed a system for non-formal adult education validation at national level. In Lithuania and Slovenia, the assessment procedure is in line with the EU Council Recommendation, while in Slovenia it encompasses all the education levels - from basic to higher education, in Lithuania - VET and higher education. In Hungary, the non-formal education validation system, albeit

enshrined in the legislation as a priority, requires further elaboration and regulation in terms of its unification and compliance with the EU Council Recommendation.

In Lithuania, persons who have completed non-formal education programs, do not receive an official diploma, however, the acquired competences can be recognized as part of completed formal education for adults, or as a completed curriculum. Moreover, the acquired competences can be recognized as the competences necessary to perform a specific job or function in accordance with the rules established by the legislation. The acquired competences can also be recognized and validated as a qualification corresponding to a specific level of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework.

Slovenia does not have a single body responsible for non-formal education validation. At the same time, the country has designed a system for recognizing non-formal education results in the course of obtaining formal education. Thus, the knowledge obtained in the course of socially significant education (regardless of the method of obtaining) can be confirmed by passing exams at the State Examination Center. If the acquired knowledge that corresponds to educational programs under which socially significant education or part of it has been acquired, is proven, the competent expert council decides on the recognition of the given adult education.



The third section examines one of the priority reform areas – civic education and training: the concept of civic education and civic competences; normative and legal acts regulating civic education in the European Union in general and in the studied countries - in particular; civic education in the curricula; special training for teachers; organizational measures and evaluation of results.

The experience of the studied countries has demonstrated that the main steps in the field of organizing civic education are mainly of practical orientation:

- ⌘ design and implementation of the strategy in the field of civic education and training, as well as an action plan for its implementation;
- ⌘ developing practical skills in the field of democratic citizenship. A possible option may be the refusal to conduct formal specialized lessons on this topic and, instead, investing money in activities having a more practical focus (for example, related to the development of digital literacy and etiquette, personal finance planning, entrepreneurship);
- ⌘ inclusion of non-formal civic education in curricula, which may be a prerequisite for obtaining a diploma of education. A volunteering program designed in Hungary may serve as an example;
- ⌘ cooperation with NGOs in terms of design and implementation of NGOs and schools

joint projects, involving representatives of NGOs and various initiatives in education in a spirit of citizenship and human rights, as well as organizing practical events; providing targeted support from NGOs in order to involve the least active categories of students in civic participation;

- ⌘ encouraging self-governance (e.g. children's parliament, student participation in school management bodies) and creating an enabling environment for it. Ensuring that such activities are real and not only formal;
- ⌘ preparing guidelines for democratizing schools, including recommendations on democratic governance, student and other social partners' engagement, and school councils organization;
- ⌘ special training for teachers, which can be carried out both when obtaining relevant education, and hiring a teacher as a mentor.

The fourth section 'Reforming the education system' highlights that the reforming of education and training in Lithuania, Slovenia and Hungary is carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the OECD, as well as with the provisions of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, which primarily aims at reducing the number of students leaving educational institutions without obtaining a qualification, as well as at increasing the share of people having obtained a higher education.



The reforms were carried out mainly in the following areas:

- ⌘ improvement of the school education quality,
- ⌘ assessment,
- ⌘ management and financing.

The experience of the studied countries demonstrates that the improvement of school education is determined, first of all, by the improvement of the quality of training, professional development of teachers and management personnel of educational institutions, as well as by enhancing the prestige of educators. Thus, for teachers in Lithuania and Hungary, changes in the school education system have been associated with the implementation of measures for enhancing their prestige through the provision of scholarships, changes in the training system in this area, and increasing the level of remuneration for work. In addition, in Slovenia and Lithuania, emphasis was put on specialized training for management personnel.

Assessment is one of the basic components of educational policy. The focus of European policy in the refraction of the national strategies of Lithuania, Hungary and Slovenia includes the rules for collecting, storing and analyzing information, the tools for assessing student achievements and the quality of educational institutions' work at

different levels of the system.

Reforming the education management is mainly associated with the adoption of strategies aimed at achieving progress at different levels of education systems, with the restructuring of management bodies and institutions and with the development of the adult education system, considering the revision of education financing systems. At the same time, reforming in the field of financing was not focused on the education system as a whole, but on its individual levels. Thus, in Lithuania, serious changes took place in the field of the school financing system, which was associated with the need to solve the problems of the “pupil’s basket” system, in which funding is distributed depending on the number of enrolled students. The Hungarian Law on National Higher Education (2011) changed its funding system by passing from direct funding from the state budget to a two-tier model of covering the basic costs of education provision and allocating special funding related to projects or investments in every higher education institution.

In annexes, the document contains:

- ⌘ Translation of the European Commission Recommendations on Education Reform in Hungary, Slovenia and Lithuania
- ⌘ Translation of extracts from the Study field descriptors in the sphere of education and training of the Republic of Lithuania



- Σ Synopsis of the most important legislative and regulatory acts of Hungary, Lithuania and Slovenia
- Σ Thesaurus of the basic concepts