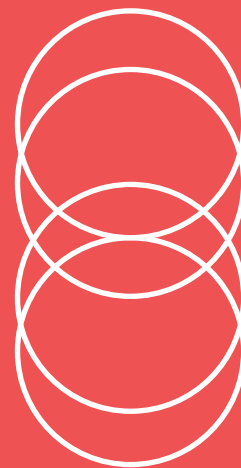




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# Belarusian education on the way of change

Summary



## DEVELOPING A LIFE LEARNING STRATEGY: CHECK LIST

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Lifelong learning (LLL) <sup>is</sup> ~~as~~ learning based on the integration of learning and life both vertically, throughout a person's life from birth to death, and horizontally, in various contexts and life situations. It is also horizontal in the sense that it occurs in all learning formats - formal, non-formal and informal. The lifelong learning perspective requires the revision of the entire spectrum of learning – from early childhood education, through primary and secondary school and higher education to adult education. A lifelong learning policy is a system of measures that encompasses improving access to early childhood education, increasing the motivation of young people to learn and their ability to learn on their own, and removing barriers to adult learning. This is a new general educational programs framework, not a separate project or a partial reform.



In the Republic of Belarus, the concept of lifelong learning has been adopted at the political level, but at the level of practical policies design and implementation, there is still no systematic response: largely isolated measures are being taken within individual sectors. Meanwhile, the political planning of lifelong learning begins with the question: **what structural and institutional changes in the entire education system need to be taken if a much higher proportion of the country's population should be able to continue their studies, as well as have the motivation and skills to continue active learning throughout the entire life?**

Documents of the OECD, UNESCO, EU and partly of the World Bank as of today offer a kaleidoscope of responses to these questions, which makes difficult to assess the relevance of recommendations and solutions for the national policy design. But despite the differences in emphasis, the documents of these organizations interpret **lifelong learning (LLL) as learning based on the integration of learning and life both vertically, throughout a person's life from birth to death, and horizontally, in various contexts and life situations. It is also horizontal in the sense that it occurs in all learning formats - formal, non-formal and informal.** This interpretation is broader than the content of the continuous education and recurrent training concepts that were based on the formal education system, within which it was proposed to improve qualifications/ educational level.

**The lifelong learning perspective requires the revision of the entire spectrum of learning – from early childhood education, through primary and secondary school and higher education to adult education.**



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The document consists of the Introduction, two Sections, the Conclusion and the Annex.

The first section **“Lifelong learning as a general policy framework”** reveals the essence of a systems approach to the development of LLL, which, first of all, implies distinct fixation of specific goals, and offers a brief overview of the main policy measures



for the implementation of this systems approach.

The objectives of the LLL policy are defined within a wide range of ideological contexts, from social democratic emphasis on social reforms to neoliberal concepts of economic growth. Accordingly, the priorities in the field of lifelong learning also differ: economic growth, social justice, self-realization.

A number of the policy features depends on the choice of the objectives:

- ⌘ institutional (management: the role of private and public players, especially in relation to funding, the degree of decentralization; responsibility for risks associated with qualifications and competences: individual, collective choice, or the state, etc.);
- ⌘ organizational (the nature of young people's skills: vocational versus general; learning: school-based, dual system or in the workplace; the degree of continuity between primary and additional education, etc.);
- ⌘ social (schemes that compensate for initial inequality, the possibility of obtaining higher education and advanced training, subsidized or not subsidized by the state, etc.).

Combinations of the listed features determine different modes of the LLL policy: based on “decommodification”: “academic” (meritocracy), “corporatist” (qualification),

“universal” (solidarity); market-oriented: “pure market competition” regime (utility) and “organized market” regime (price/quality ratio).

Under any regimes and focus priorities, LLL implies an analysis of all stages and formats where learning can take place; how learning at each stage is grounded on what happened in the previous stages; factors contributing to a successful transition between stages.

The systematic nature of the LLL policy implies, therefore,

- ⌘ coordinating all learning providers in the process of the high-quality inclusive learning development;
- ⌘ improvement of curricula, pedagogical practice and organization of learning in terms of motivation for further learning;
- ⌘ implementation of recognition, verification and accreditation procedures to increase the visibility and transferability of the skills gained in various programs;
- ⌘ partnership between the stakeholders for creating synergy and maximizing learning opportunities.

The second section, “**Key Policy Directions**”, provides a structured presentation of the core aspects that need to be considered when designing a national LLL development strategy.



Analytical and review papers, produced by experts from UNESCO and OECD, fix **the five imperatives of the LLL policy**:

- ⌘ *Relevance and recognition*: all learning, not just formal education, needs to be recognized, made more visible and linked to the appropriate incentives to motivate people to advance in learning;
- ⌘ *Emphasis on motivation*: lifelong learning requires a broader concept of basic skills that emphasizes the motivation to learn and the ability to learn independently;
- ⌘ *Equal access issues* need to be assessed throughout the life cycle and for all types and conditions of learning;
- ⌘ *Resources mobilization*: as with access and equality, the resources available for lifelong learning need to be assessed in the context of both formal and non-formal learning;
- ⌘ *Engagement and coordination of actions of all the stakeholders*: education ministries cannot single-handedly implement LLL strategies throughout life, close cooperation of a wide range of parties is required.

The system for ensuring **the learning and qualifications relevance/recognition**, regardless of where and at what stage of life the learning has taken place, is based on:

- ⌘ availability of mechanisms for the outcomes' recognition, regardless of the format of learning;
- ⌘ establishing the links between formats and types of learning at different stages through the formation of clear and transparent transition opportunities;
- ⌘ creating information resources that provide all learners with the information and guidance they need to take full advantage of the broader learning opportunities.

In terms of **learning outcomes recognition**, there is need to:

- ⌘ improve on-the-job learning (to simplify the accreditation processes for teaching and learning programs, to develop updated certification, primarily for informally acquired skills);
- ⌘ provide "visibility" for skills, knowledge and competences acquired in the course of non-formal and informal learning.

**Links between the levels and the forms of education** (convergence of upper secondary and vocational education; forging linkages from senior secondary vocational education to higher education and linkages between non-university and higher education) create synergies between sectors that ensure «transfer» of people between forms of



education and training at different stages.

To provide opportunities for flexible educational paths, it is necessary to create **effective systems of education and information about employment, as well as appropriate guidelines for lifelong learners.**

The LLL policy is based on **the motivation development for further education.** The most important incentive for the formation of motivation to study at any age is **the development of the LLL mindset**, interpreted not only as the ability to learn, but also as the conviction of governments and social partners in the importance of the need to renew and develop adult skills.

**Equality and inclusion issues** need to be considered at all stages of lifelong learning, whether in preschool and early childhood education, schooling, tertiary education or adult education. When designing the LLL policy, it is of particular importance to ensure the conditions for engagement of vulnerable social groups in learning, to eliminate inequalities and expand access to learning. Bridging the supply gap in preschool education and education for low-income families, and in rural areas is an important component of ensuring equality of access.

From a **funding** point of view, public authorities that design the LLL policy should take into account three sets of issues:

⌘ Are the resources adequate for maintaining LLL and are they optimally allocated for

different types and formats of learning at all stages of life cycle?

⌘ How efficiently are the resources used?

⌘ If more resources are needed, how can these be mobilized?

As the general framework, the LLL covers various areas:

⌘ policy in the field of education – acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences;

⌘ economic policy – vocational skills and employment provision, implementation of innovations, competitiveness and economic growth;

⌘ social policy – maintaining social cohesion and well-being

*Therefore, the success of the LLL strategy depends on close coordination between the political sectors and on collaboration of diverse interest groups (stakeholders).*

The analysis of the implementation experience the LLL policy in European countries allows for identifying a number of challenges that should be paid attention to when designing national policies:



prioritization of formal and, accordingly, marginalization of non-formal, informal learning, adult education; lack of awareness, access and participation of local communities; cautious attitude towards innovation and choice towards old proven methods; need to change the meaningful focus of training; excessive attention to quantitative indicators; difficulty of assessing the impact of demographic trends; engagement of population groups and individuals in disadvantaged conditions; overcoming personal problems/barriers of participants in the learning process; need for an effective response to technological change and robotization.

Considering the above conceptual provisions and challenges is a necessary condition for translating declarations on the lifelong learning development into the specific political program.

The Annex “Policy of Lifelong Learning in the European Union” provides a brief description of the main directions of the European Commission’s policy and national policies, analyzes the main barriers to the LLL implementation.