

## ADULTS AND OLD PEOPLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: CASE OF LITHUANIA

### ABSTRACT

The article discusses the adult and old people learning opportunities for Lithuania. Adult education is one of the most important factors that determine both the development of the society and the human achievements in modern society. Education is a social practice which includes education and cultural communication in the broadest sense, as well as actions of human reproduction at large. Access to adult education should ensure the justice in the society, although scientists argue that education system is usually powerless to correct other social systems created by inequality and in justice. Accessible and quality adult education system ensures better life, social mobility, and provides status. Accessibility of education (particularly adult's) is unconsciously problem, unequally understandable phenomenon, rarely becoming the object of special investigation. This can be logical: usage of this concept gained a wider scope only in last years, when essential European political educational documents appeared, first of all, Memorandum of life-long learning. In long-life learning ensuring strategy, the analysis of present state is provided. A potential of informal adults education suppliers when integrating groups of social exclusion, consolidating local communities by raising political and civil literacy of society, what is directly related to common welfare of society, are not fully used. Seeking to increase the integration of socially vulnerable society groups, juridical base is constantly improved in recent years. The law of disabled people social integration and the law of social companies are enacted, interinstitutional programs, reflecting the needs of different social separation groups, making assumptions to develop the initiatives directed to education of social separation groups are implemented.

**KEYWORDS:** *Adults and old people's education; education policy, Access to adult education, University of the Third Age*

## INTRODUCTION

Access to adult education is one of the top priorities at present in Lithuania, as LR Law on Education (2011), secondary legislation, the new Education Strategy (2013–2022), etc., highlight. Adult education is recognized as probably the most important factor in modern society, determining individual's income and position in the society. Access to adult education should ensure the justice in the society, although scientists argue that education system is usually powerless to correct other social systems created by inequality and in justice. Successful participation of all social groups in the process of education is the essential tool to palliate social inequality, to reduce poverty and social marginalization. Accessible and quality adult education system ensures better life, social mobility, and provides status.

The modern world gives weight to education, as well. Education has to become the sole and essential instrument to help to rise from any social class to a higher stratum. Therefore, adult education becomes compulsory to avoid social groups in a modern society that may become not integrated and separated from the society.

Adult education is one of the most important factors that determine both the development of the society and the human achievements in modern society. Education is a social practice which includes education and cultural communication in the broadest sense, as well as actions of human reproduction at large. These two components are not replaceable; rather, they complement one another. Therefore, in education, one of the most important social institutions, various social fields and activity forces (production, politics, etc.), their values interact with each other, struggling to prevail. Generally, even the society's level of development is measured by the achievements in education. Mostly, public growth is closely linked with the quality of adult education, and the individual's future depends on the opportunity of participation in education system, on the accessibility of performance and education. Adult education accessibility issue becomes particularly important and problematic in the context of the transformation of society. Society transformation in Lithuania is quite specific, and has also been greatly influenced by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of Lithuanian independence. Thereafter, the post-Soviet reality was faced, and its specificity, attributed to

the former socialist world, appeared. According to Z. Norkus (2008), post-Communist capitalism has not been created on the ruins of socialism, rather out of the ruins of socialism. Radical changes took place in people's relations, the transition to the free market and democracy was made. Education system and education requirements have been changing during the transformation of the society; the need to reform education that meets the needs of the period, political ideology has emerged.

**Exploration of the topic.** Lithuanian scientists (Trakšelys, 2014; 2011 (a); Šabajavaitė, 1999; Dobryninas, 2000; Douglas, 2003; Gečienė, 2005; Rinkevičius, 2007; Donskis, 2006; Rapoportas, 2007; Bulajava, Duoblienė, 2009; the accessibility to the adult education. Lithuanian scientists: Barzienė R. (2005), Bučaitė V Norkus, 2008 and others) studying the transformation of post-Soviet societies (on political, economic aspects), indirectly discussed the changes taking place in education system, including. (2003), Gruževskis B. (2002), Taljūnaitė M. (2004), Guogis A. (2004), Mikulionienė S. (2005), Lazutka R. and others (2008), et al, discussed on the scientific level modern Lithuanian society social marginalization and the adult education accessibility problem, which has become relevant due to economic, cultural, political changes.

**The purpose of Article** – theoretically analyze adult and old people learning opportunities

**Article methods** – analysis of scientific literature.

## **POLITICAL ASPECTS OF ADULTS' EDUCATION AND REDUCTION OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

All citizens must gain and constantly renew the knowledge and improve competences through life-long learning. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider special needs of people in risk to experience social exception. These important aspects are constantly emphasized in different documents of the European Union, made for evaluation of role of education while improving economical state of the European Union (European Council and Commission, 2005).

In the confirmed by the European Board of Lisbon strategy (2000), strategically aims of the European Union are anticipated seeking to increase the occupation in the based on knowledge economy, consolidate economical

reforms and social cohesion in order to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world in one decade growing on the basis of knowledge, economical development in which would adjusted with growth, social cohesion, respect to environment and general occupation (Martinkienė and others 2009).

Considering hardly implemented aims of Lisbon strategy, European Commission announced the renewed in 2005 Lisbon strategy. Main tasks of the latter seeking for economical growth and establishment of work places are the following: to make Europe an attractive place for investment and work; to use knowledge and innovations as a mover of economical growth; change politics in a way business could establish more and better work places.

In integrated guidelines of the European Union, member countries are invited to develop and improve investments to human capital and apply the systems of education and professional preparation to the requirements set for the competence of new human resources. In such circumstances, European Board recommends to continue the implementation of work program 'Education and training 2010' by implementing to the end the newest integrated programs of the European Union economy growth and work places establishment. Seeking to establish more and better work places, it is intended to increase the possibility of employment and modernization of social security systems in a strategy, improve the ability of employees and companies to adapt as well as to increase the flexibility of job markets, make more investments in human resources: improve the quality of education and teaching as well as to stimulate constant learning. Thus, a task of human resources development is acknowledged an important factor of the European Union development (Martinkienė and others, 2009).

Social and education politics in the level of the European Union are the least regulated, thus, a role of national education and teaching politics becomes very significant. In large part, the planned development of the renewed European Union defined in the updated Lisbon strategy (2005) will depend on renewal of national education and teaching strategies, stimulation of science and innovations, investments in the development of human resources as well as national and local level of education management culture. The intended in

the updated Lisbon strategy objectives should be directly integrated when forming national education politics, laws and strategies of main education and study fields development when planning investments in human resources and assessing the effectiveness of these investments. However, according to G. Martinkienė and J. Adomkus (2009), it has to be acknowledged that the renewed strategy of the European Union is less oriented to social cohesion and stimulation of investment in human resources is evaluated with much critics, because it is not trusted in the ability of government as monopoly education and training services provider to do it flexibly and effectively.

The following 2 main reasons, why the European Union has necessarily implement long-life learning exist:

- 1) Europe goes towards knowledge-based society and economy. More than any time else, accessibility of the newest information and knowledge, motivation and skills to use these resources in the name of own and all society becomes a factor, increasing European competence, working efficiency and applicability of people;
- 2) Nowadays Europeans live in complex social and political world. They are expected active public activity. They must learn living in constantly changing conditions. Education in a wide meaning is the most important thing when learning and understanding, how to accept these challenges (Memorandum of long-life learning, 2001).

According to G. Martinkienė and J. Adomkus (2009), both these reasons of social and economical changes are interrelated. They indicate two equally significant long-life learning aims: stimulate active public participation and increase a possibility to employ. Active public participation reveals, if it appears in all fields of public and economic life of people, how they use occurring opportunities and avoid dangers and how much they feel members of society, etc. A possibility to work, i.e. ability to save a working place, is not only main indicator of active public participation, but also a critical condition seeking for occupation while consolidating competitiveness of Europe and welfare in 'new economy'. According to G. Martinkienė and J. Adomkus (2009), a possibility to work and active public participation depend on appropriate newest knowledge and skills of a person, necessary when participating in economical and public life.

In a communique of commission, 2001 'Make reality long-life learning in Europe' and in Board regulation, 2002 regarding long-life learning, the importance of long-life learning is emphasized not only from the aspect of competitiveness and ability to employ, but also from the aspect of social integration, active public participation and personal development. In a communique of commission 'Adults learning: it is never late to learn' (2006) it is defined that adults learning, when important knowledge and skills are obtained, basically improve the employment possibilities and mobility in modern job market and social integration. Communique also reflects an attitude regarding the necessity of reforms implementation in order to make education and teaching systems more effective and correct.

The basis of modern adult's education system is already established in Lithuania and law acts, developing a mechanism of governmental acknowledgement of the obtained in informal adults education system knowledge and skills and defining the order of information about the provided for adults programs of informal education, are prepared. Development of such mechanism is very actual task not only for Lithuanian, but also of the countries of the European Union adult's education systems (Normantas, 2000). On the other hand, an important stimulus towards long-life learning politics became a consideration of European Union Long-life learning memorandum (2001) in Lithuania. This made a new impulse to think over all education and study system, to think, which problems are faced when stimulating long-life learning, what should be done in order every habitant of Lithuania would gain a qualitative basic education that what is thought in different teaching institutions, would help a person to form long-life learning skills in informal courses and develop common abilities, which are necessary for successful work, learning, professional preparation and life (Martinkienė and others, 2009). Besides, by Long-life learning ensuring strategy of Lithuania (2004) and its implementation actions plan (2004), it is intended to seek to involve as many people as possible in job market and invest more effectively in the development of human resources and stimulate long-life learning. The means, facilitating to provide individuals skills, necessary for modern work power in a knowledge-based society and making them conditions to be promoted and reduce nonconformity of skills as well as obstacles in job market, are also anticipated in documents.

According to T. Tamošiūnas and G. Linkaitytė (2004), the purpose of up-to-date education can be defined in 3 levels: conceptual; legislative; strategic.

Conceptual level defines the purpose of adult's education in respect of a person and country: to enable a person to develop own possibilities in the selected field of professional activity; enable a an adult person to change his activity field, profession due to circumstances of society or individual incentives; make conditions for a personality of responsible realization for the welfare of a country as well as help to develop democratic society. Legitimate role defines legitimated field of adult's education: to make conditions to gain necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills for qualification improvement; help to satisfy the needs of adult's self-education, develop cultural interests as well as develop creative efficiency. Strategic level anticipates methods, by which it is seeker to implement the system of adult's education: to develop a continuing, long-life learning ensuring and accessible, socially correct education system; optimize all accessible sources (state, companies, municipalities, communities, NVO and individuals), seeking to develop an integral and rentable long-life learning system, suggesting the diversity of possibilities for professional, social and personal development of all employable age individuals and youth preparation for professional life, corresponding European standards (Tamošiūnas and others, 2004).

The most important strategic provision of National announcement in 2008–2010 is to aim further to make conditions of full-rate life of every habitant of the country in the field of social security and social coverage. It is intended to implement the politics of active social involvement attempting that occupation and social politics would supplement each other. When implementing occupation politics, it is tried to combine the flexibility of job market with occupation guarantees. Besides, active means of job market politics, helping the residents to apply to the challenges of job market and enabling to gain the valuated in job market skills, are further implemented. Social security system (services, payments) help to those, who can not work or temporarily do not have a job, to ensure dignified life and protection against exclusion and poverty. Social politics is implemented in a way to help

economically inactive, but able to work persons (eg., experiencing social exclusion or belonging to social risk groups) to integrate better in society and start participating actively in job market. It is intended to improve further the position of different habitants groups in job market. It is seeker to implement the supply of work power increasing means: provide different services, intended to help searching for job persons to choose a suitable profession and find a job which satisfies his needs. Thus, also later much attention is paid to professional teaching and informal education of unemployed people and employees at risk of unemployment. It is intended to develop a system of professional rehabilitation of disabled people. While stimulating the occupation of residents and inactive involvement of residents in job market, it is necessary to increase further the demand of work power, especially in economically underdeveloped regions. Thus, it is very important to improve business environment and stimulate companies, establishing new work places (employing unemployed persons). Considering this, social companies are sponsored. Such support is especially actual for disabled people and other target groups employed in them (for long time unemployed people, unemployed pre-retire age persons, etc.). A very important aspect while seeking to balance work demand and supply is arrangement of job market flexibility and occupation guaranties.

By tasks of education and teaching field stated in National announcement of 2006–2008 first of all was seeker to improve the quality of services and accessibility in every of education levels: while improving professional preparation regulating juridical base, a law of new edition of Professional teaching was enacted. Besides, in the field of professional preparation, possibilities of practical teaching were increased and modernized while establishing sector centres of practical teaching. Seeking to establish and implement in the scope of all Lithuania united system of professional informing, consulting and orienting, projects 'Establishing and development of open informing, consulting and orienting system (AIKOS)' and 'Establishing and implementation of orienting system' (POS) were implemented.

In structural funds usage strategy of the European Union of 2007–2013 it is intended to strengthen highly the application of some previous means and to start several new initiatives in the field of increase of economical



activeness and occupation of residents in the period of 2008–2010. More funds are dedicated for this purpose. It is intended to use purposeful means when stimulating certain groups of social risk or experiencing an exclusion groups to integrate in society and job market. When stimulating sexual equality, actions. Helping women to involve (return) to job market, supporting women's entrepreneurship, stimulating the principles of equal salary for equal job, etc., will be implemented. When implementing an active job market politics, it is necessary to improve education and teaching systems at the same time and stimulate long-life learning.

In long-life learning ensuring strategy (2004), the analysis of present state is provided. A potential of informal adults education suppliers when integrating groups of social exclusion, consolidating local communities by raising political and civil literacy of society, what is directly related to common welfare of society, are not fully used. Often integration in job market is burdened by insufficiently developed system of professional informing, consulting and orienting, as well as insufficient attention of employers for employees learning and still small motivation of long-life learning of residents.

Qualification improving persons do not yet use satisfactory the system of continuing professional teaching. An issue of qualification improvement as well as full or partial financement of consulting services for employed and not falling in different socially vulnerable groups (eg., disabled people, long-time unemployed people, older than 50 years employable persons, having returned from imprisonment institutions, etc.) persons is not solved. A problem of learning quality of adults as well as exclusion groups, especially from the aspects of not applied to adults education programs content, topicality and means as well as methods application remains actual in general education.

Seeking to increase the integration of socially vulnerable society groups, juridical base is constantly improved in recent years. The law of disabled people social integration and the law of social companies are enacted, interinstitutional programs, reflecting the needs of different social separation groups, making assumptions to develop the initiatives directed to education of social separation groups are implemented.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

According to the prevalent concept in different countries and the main mission, the Third Age University (U3A) – is an independent, non-profit public and non-formal adult education institution that brings together senior and/or retirement age people, persons with disabilities and their caretakers, without prejudice to their age and education.

The University of the Third Age is an international organization which main purpose is to engage in lifelong learning and to promote the cooperation of the elderly people. The University of the Third Age is abbreviated U3A (The Third Age University). Lithuanian equivalent is TAU (The University of the Third Age). U3A started in France at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Toulouse in 1973. Professor Pierre Vellas is the pioneer of The University of the Third Age.

U3A is most often associated with local universities. This university model is used in many countries around the world. At the beginning of 1980 the activity of a university in Britain changed substantially – U3A become “self-help” organization. This model is also used in Australia, New Zealand, the Dominican Republic and South America. Some Eastern European countries were introduced to the U3A quite early: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Slovenian Third Age University was started by two university teachers in 1984 and has developed into a network of forty universities over the entire country.

In the British model it is acknowledged that retired people have a lifetime of experience and, collectively, a vast amount of knowledge. Each meeting is normally led by a member of the group with specialist knowledge. Each U3A group pays a capitation fee to the national coordinating body, and has access to a vast range of resources including a multi-media lending library, special interest newsletters and contacts with other groups with similar interests. Summer schools are held by special interest groups. Each group is a separate community.

In 1998 VU3A – virtual courses for older people, unable to attend university lectures, were launched. At present, there are about 35 courses for older people compiled by volunteer-experts from different countries of the world.

The report, entitled “Educational initiatives for the elderly”, was published in 2009. It writes about the third age world universities, their activities and the like.

Volunteers perform a range of works at U3A, including also virtual training. It has shown that physical and intellectual activity prolongs the lives of people. U3A admits not only older people, but also all those who have free time – thus increasing the field of interests of the University and the knowledge.

Most often training includes such educational areas as art, classical studies, language, computers, crafts, debates, drama, history, language, literature, music, science, social sciences, philosophy and so on. Some groups are free from the study program – the subject emerges during the interview. Some groups go beyond the limits of subjects – involve society, a variety of technologies and science considering them from another aspect.

U3A provides a lot of valuable information on important current issues. Although it is a non-political organization, however, its participants discuss various issues: crime, punishment, public service, renewable energy resources, etc., participate in public debates.

Community gatherings important history and genealogy, since each member of the group can tell you a lot of interesting things from your past. Some of the groups aim to share their experience with the representatives of other generations and thus eliminate the gap between people of different ages. The Internet is very important for people who live in areas with no educational institutions. There are also many less-educational activities – ‘Games’, including educational function ‘Health’, ‘Fitness & Leisure’, including countryside walks, theatre/concert clubs, travel clubs, dances in all its forms, etc. Many from U3A publish local reports. Third Age Trust, coordinating the U3A activities of universities in the UK, publishes a newsletter titled “Sources” three times a year. Third Age University aims to enable older, retirement age people to remain an active part of society and have the opportunity to enjoy light aging for many years that the elderly people, mostly pensioners, with much of free time, could it to studies, development, and to the realisation of their youthful ambitions and dreams.

As the Lithuanian Education Development Centre report states, the Third Age University (U3A) is in a sense a form of non-formal adult education in European countries. The University of the Third Age is an independent, voluntary organization, and ensures older people better social integration into society, promotes their efficient, productive and meaningful lives, while maintaining their ability to work, physical activity.

This form of education is suitable for elderly people, as it helps to learn critical reflection and evaluation of their life circumstances, to discover new opportunities to improve the quality of life and take positive change. No matter what kind of education that would be – formal or informal, it extends to all aspects of personal development: personal, social, creative, professional, economic, and cultural. The Third Age university is often understood much wider in Lithuania – than any operational and development objectives (not only academic excellence, but also artistic activities, tourism and so on.), implying in particular the elderly association. Therefore, the Third Age university activity can be described not only as non-formal education, but also as self-education in Lithuania. Medardas Čobotas defines U3A operational objectives most comprehensively:

- support older people's better social integration into society, the realization of opportunities, and their active participation in the formation of public opinion and decision-making processes;
- investigate and promote older people's cultural and social experience;
- encourage communication between the generations, based on the principles of solidarity and cooperation;
- organize lectures, conferences, seminars, tours and meetings with Lithuanian and foreign specialists, professors, teachers, doctors and other public figures;
- organize events, and to provide with pre-conditions for targeted spending of their leisure time by the abilities and opportunities;
- promote sports and physical education as the best means to maintain health and working capacity;
- promote international cooperation in education, social and other similar areas. Liaise with foreign societies, non-governmental and governmental organizations;
- implement social protection and care, sanitary surveillance programs;
- carry out other activities in the social, health and cultural fields;
- organize charity campaigns.

Due to the nature of the non-formal adult education it is very difficult to count the number of people in the country attending U3A; you can count persons only occasionally visiting U3A, you can count those visiting more

than half of the classes, you can register the number of those who obtain a certificate of completion at the end of the school year.

So far, the activity of the Third Age universities often relied on the enthusiasm of individuals and poor support of the state. LR Law on Education stipulates that the municipal representative body forms adult schools network for non-formal education programs, makes and initiates the formation of the providers of educational network, compatible with the population needs in vocational training and adult education, independently forms the network of providers of non-formal education. Therefore, the Municipal Council must ensure directly education and training needs for older residents of the municipality. Municipal executive authorities, executing Municipal Council resolutions and supporting individuals' initiative, as they understood, encouraged the emergence and the activity of the Third Age Universities. However, it can be said that the setting up such U3A was fairly chaotic and poorly coordinated by the state.

Another feature of the Third Age universities – LR Non-Formal Adult Education adopted and still in force in Lithuania since 1998 which does not meet current realities of life. Education specialists group has already been working on the new law of LR- Non-Formal Adult Education for several years. It is evident that the preparation of this law needs compromise agreements among various interest groups. Therefore, until then while the new Republic of Lithuania non-formal adult education law statement is not formally adopted, it is very difficult to predict what will be the main provisions of the law. This situation aggravates the research of any Third Age university activity: on the one hand, without knowing the future legally enshrined such educational establishment's regulations, the preparation of the study of the theoretical construct is difficult, on the other hand – a possibility exists that the adopted law provisions not fully will take the prevailing realities into account. Thus, the Third Age universities may need time before they are able to restructure their activities in accordance with the provisions of the adopted law. One of the most important working characteristics of The Third Age universities is free choice of activities, which took root in the name of "faculties" and equally free alteration of activity trends. The audience, in agreement with the heads of U3A (if/when able to find teachers or lecturers) will decide on the

faculties (activities) for each academic year. Likewise The Third Age University students are free themselves to decide how much and what faculties (learning trends) they will attend. Unlike some of the foreign countries where The Third Age universities are more for academic institutions seniors, Lithuania formed a practice that The Third Age universities are not only and not so much academic spending of time, as much as the way of spending leisure time in general (not necessarily academic). Amateur arts (drama studio, chorus), or travel arrangements (but not geography or regional studies!), etc., can be such a clearly non-academic leisure activities. The number and the analysis of the Third Age universities faculties' names is sufficiently informative. It is obvious, the higher the number of the Third Age university listeners, the higher the possibility of U3A to form more educational fields and thus to attract even more listeners. On the other hand, the Third Age universities – small in the number of students – sometimes specially limit the number of their educational fields (faculties) because of the small number of listeners. Consequently, Rokiškis U3A combined all educational fields into a single field under common agreement of listeners in 2012-2013 and attempts to find universal and relevant topics for the sessions of the majority of audience.

Third Age operational analysis suggests that during the collection of statistical information about the Third Age Lithuanian universities, attention was paid to the number of educational fields (faculties) and their names. Attempts were made to generalize the names – at least symbolically, and not quite accurately. A total of 23 provisory educational fields were distinguished (as all given fields can be generalized). The names of the analogous educational fields, by the researchers assessment, are listed together: Health, Healthy Lifestyle, Health and Spiritual Development, Fostering of Health, Health Gymnastics; Culture, Cultural Cognition; Tourism, Tourism and Regional Studies; Housekeeping, Mode of life; Political Science, Civic Society, Human and Social Environment, European; Relationships, Political Debate; History, The History of Lithuania; Social Psychology, Spiritual Development, Humanities, Psychology, Philosophy; Music, Theatres and Music, Songs; Foreign Languages; Folk Art, Art; Literature, Poetry, Readers' Club; Joint; Arts, Artistic Expression, Dance Theatres, Choir, Drama, Expression; Management; Information Technology, Digital Competence; Gerontological

Psychology; Social Rehabilitation; Intergenerational Relations; Russian Philology; Ichthyology; Garment Design and Sewing; Theology; Law.

The Third Age universities were established on the initiative of individual, active people, under the leadership of M. Čobotas, by moving good Western countries practice in a volatile Lithuania. This tradition, when active and initiative people, and not the state institutions determine the subject of U3A as an educational institution, has remained until now. According to the researchers 'assessment there are several, sometimes strongly different, U3A models in Lithuania:

- relying on individual initiative with the listeners engaged in all sorts of interesting activities are the universities of The Third Age;
- established on the Local Government initiative and following the requirements of the law of the Ministry of Education The Third Age universities are acting at some municipal institutions (Teachers' Training Centre, Education and Sports Service Centre and so on);
- acting at any high school and any faculty, and meeting the specifics of The Third Age universities.

In terms of the type of activity, some Universities of Lithuania are clearly focused on the academic (lectures) activities, other U3A, together with academic activities, develop widely cultural, more active leisure-oriented activities. In terms of organization, the Third Age universities management are looking for contacts and support in the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and the Ministry of Education. These contacts and legal assistance that can be provided are still poorly regulated. The Third Age University and Lithuanian retirees union – Bočiai – relations are not very clear defined.

Therefore, we would propose to organize a joint The Third Age university and Lithuanian Municipality Association working group, which with respect to already-existing realities in Lithuania and aligning the interests of all the institutions concerned could clearly define legal, organizational and educational status of The Third Age university in Lithuania.

Currently the organizational status of the acting U3A in Lithuania is not fully understood. From Vilnius MČU3A website it can be assumed that all operating U3A in Lithuania are MČU3A branches. On the other hand,

the surveys carried out by experts show that the regional U3A relations and communications with MČU3A not always satisfy the needs of these regional U3A. We, therefore, propose to initiate the beginning of a national U3A formation (union, association, or similar), with equal representation of each established the Third Age university. National-level U3A activity coordinators (eg., ESM or UPC) would be easier and more convenient to cooperate with the national U3A formation than with individual U3A. The Ministry of Education could pay the emergence of such national formation, and, if necessary, certain U3A re-registration legal fees.

The research showed that any of the existing institutions of the national level, subordinated to the Ministry of Education, must be delegated the coordination and assistance role to U3A. The management of the Third Age University should clearly know who they can address in case of method, methodological and organizational problems. In some cases, such national level institution could help to solve the specific problems among U3A, the Municipality Council or the Municipal Administration. We think that the Education Development Centre could perform best national coordinator's functions.

The Republic of Lithuania Law on Education stipulates that the municipal representative body is to form school network providing non-formal adult education programs. On the other hand, practice shows that municipality established and purview institutions, especially under the economic crisis, are often reduced funding and otherwise their operating conditions are deteriorated. U3A representatives having participated in the survey complained of the lack of funds and funding. Therefore, we clearly suggest splitting between the national and municipal level U3A-related functions and responsibilities for these functions. For example, a municipality ensures adequate facilities and equipment necessary for learning (eg., co-educational school computer and foreign language classrooms) for U3A, bears minimal management costs, and specially authorized national institution helps to select professors for U3A, pay their trips to other cities U3A and engages in teacher training. Experts have named the necessity of the upstart of – U3A listener's basket–, however, by the researchers 'assessment, it is currently hardly possible.



The research revealed that one of the biggest U3A problems is to invite interesting adequate qualification and interesting teachers. This is difficult to do for several reasons: U3A management is difficult to pay for this activity (for the lack of funds), on the other hand, U3A in smaller towns have difficulties to find enough qualified teachers in their town, and invite them from other cities also have no funds. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania could initiate the supplements to LR law on Science and Studies. These supplements can include a provision that Lithuanian high school could set up a university of The Third Age within its unit al-ne, or together with other founders (Municipal Council, the Ministry of Education and Science, private founders), provide spaces and facilities, also instructors work, or would consider another city U3A as the normal educational activity. Provision should be made that the work at The Third Age university to be included in the teacher's academic load.

Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science – the authorized national level institution – could establish minimum requirements for the U3A teacher, and be able to ensure that U3A has no problems to provide with adequately qualified teachers. For example, U3A teacher's database can be prepared and enable the U3A management to choose the required teachers from the database and invite to the university. Then U3A could choose teachers, not necessarily the ones that live in the same city. MES, the authorized national level institution, could cover the teachers 'travel expenses and, perhaps, remunerate for educational activities at U3A.

LR Law on Education obliges to carry out nationwide monitoring of education – the analysis of the permanent education state and change, assessment, forecasting. It must be recognized that a sufficiently broad network of U3A has already formed in Lithuania, so, you can already watch U3A as the former social phenomenon. But so far, no monitoring of U3A in general is available as non-formal adult education institutions type. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage the founders of the Third Age Universities to register in Educational and Scientific Institution Register administered by Information Technology Centre (IREM). Among other consequences, this would allow information about U3A to appear in Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (AIKOS), where information on the

country's other non-formal adult education schools is published. In order to perform the monitoring of U3A, it is also necessary to develop minimally adequate statistical information that the management of U3A could submit to ITC annually. One aspect of the annual monitoring of U3A could be the analysis of whether the conditions are for U3A activity.

Currently, the number of U3A listeners makes only a very small share of seniors living in Lithuania. It is necessary to prepare a plan of measures to stimulate the emergence of new U3A and the further development of currently operating The Third Age universities. The results of the study and then held experts' survey showed that it is necessary, as far as possible, to increase the number of listeners at each U3A. This helps to ensure that every senior, who has decided to spend time at The Third Age university, could find occupation by his hobbies. So, municipal administrations, professionals, alongside with the national U3A activity coordinators should provide tools that will allow U3A to increase the number of listeners, also to ensure proper operating conditions for U3A after the increase in the number of listeners (premises, facilities, teachers).

The above findings indicate that one of the biggest problems for U3A is due provision of premises and training facilities. It is necessary to think about the legally enshrined obligation for municipalities to ensure The Third Age university needs to get necessary equipment and facilities for lectures of a sufficient level. For this purpose, for example, the premises of the mainstream schools established by Municipal Councils could be used. Moreover, general education schools usually work one shift in Lithuania, so U3A classes, usually taking place in the afternoon, really should not interfere with the educational process in general.

The authors of the study make recommendations on specific aspects of the improvement of the U3A performance. In some cases the Third Age university quality can be clearly improved even without any systemic transformations. It is sufficient that the responsible national-level educational institution coordinates the steps. The survey results clearly show that there is the most important persons in The Third Age university communities are U3A managers and listeners. Teachers usually limit themselves to coming to U3A workshops and training seminars and the related activity. It is necessary

to increase the importance of U3A teachers, involve them into the daily life of The Third Age University. The aforementioned researchers in the public area basically did not find any information actions, inviting interesting people to work as U3A lecturers. Tutors are U3A heads, students from U3A managers, in key positions of any educational institution (Educational Center and so on), belonging subordinates, or persons, personally invited by U3A heads. On the opinion of the researchers, higher education, general education and vocational schools teachers, businessmen, municipal administration professionals could work as U3A teachers. Therefore, the national-level U3A coordinating body must help to develop the strategy of broader involvement of lecturers in The Third Age University and to provide for the necessary measures and funds. Data bank which contains the sessions themes, short descriptions of courses, teacher's residence (this is necessary in order to calculate travel costs), and other information about teachers, ready to work for U3A, would facilitate U3A heads work. U3A heads could then, after the study of listeners needs, contact directly with the selected teachers or through national-level institution, coordinating U3A activity book teachers in person or by necessary course topics. It is necessary constantly to raise The Third Age university teachers ability to work with seniors. The teachers, resolved to work with seniors, need andragogy knowledge about the work with elderly people, understand techniques and methodologies of teaching at U3A.

The Republic of Lithuania has so far mostly only symbolically and only at snatches supported The Third Age universities activity, so activity under development too much relies on the efforts of individual heads and enthusiasm. In some cases, when some of these managers have health problems, the possibility of proper management of the whole U3A operations reduces and often U3A activity slows down. Therefore, it would be ideal if each U3A should be allotted state or municipality funded manager post. This would facilitate U3A opportunity to provide the required annual monitoring information. With such a manager, U3A heads could devote more time and attention to the strategic development of the Third Age University. Special attention must be paid to the improvement of the Third Age heads qualification. The survey results show that the most necessary U3A heads capacities to be improved are as follows:

- Education organizations management (great part of U3A heads have no practical experience to manage formal education institution, and leadership experience to U3A is not great);
- Andragogy knowledge (especially for younger leaders);
- Work with the media;
- Network and guerrilla marketing (using the condition identified during the study that the most common first and most reliable source of information about U3A Third Age university listeners are friends, acquaintances and neighbours. The managers, advertising their university should use U3A listeners already attending the university);
- Submission of information on the Internet;
- Project development (by taking part in various municipal, national and EU-funded on-going projects U3A managers could increase their university possibilities and improve the on-going activity).

The greater part of U3A listeners – as it often happens in adult education – are women. Therefore, The Third Age university management, with the help of the national U3A activity coordinators, it is necessary to reflect on measures to help U3A to attract more men. This could be a more masculine audience-oriented advertising, training fields (faculties) conforming more with men's interests and so on. The study results show that family members are the most reliable source about U3A for men. Therefore, spouses already attending U3A are not to be forgotten when promoting The Third Age University orienting for men. The study showed that Internet options are poorly used to disseminate information about U3A. At least two possible solutions to this problem are available:

- specially teach U3A representatives to create Web sites, publish a range of information in these sites and support universities financially, maintaining such designed website for U3A;
- develop a single national whole Lithuanian the Third Age universities website, where each U3A representatives could self-publish all the information they need and receive all the necessary technical assistance.

The Third Age university students have an excellent opportunity to gain knowledge, to spend time with their peers and their congenial. In many U3A activity is based on a learning process. Learning – perceived by the third age

people – is understood as an opportunity for everyone, regardless of sex, race, nationality, religion, political beliefs, age and health, and the ability to customize their experience and competencies, learn new skills, make friends, get involved in work and to intensify social life. Lithuanian the third age people are also willing to get involved in other activities (church, volunteering, political, etc.).

## CONCLUSION

Adult education is one of the most important factors that determines both the development of the society and the human achievements in modern society. Mostly, public growth is closely linked with the quality of adult education, and the individual's future depends on the opportunity of participation in education system, on the accessibility of performance and education. Adult education accessibility issue becomes particularly important and problematic in the context of the transformation of society.

Adult education is recognized as probably the most important factor in modern society, determining individual's income and position in the society. Access to adult education should ensure the justice in the society, although scientists argue that education system is usually powerless to correct other social systems created by inequality and in justice Accessible and quality adult education system ensures better life, social mobility, and provides status.

The modern world gives weight to education, as well. Education has to become the sole and essential instrument to help to rise from any social class to a higher stratum. Therefore, adult education becomes compulsory to avoid social groups in a modern society that may become not integrated and separated from the society.

However, one of the largest practical problems of adults education is compatibility of education supply and demand, answering questions, if adult learners find in learning market available and suitable for them, personal and social needs meeting learning services, if they are provided with necessary, acknowledged and necessary abilities conditioning knowledge. Issue of education availability is more and more often stated in levels of education politics: accessibility characteristics reflect its efficiency, quality and compatibility of personal and social needs. Accessibility of education

(particularly adult's) is unconsciously problem, unequally understandable phenomenon, rarely becoming the object of special investigation. This can be logical: usage of this concept gained a wider scope only in last years, when essential European political educational documents appeared, first of all, Memorandum of life-long learning

These reasons of social and economical changes are interrelated. They indicate two equally significant long-life learning aims: stimulate active public participation and increase a possibility to employ. Active public participation reveals, if it appears in all fields of public and economic life of people, how they use occurring opportunities and avoid dangers and how much they feel members of society, etc. A possibility to work, i.e. ability to save a working place, is not only main indicator of active public participation, but also a critical condition seeking for occupation while consolidating competitiveness of Europe and welfare in 'new economy'. Possibility to work and active public participation depend on appropriate newest knowledge and skills of a person, necessary when participating in economical and public.

In long-life learning ensuring strategy, the analysis of present state is provided. A potential of informal adults education suppliers when integrating groups of social exclusion, consolidating local communities by raising political and civil literacy of society, what is directly related to common welfare of society, are not fully used. Often integration in job market is burdened by insufficiently developed system of professional informing, consulting and orienting, as well as insufficient attention of employers for employees learning and still small motivation of long-life learning of residents.

Seeking to increase the integration of socially vulnerable society groups, juridical base is constantly improved in recent years. The law of disabled people social integration and the law of social companies are enacted, interinstitutional programs, reflecting the needs of different social separation groups, making assumptions to develop the initiatives directed to education of social separation groups are implemented.

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