

# NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN BELARUS: EXPERIENCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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Non-formal education is an essential and integral part of continuing education. According to the UNESCO classification, non-formal education include training programs and courses that are held not in the traditional system of education, where learning outcomes are not always supported by the relevant documents. the European Commission's Memorandum on lifelong learning emphasizes that non-formal education is an equal part of the educational process throughout life.<sup>1</sup>

The final resolution of the Sixth international conference on adult education CONFINTEA VI (Belém/Brazil, December 2009) states: *“Adult learning and education are an important step, which is necessary in response to the challenges we face. Adult learning and education is a key component of a holistic and comprehensive system of education and training throughout life, which includes **formal, non-formal and informal learning** and which directly or indirectly is aimed at both young and adult learners. Adult learning and education ultimately are related to ensuring such conditions and processes of learning that **are attractive and responsive to the needs of adults as active citizens**. They are connected with development of an independent, autonomous personality, with the creation and restructuring of its life in complex and rapidly changing cultural, social and economic environment — at work, at home, in the community and society”*.<sup>2</sup>

Non-formal education can be attributed to any organized and systematic training, carried out outside the formal education system, which complement it by providing mastery of the skills that are needed for socially and economically active citizen. This educational activity is structured; it has an educational purpose, certain time frame, infrastructure support and is conscious. The knowledge gained is usually not certified, although it is possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Меморандум непрерывного образования Европейского Союза (неофициальный перевод) // Адукатар. — 2006. — № 2 (8). — С. 24—27.

<sup>2</sup> Использование потенциала обучения и образования взрослых в интересах благополучного будущего // Адукатар. — 2010. — № 1 (17). — С. 3—9.

The scope of non-formal education in our country has been developed rapidly in recent decades<sup>3</sup>. It is represented by different providers with their goals, interests, and some differences in the approaches, principles and ways of activity arrangement. This includes commercial structures and public institutions (especially, institutions of social and cultural spheres), and non-governmental non-profit organizations. This article deals with the last group of providers.

Non-governmental non-profit organizations of non-formal education are represented by social associations, founds, non-governmental institutions, associations, trade unions, religious organizations, etc. Quantitatively, this group is not numerous. Perhaps we can talk about a few hundred of active organizations<sup>4</sup>.

Despite their small number and little involvement of the population of the country in their training programs<sup>5</sup>, it is this segment of non-formal education that in many ways sets the fashion and is at the forefront of many developmental processes of both further education of youth and adults, and education in general.

Non-governmental non-profit organizations in their learning activities are focus on the development of the personality, social and civic competences. Teaching programs of this providers are focused on a variety of target groups (young people, socially disadvantaged segments of the population, professional societies, active member of non-governmental non-profit organizations, etc.) and are being

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<sup>3</sup> Further information about the sphere of non-formal education in Belarus can be found in the following articles: Верамейчык Г. Неформальная адукацыя ў Беларусі // Адукатар. — 2010. — № 2 (18). — С. 2—7. Access mode: [http://adukatar.net/?page\\_id=5442](http://adukatar.net/?page_id=5442); Лабода С. Неформальное образование в Беларуси: провайдеры, ключевые тенденции и перспективы для будущего // Неформальное образование для региональных демократических трансформаций. Исследование / Под общей ред. Д. Карпиевича и Г. Усатенко. — Фонд «Европа XXI», Киев 2012. С. 38—59. Access mode: <http://adukatar.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/book-final.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> For example, the database category “education, enlightenment, upbringing” of the portal [www.ngo.by](http://www.ngo.by) includes 432 community organizations: <http://www.ngo.by/database/ngo/>

<sup>5</sup> According to experts 1.2% of the population aged 14 years and older are involved in the training activities of non-governmental organizations during 5 years (Source: Состояние гражданского образования в Республике Беларусь / Аналитический документ. В. Жураковский, В. Корж, О. Ображей, Е. Аношко. — Минск, 2013. — С. 38. Access mode: [http://oeec.by/sites/default/files/Overview%202013%2005%2014%20ru%2060%20\(2\).pdf](http://oeec.by/sites/default/files/Overview%202013%2005%2014%20ru%2060%20(2).pdf))

implemented in many areas (legal, economic, civil, political, ecological education and enlightenment, the development of local communities, etc.).

In the non-formal education, as a rule, there is no such a notion as an academic year, and there are no generally accepted forms of educational programs. Duration of the study here can last from one hour to several days and even years. Among the most popular learning forms are trainings, seminars, schools, training courses, in-depth training, international exchanges, electronic distance learning, etc.

It should be noted that the main type of activity arrangement in the non-profit non-governmental organizations is planning. This is conditioned, to a certain extent, by the sources of financing. Moreover, gradually it becomes evident that in terms of final results this format is also important for the activity of non-profit non-governmental organizations. To some extent, this factor influences the fact that the educational activity is organized on the principles of competence-based approach. Certainly, the quality problem is quite acute. But for all that, training of non-state non-profit organizations is focused more on results than on process. The participants of various training programs participate in them voluntarily. They have their motivations, and when it is not justified, and the training is not useful, then comes "foot voting".

Practice-oriented nature of the non-formal education programs is conditioned by the fact that the learning activities of non-profit non-governmental organizations are part of specific projects. Therefore, organizations are interested in active implementation of learning content in daily activities of program participants. There are certain areas and directions whose development is promoted above all by the educational activities of non-profit non-governmental organizations. Rural tourism is the striking example. A few years ago in our country only a small group of people knew about this type of activity, and only a few enthusiasts were involved in it. Today, rural tourism is regulated by the legislation and hundreds of villagers, who have acquired the knowledge, skills, abilities and understanding through participation in numerous seminars, round tables, in-depth studies, organized and carried out by non-profit organization, are already occupied.

It is non-governmental organizations that very actively use innovative for our educational practices approaches, trends, methods and forms of education. This includes numerous methods of active learning (interactive, role-playing and business games, case-study, simulation,

etc.) and educational technology (open space, workshop of the future, “peer education”, etc.). And at the same time, representatives of non-profit organizations actively share their practical experience, allowing representatives of other organizations and institutions, including those of the formal education system, to actively use the obtained experience.

In general, the whole range of educational activities in the sector of non-profit non-governmental organizations in Belarus can not yet be described as systemic, as most public organizations and non-profit institutions exist separately; they do not see themselves as links of the same “chain” – continuing education. Today, in most cases, their union is possible only on a temporary basis, in terms of the project activity. Although at present there is already experience in the development of a coalition cooperation and creation of platforms for exchange of information, experience and search of partners for common problem solving. For example, work is being done, aimed at popularization and promotion of non-formal education by organizing Weeks and Festival of non-formal education, which has already become a tradition, as well as the publication of the magazine “Adukatar”<sup>6</sup>.

Non-formal education in general and training activities of non-profit non-governmental organizations in particular, is becoming an important integral part of the educational landscape of our country. But without fulfillment of a number of framework conditions non-formal education is unlikely to be able to enter to a new qualitative level and make full use of its potential for the development of society and the state. And this is possible only by combining efforts of non-formal education providers, educational institutions and state bodies.

*Translated from Russian by M.N. Nepachatykh*

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<sup>6</sup> <http://adukatar.net/chasopis-adukatar>