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Key competences for people 50+

REPORT



The state of education in terms of key competences and the needs of the target group (people 50+) in Poland

Project result 1 - Methodology of training courses
"Key competences for people aged 50+" (part 1)

Free publication

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Report

The state of education of key competences and the educational needs of adults, including people aged 50+ in Poland

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Prepared by: Deinde sp. z o. o.

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Contents

Introduction	4
Deficits in key competences in Poland, taking into account the situation of people over 50.....	9
Educational needs of Poles, including people over 50.....	15
Lifelong learning opportunities available in Poland.....	16
Differences in education of people over 50 and younger people in Poland.	21
Conclusions and recommendations.	24
Literature	25

Introduction

The aim of the report is to analyze the existing data on the state of education in the field of key competences in Poland, especially in terms of the needs of people aged 50 and more. As the development of competences and skills by citizens takes place within the framework of implemented state strategies and policies, the starting point for our analyzes will be the presentation of basic information on the socio-economic and demographic situation in Poland in recent years.

In 2020, over 38 million people lived in Poland, of which women accounted for 51.64%. We have been observing unfavorable trends since 2010. First of all, the decreasing number of Poles. Second, the increasing median age in our society. While in 2000 the median age of Poles was 35, in 2010 it was 38, and in 2020 it was 41.7 years.

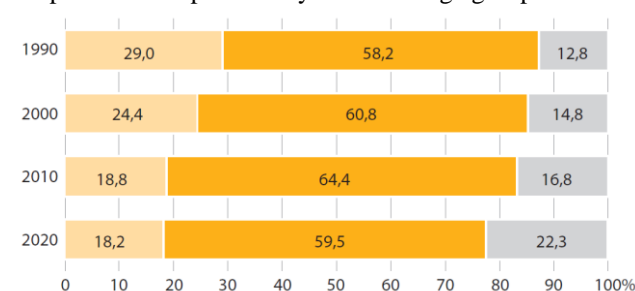
Tab. no. 1 Population of Poland.

	1990	2000	2010	2020
Total in thousands	38 073	38 254	38 530	38 265
Including women	19 521	19 717	19 877	19 763
Urban population in %	62	62	61	60
Median age (middle age)	32.3	35.4	38.0	41.7
Men	30.9	33.4	36.3	40.1
Women	33.7	37.4	39.9	43.3

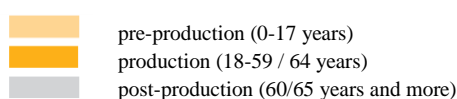
Source: *Poland in numbers 2021*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 2.

By making a more detailed analysis of the age of Poles in the chart below, we can observe unfavorably changing proportions of Poles in the pre-productive, productive and post-productive age over the course of three decades. Since 1990, the number of people in retirement age has increased by 10 percentage points (p.p.). At the same time, almost by 11 p.p. the number of people of pre-working age has decreased. An unfavorable trend also applies to the number of people at the working age. While in 2010 it was 64.4% of the population, in 2020 it was only 59.5% of Poles.

Graphic no. 1 Population by economic age groups.



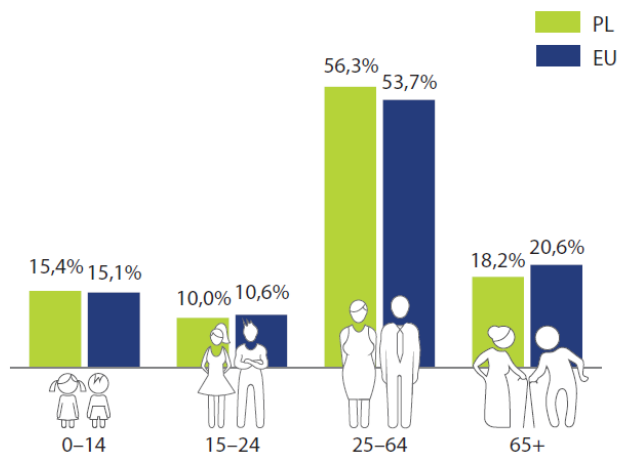
Age



Source: *Poland in numbers 2021*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 2.

Analyzing the age structure of Poles against the background of the European Union, we can observe slight differences in individual age groups, which shows that Poland is subject to the same trends as practically all European societies: the growing number of people in post-working age and the decreasing number of people in pre-working age and working age.

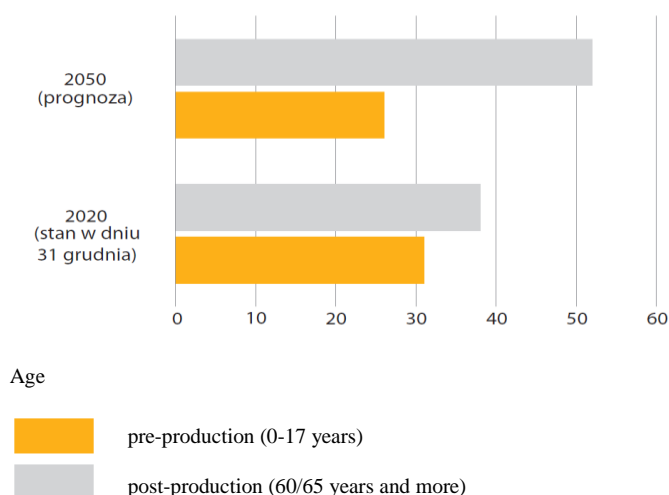
Graphic no. 2 Population structure by age in 2020.



Source: *Poland in the European Union*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 3.

The consequences of these unfavorable demographic changes are presented in the graphic below, which shows that according to the forecasts in 2050, for every 100 people of working age in Poland there will be over 50 people of non-working age. Currently, it is less than 40 people.

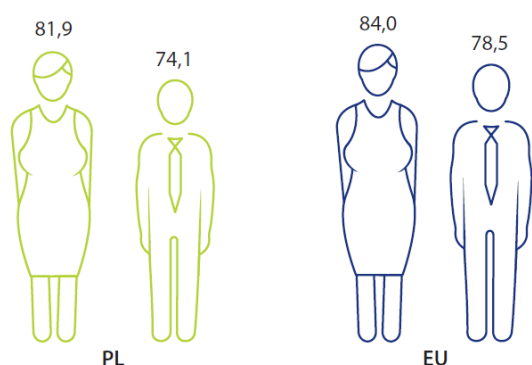
Graphic no. 3 Number of people in non-working age per 100 people in working age.



Source: *Poland in numbers 2021*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 2.

Additionally, taking into account the trend of the increasing average life expectancy in Poland, there is no doubt that the Polish labor market and the social security system are facing difficult challenges. In this context, the acquisition / improvement of key competences by adult Poles, especially people aged 50+, is an important element not only for the personal development of these people, improving their functioning in society, but will become more and more important over time in the context of the availability of human resources on the labor market.

Graphic no. 4 Average life expectancy in 2019 (in years).



Source: *Poland in the European Union*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 5.

Over the past few years, Poland has been characterized by positive changes taking place on the labor market. In 2020, the number of economically active people amounted to almost 17 million and has remained at a similar level since 2010. In 2020, the number of working Poles amounted to 16.4 million, which means an increase by almost one million people over the decade. For many years, a negative phenomenon on the Polish labor market has been the persistently high number of economically inactive people, which since 2010 has exceeded over 8 million people.

Tab. No. 2 Economic activity of the population aged 15 and more (annual average) - based on BAEL (in thousands).

	2010	2019	2020
Professionally active	17 123	17 019	16 979
including women	7 677	7 620	7 579
including in working age	16 691	16 354	16 266
Working	15 473	16 461	16 442
including women	6 908	7 346	7 329
The unemployed	1 650	558	537
including women	769	274	249
Professionally inactive	13 832	13 264	13 292
including women	8 456	8 204	8 244

Source: *Poland in numbers 2021*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 6.

When analyzing the situation on the Polish labor market in the last decade, it is worth paying attention to the systematic decline in the number of unemployed. While in 2010 in Poland there were over 1.6 million unemployed, in 2020 it was only 537,000. people, as presented in the table below.

Tab. No. 3 The unemployed aged 15–74 (average for the year) - based on LFS.

	2010	2019	2020
Total in thousands	1 650	558	537
In % of the total - the unemployed:			
Women	46.6	49.1	46.4
In working age	99.3	98.9	98.7
Not working yet	17.6	18.1	16.4

Have finished their work for a specified period, occasional work	25.3	27.8	26.4
Long-term (13 months and more)	25.5	14.9	14.2
Unemployment rate in %	9.6	3.3	3.2
Average time of looking for a job in months	9.4	7.7	7.1

Source: *Poland in numbers 2021*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 7.

A noticeable correlation in the Polish labor market is the situation in which people with higher education levels are less likely to be unemployed. In 2018, every fifth person with higher education remained economically inactive (19.3%), while in the group of people with lower secondary, primary and lower education, only every sixth person was professionally active (16.2%). At the same time, in the same period, as many as 79.4% of people with higher education worked, while in the group of people with lower secondary, primary and lower education, only 14.5% of people worked. At the same time, the unemployment rate for people with university diplomas was 1.6%, compared to 10.0% for people with lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary education.¹

In the next step of our considerations, it is worth looking at the situation on the labor market of Poles in individual age categories. Here we can see an unfavorable trend of low economic activity of people aged 55 and more. In 2020, in the 55-59 / 64 age group, only 65.4% of Poles were economically active and only 63.9% were employed. In the age category of 60 (for women) and 65 (for men), the economic activity and employment rates were even more dramatic and amounted to 8.5% and 8.4%, respectively. For comparison, in the 45-54 age group these indicators were at the level of: 84.8% and 83% respectively. The data in the table below show us that Poles leave the labor market relatively early, many people over 55 years of age.

Tab. No. 4 Economically active population aged 15 and more in 2020 (average for the year) - based on LFS (percentages).

	Economic activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
Overall	56.1	54.3	3.2
including women	47.9	46.3	3.3
including working age (men aged 18-64, women aged 18-59)	77.4	74.9	3.3
By age:			
15-24 years	31.8	28.4	10.8
25-34	84.1	80.9	3.8
35-44	87.6	85.4	2.4
45-54	84.8	83.0	2.2
55-59 / 64	65.4	63.9	2.3
60-65 years and more	8.5	8.4	.

Source: *Poland in numbers 2021*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 6.

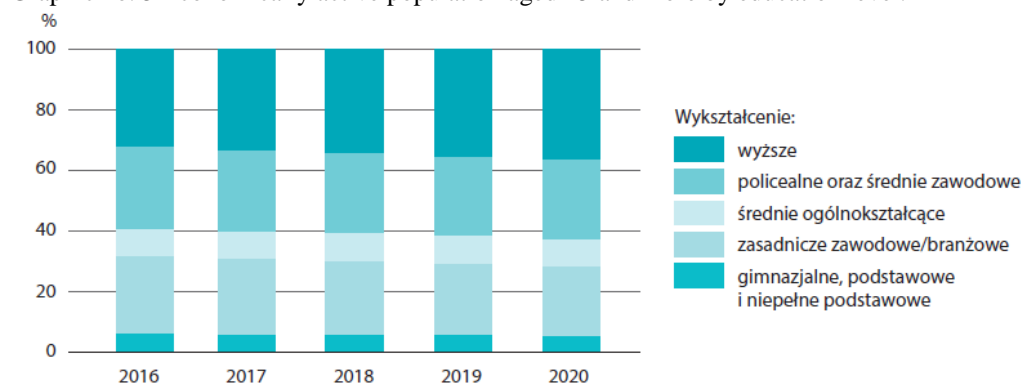
If we look at the labor market data on people of working age (20-64 years), we notice that in 2020 the employment rate in Poland amounted to 73.6%, which was an increase by 4.3 p.p. compared to 2016. In the last few years, we have noticed an unfavorable situation in the context of significantly

¹ *The labor market in Poland in 2018*, Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy, Labor Market Department, Warsaw, 2019, p. 4.

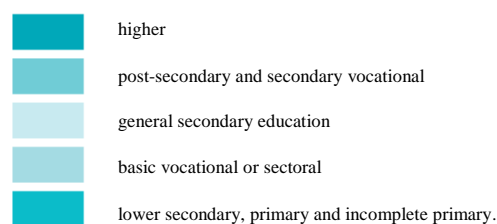
lower economic activity of women compared to men. In 2016, the difference was 14.1 p.p. to the disadvantage of women, and in 2020 it increased further to 15.7 p.p.²

In the next step, let's see what the education level of Poles looks like among economically active people. Education (i.e. the knowledge and skills acquired through it) is undoubtedly one of the key factors determining professional success. Over the last few years, we can see that among economically active people the percentage of people with higher education is growing (by 10.3%), and at the same time the percentage of people with vocational education is decreasing, which shows positive trends in improving the quality of human resources on the Polish labor market.

Graphic no. 5 Economically active population aged 15 and more by education level.



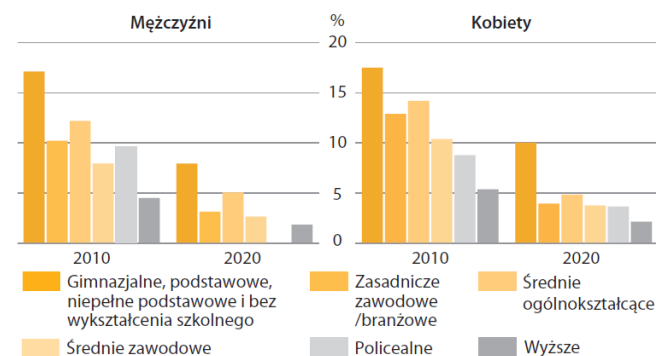
Level of education:



Source: *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 36.

The resources of knowledge, skills and competences (acquired in the process of education and training) have a key impact on the situation of Poles on the labor market. This is especially visible in the context of the unemployed, because the higher the level of education, the lower the percentage of unemployed people - both among women and men.

Graphic no. 6 Unemployment rate by gender and education level (annual average) - based on LFS.



Legend (colours from left side):

² *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 36.

- lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary
- basic vocational or sectoral
- general secondary education
- secondary vocational
- post-secondary
- higher education

Source: *Poland in numbers 2021*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 7.

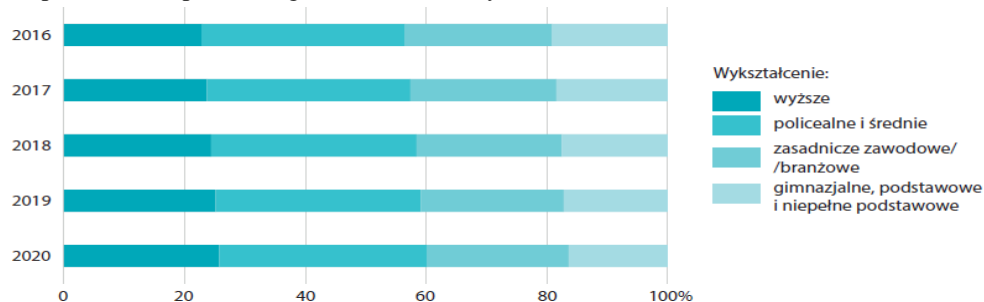
The contemporary Polish labor market shows a need for carefully and modernly educated employees, who are mobile, able and willing to work in conditions of rapid technological development, progressing processes of internationalization of the Polish economy and global competition of enterprises.³

In the period of 2016-2020, in some regions of Poland, there was even a structural mismatch between education and human resources competences and the needs of the labor market. This resulted in the occurrence of unemployment in certain occupational groups and, at the same time, a shortage of employees in other occupations. In 2020, the scarcity professions were the following professions: cleaning worker, casual worker, insurance agent or application programmer. On the other hand, the following professions were surplus: shop salesman, cook, car mechanic, locksmith and hairdresser. Among the professions requiring higher education in 2020, the most surplus were the professions of administration and development specialist and economist, which shows a partial mismatch between the structure of education and the needs of the Polish labor market.⁴

Deficits in key competences in Poland, taking into account the situation of people over 50.

Poland is one of the leading European countries in terms of the level of education of its inhabitants. The share of people aged 25-64 who completed their education at least secondary level was 93.2% in 2020, with the average of 79.0% for the European Union countries. In international comparisons, Poland ranked 11th among the European Union countries in terms of education of people with higher education in age from 30 to 34 years - 47.0% of population (6.0 p.p. more than the EU average). According to the estimates of the United Nations Office for the Report on Social Development, the average number of years of formal education completed by people aged 25 and more was 12.3 years, and Poland was ranked 9-12 among the 27 countries of the European Union.⁵

Graphic no. 7 Population aged 15 and more by education level.

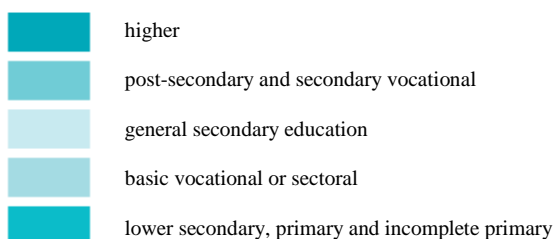


³ A. Dąbrowska, *Education and the labor market*, in: A. Zbierchowska (ed.), *Lifelong learning in the conditions of globalization and the development of the information society*, Institute of Knowledge, Warsaw 2012, p. 75.

⁴ *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 39.

⁵ *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 32.

Legend - Level of education:

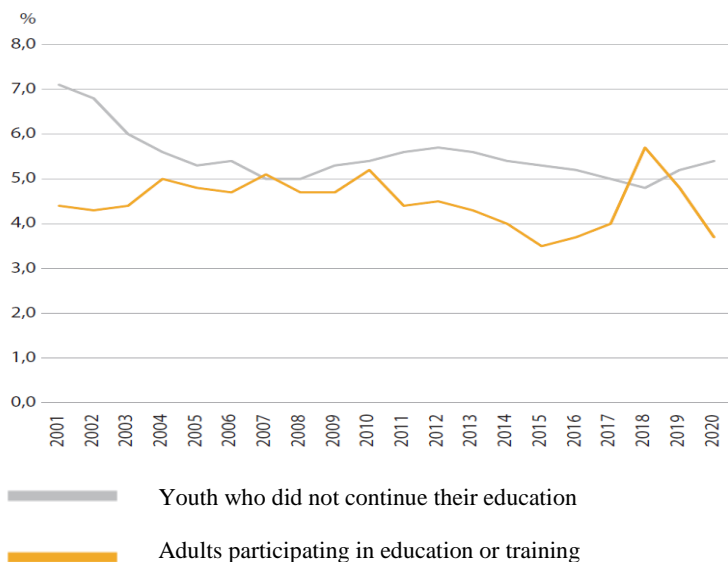


Source: *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 31.

In the field of education, in recent years in Poland we have been dealing with a constant improvement in the level of education. In 2018, most people had higher education - 27.2% (32.6% for women, 21.9% for men). Over 24% of the population had post-secondary or secondary vocational education. 10.5% of Poles had general secondary education, and 24.5% had basic vocational education (of which among men - 30.4%, among women - 18.5%). In turn, 13.5% of Poles had lower secondary, primary and lower education. Women are a better educated part of Polish society than men and more often receive higher education. In 2016, 30.1% of Polish women had a university diploma, compared to only 20.3% of men.⁶

Public funds allocated to education in Poland in relation to GDP do not differ from the EU average. However, Poland has one of the lowest rates of adults aged 25-64 participating in lifelong learning in the EU (PL - 5.7%, with the EU average of 11.1%). This phenomenon is a consequence of the lack of universal, publicly funded education, training and professional development programs aimed at adults who have already completed the stage of formal education. Adult education in our country takes place mainly from private funds and EU funds. Activities financed from European funds are most often directed to the unemployed.⁷

Graphic no. 8 Adolescents not continuing their education and adults participating in education or training - based on LFS.



Source: *Poland in numbers 2021*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 5.

⁶ *Human capital in Poland in 2012-2016*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 7.

⁷ E. Kryńska, *Balance between flexibility and security in the Polish labor market. How to achieve flexicurity?*, p. 16-17.

One of the factors conditioning the development of human capital, the role of which is constantly growing along with the progressive globalization of information, work, science and culture, is the knowledge of foreign languages. Language competences contribute to a higher level of employee mobility and increase the competitiveness of the economy. According to the results of the Adult Education Survey (AES), in 2016, more than two-thirds of the surveyed population aged 18-69 declared knowledge of any foreign language. The most numerous group were the respondents who could use only one language (44.8%), 65.8% of whom mastered it at the basic level. The respondents able to use more than one foreign language constituted 23.5% of the surveyed population, 39.4% of them described their level of competence with regard to the first known foreign language as average. A higher level of language competences was noted among respondents who knew two or more foreign languages - 26.9% of people in this group claimed that they had almost fully mastered one of them. Among the respondents who knew only one foreign language, 10.1% of the respondents declared that they knew it fluently. Apart from a large number of people who do not speak any foreign language (almost one third of the respondents), 38.7% of all respondents described their language skills at a barely basic level. Just over 43% of people knowing foreign languages assessed their competences at least at the intermediate level.⁸

In the context of IT and computer competences, research shows that among Poles aged 16-74 who used the Internet in the 3 months preceding the survey in 2020, the majority (60.3%) were under the age of 45. The most numerous group of internet users were people with secondary (56.9%) and higher (34.5%) education, and the smallest - with less than secondary education (8.6%). At the same time, the community of internet users was clearly diversified in terms of their status on the labor market. The most users were employed (66.8%), among which hired workers (54.6% of users) were distinguished, while farmers constituted the smallest group - 3.6%.⁹

Table no. 5 The level of digital competences of Poles by age, place of residence and status on the labor market.

	People who do not have digital skills	People with digital skills		
		low	basic	secondary
Overall	1.4	31.5	24.1	26.1
men	1.4	30.8	24.6	26.5
women	1.4	32.2	23.6	25.8
Age:				
16-24 years	0.2	9.0	26.1	63.9
25-34	0.2	23.4	36.2	39.0
35-44	0.9	34.6	28.2	32.5
45-54	1.5	42.4	24.8	18.6
55-64	2.9	41.5	17.9	7.2
65-74 years	2.7	30.4	7.8	2.3
Level of education:				
lower than average	2.1	13.8	18.0	35.1
medium	1.9	41.3	21.1	14.0
higher	0.2	17.6	32.6	48.2
Place of residence				
cities	1.3	29.9	25.8	30.5
village	1.5	34.0	21.6	19.6
Professional status:				

⁸ *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 33.

⁹ *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 46.

working	1.0	32.3	29.6	30.1
the unemployed	1.5	41.0	26.8	16.5
learning	0.1	3.1	22.2	74.4
retirees, pensioners and others	2.6	37.2	12.7	4.5

Source: *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 47.

When analyzing deficits in the area of key competences in Polish society, it is worth taking a look at the research showing the perspective of several stakeholders: students, graduates, universities and employers. In the first step, let's look at the language and communication competences.

Table no. 6 Self-assessment and the assessment of having key competences (linguistic and communicative).

COMPETENCES	Self-assessment - students	Self-assessment - graduates	Assessment of competence (universities)	Assessment of competence (employers)
Interpersonal	4.10	4.00	4.10	3.39
Foreign language	3.70	3.29	3.51	3.13
Native language	4.40	4.22	3.85	3.86
Communication (total)	4.07	3.84	3.82	3.46
Collaboration in a group	4.23	4.07	3.79	3.58

Source: *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, pp. 67-68.

Table no. 7 Assessment of the need for key competences (language and communication).

COMPETENCES	Self-assessment - students	Self-assessment - graduates	Assessment of competence (universities)	Assessment of competence (employers)
Interpersonal	4.15	4.23	4.67	4.42
Foreign language	4.34	3.86	4.75	3.35
Native language	4.30	3.76	4.76	4.43
Communication (total)	4.26	3.95	4.73	4.07

Source: *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 69.

The biggest gap between the needs and the assessment of the current situation in the case of communication competences was noticed in the study by universities. At the same time, employers rated the lowest communication skills among graduates. They also pointed to the largest gap in interpersonal competences, and the smallest in foreign languages. We should also not forget about the shortcomings indicated in the study with regard to the use of the mother tongue by graduates. It should also be emphasized that in the case of interpersonal competences and those related to the use of the mother tongue - students and graduates assessed themselves as adequately prepared for the labor market, which clearly contradicts the opinions of employers and, in part, universities, who recognized that there is significant shortages of these competences among students and graduates.¹⁰

In the next step, let's look at research on digital competences.

¹⁰ *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 69.

Table no. 8 Assessment of computer and technical competences with the perception of the demand in the labor market.

COMPETENCE	students		graduates		universities		employers	
	Self-assessment	Employers' expectations	Self-assessment	Employers' expectations	Assessment of competence	Need in the labor market	Assessment of competence	Need in the labor market
Computer skills	4.26	4.30	4.21	4.01	4.12	4.54	3.92	4.33
Organizing office work	3.80	4.12	4.10	3.86	3.42	3.91	3.39	4.00
Mathematical	4.17	3.99	3.87	3.22	3.46	3.99	3.54	3.91
Computer and technical (total)	4.08	4.14	4.06	3.70	3.67	4.15	3.61	4.08

Source: *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 71.

The conducted research confirmed the deficit of computer skills among Poles graduating from studies. On the basis of the above table, we can see that in the case of computer and technical competences, a significant difference can be seen between the needs of the labor market defined by representatives of universities and employers and the assessment of the current situation. Employers and universities indicated the need to improve the assessed key competences of graduates. This need, however, is not noticed by students and graduates themselves, whose answers show that they are convinced that their computer and technical competences are adequate to the expectations of the labor market. The situation observed in the study is worrying because it may lead to the abandonment of the development of computer and technical competences by students, which will translate into a further widening of the discrepancy between the level represented by university graduates and the expectations of employers.¹¹

In the next step of our considerations, let's look at the deficits in the area of personal and social competences.

Table no. 9 Assessment of personal and social competences with the perception of the demand in the labor market.

COMPETENCE	students		graduates		universities		employers	
	Self-assessment	Employers' expectations	Self-assessment	Employers' expectations	Assessment of competence	Need in the labor market	Assessment of competence	Need in the labor market
Cognitive	4.33	4.60	4.28	4.34	3.80	4.69	3.59	4.51
Artistic	2.88	2.88	3.02	2.29	3.59	3.59	2.60	2.60
Civic	3.62	3.37	3.13	1.79	3.50	4.10	3.26	3.37
Personal (total)	3.61	3.61	3.48	2.81	3.63	4.13	3.15	3.49

Source: *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 74.

In the case of cognitive competences, the research confirmed the discrepancy between the self-esteem of students / graduates and the situation desired by employers and the labor market. At the same time, artistic and civic competences were not so important for employers (which may result from the underestimation of these competences by representatives of the labor market).¹²

¹¹ *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 70.

¹² *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, pp. 73-74.

In the next step of our analysis, let's look at professional competences such as: availability, self-organization, managerial skills and the ability to use the knowledge.

Table no. 10 Assessment of professional competences in the context of the labor market demand.

COMPETENCE	students		graduates		universities		employers	
	Self-assessment	Employers' expectations	Self-assessment	Employers' expectations	Assessment of competence	Need in the labor market	Assessment of competence	Need in the labor market
Availability	3.84	4.09	3.40	3.36	3.58	3.90	3.53	3.51
Managerial	3.60	4.13	3.28	3.34	3.49	4.16	3.08	3.59
Self-organizing	4.05	4.52	3.88	4.19	3.68	4.62	3.37	4.26
Knowledge (including the ability to use it)	3.88	4.10	3.70	3.45	3.85	4.49	3.41	4.06
Vocational general (total)	3.84	4.21	3.57	3.59	3.65	4.29	3.35	3.85

Source: *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 76.

Research shows us that the greatest differences between the actual state of affairs and the needs of the labor market, according to employers' representatives, occur in the self-organizing competences of students / graduates as well as the knowledge and skills to use it in practice. Employers' expectations regarding managerial skills of graduates slightly differ from their assessment of the current state. It is worth to underline that students are aware of a gap between their competences and the expectations of the labor market. In turn, according to graduates, they have more knowledge and ways of using it than expected by the labor market. This may indicate the phenomenon of undertaking work below one's qualifications.¹³

Table no. 11 Assessment of competency gaps.

COMPETENCE	students	graduates	universities	employers
Interpersonal (communication)	-0.04694	-0.22915	-0.56333	-1.04246
Self-organizing (vocational general)	-0.46544	-0.30546	-0.9329	-0.96142
Cognitive (personal)	-0.26417	-0.0647	-0.89103	-0.92962
Knowledge (general vocational)	-0.21403	0.24848	-0.63709	-0.67358
Organizing office work (technical and computer)	-0.32112	0.235765	-0.48711	-0.61617
Mother tongue (communication)	0.105	0.459053	-0.90583	-0.57169
Managerial (general vocational)	-0.52649	-0.06195	-0.66696	-0.57065
Computer skills (technical and computer)	-0.04056	0.199936	-0.42311	-0.41288
Mathematical self-assessment (technical and computer)	0.1775	0.645873	-0.52684	-0.36742
Foreign language (communication)	-0.6405	-0.56846	-1.24474	-0.34007
Civic (personal)	0.246206	1.340371	-0.60309	-0.0596

¹³ *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 76.

Artistic (personal)	0	0.731926	0	0
Availability (vocational general)	-0.25417	0.033909	-0.31983	0.073378

Source: *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 86.

Research has shown that the most desirable by employers among graduates are interpersonal, self-organizing and cognitive competences.

To sum up, the above-mentioned research shows that the "hard" qualifications and key competences most desired by the representatives of the labor market are: language skills, creating websites, and operating specialized programs. Employers also pointed to the importance of "soft" skills related to the quality of work performed by employees.¹⁴

Educational needs of Poles, including people over 50.

In 2020, according to the LFS research - 3.7% of Poles aged 25-64 declared participation in education including formal learning (school and higher education) and non-formal education (various types of courses and training). The participation rate in various forms of lifelong learning ranged from 3.7% in 2016 and 2020 to 5.7% in 2018. The greatest interest in deepening and extending the acquired knowledge was observed among the inhabitants of the Mazowieckie voivodeship (5.5%, 1.8 p.p. more than the national average).¹⁵

Labor market status affects participation in lifelong learning. Employed people more willingly and more often undertake forms of training. At the same time, the level of education, acquired competences and skills translate into a more favorable employment situation (higher earnings, better job, greater opportunities for career advancement, lower risk of unemployment, longer professional activity).

Against the background of the EU, Poland is characterized by an unfavorable employment rate, especially in older age categories - people over 50, which is presented in the graphics below. In 2020, Poland was placed 16th in the European Union in terms of the employment rate of people aged 15-64. The indicator in our country amounted to 68.7% and was higher by 1.0 p.p. from the average for the entire European Union. The rate lower than in Poland was recorded in 11 countries, while 3 countries: the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden recorded the rates at the level of over 75%.¹⁶

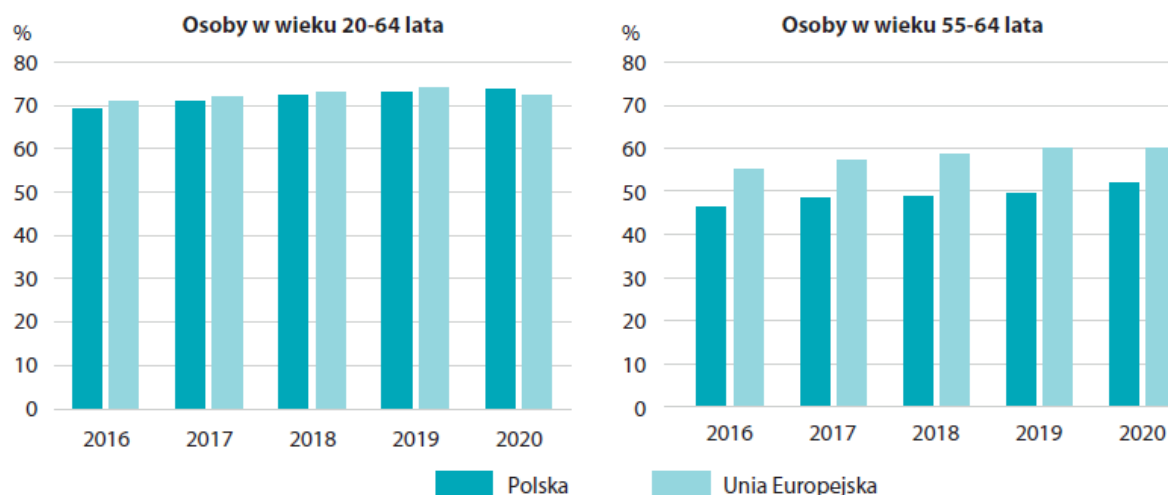
The table below shows the unfavorable situation of Poland compared to the EU in the employment rate for people aged 55-64.

¹⁴ *Analysis of qualifications and key competences for increasing the chances of graduates on the labor market*, Agrotec Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw 2014, p. 87.

¹⁵ *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 32.

¹⁶ *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 37.

Graphic no. 9 Employment rate in Poland and in the European Union.



Source: *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 36.

In the 55-64 age group, the disproportion in the employment rate between Poland and the EU average was 9.0 p.p. in 2016 and 8.0 p.p. in 2020 to the disadvantage of Poland. What is positive, the rate in Poland is systematically growing: from 46.2% in 2016 to 51.8% in 2020. Among the factors affecting the age of leaving the labor market, the pensions system in force in Poland was decisive, e.g. for certain occupational groups (such as miners) to retire after 25 years of work.¹⁷

Table no. 12 Average age of people who have been awarded retirement benefits by the Social Insurance Institution.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Overall	61.9	62.3	62.1	62.1	62.3
Men	63.3	64.6	64.4	64.6	64.8
Women	61.0	61.0	60.7	60.7	60.6

Source: *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 37.

The relatively early retirement of Polish women and men makes people over 50 years of age less educationally active than the younger age categories. People aged 50+, approaching the conscious end of professional activity, are not willing to take part in various forms of lifelong learning, including the acquisition and improvement of their key competences.

Lifelong learning opportunities available in Poland.

Adult education and training is the most diverse area of education in Poland, validating learning outcomes, especially non-formal and informal. This also applies to the system of institutions that implement activities in this area. When identifying lifelong learning in Poland, attention should be paid to all sectors of socio-economic activity (public administration institutions, economic entities and all non-governmental organizations). Due to the adopted goal and organizational form, in adult education and training we can distinguish: formal education and non-formal education.¹⁸

In 2016, 45.9% of Poles aged 18-69 declared participation in broadly understood education, including 31.4% (nearly 8.5 million people) in informal education (self-education), which was the most

¹⁷ *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 36.

¹⁸ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-56_en (accessed on 08/04/2022).

popular form of learning. Participation in education in the school system (formal education) was declared by 11.3% of the respondents (slightly over 3 million people), while every fifth person (nearly 5.8 million people) indicated further education at courses and training and in other forms non-formal education. A positive trend that we could observe is the systematic increase in the educational activity of adult Poles. The percentage of people aged 25-64 who undertook any form of education increased by 7.5 percentage points compared to 2006. The increase concerned the forms of non-formal education (by 4.3 percentage points) and informal education (by 5.6 percentage points), while the decrease occurred in the case of formal education from 5.5% to 4.4%. Participation rates in education for most forms were slightly higher for women than for men.¹⁹

Table no. 13 People aged 25-64 participating in formal, non-formal and informal education by sex and place of residence.

	People participating in							
	any form of education		formal education		non-formal education		informal education	
	2011	2016	2011	2016	2011	2016	2011	2016
Overall	40.0	43.3	5.4	4.4	21.0	22.9	29.0	31.0
men	39.5	42.5	4.5	3.5	20.6	23.1	28.3	30.0
women	40.4	44.0	6.2	5.5	21.4	22.8	29.7	31.9
Cities	45.8	48.3	6.6	5.3	25.2	27.4	33.4	34.4
Village	30.4	35.2	3.3	2.9	14.0	15.7	21.8	25.5

Source: *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 33.

A feature that significantly differentiated the participation of adult Poles in education was the place of residence. In 2016, 49.9% of urban residents and 39.5% of rural residents aged 18-69 undertook or continued any form of education or training. Every fourth inhabitant of the city participated in various types of courses or training, compared to only every seventh inhabitant of the village. Among people aged 18-69, 11.7% of people living in cities and 10.7% of rural residents participated in formal education.²⁰

Obviously, the status on the labor market has an influence on participation in lifelong learning. The results of the research from 2017-2018 show that 68% of employed Poles develop their strictly professional competences and as many as 91% of employees develop their competences, both professional and those not directly related to the work performed. Among the forms of education of working people, non-formal learning (72%) dominated, and more than 2/5 of the respondents (42%) used forms of competence development in their workplace.²¹

The most common reasons for undertaking formal education were professional work (77.4%) and the desire to improve the quality of work performed (56.6% of the respondents). A particularly high level of participation in education was achieved by people representing professions that require continuous improvement of qualifications: teachers (44% of those in training), representatives of medical and IT professions (40% each). Almost half (49%) of those participating in formal education benefited from their financing by the employer, and only slightly more than 1/5 had to finance their training on their own (the average declared cost was about PLN 348). Among the participants of non-formal education, 45% of the respondents received a document confirming the acquired qualifications or skills. In 2016, self-education or informal education concerned 31.4% of Poles, i.e. about 8.5 million

¹⁹ *Adult education 2016*, Central Statistical Office, Gdańsk 2018, p. 14.

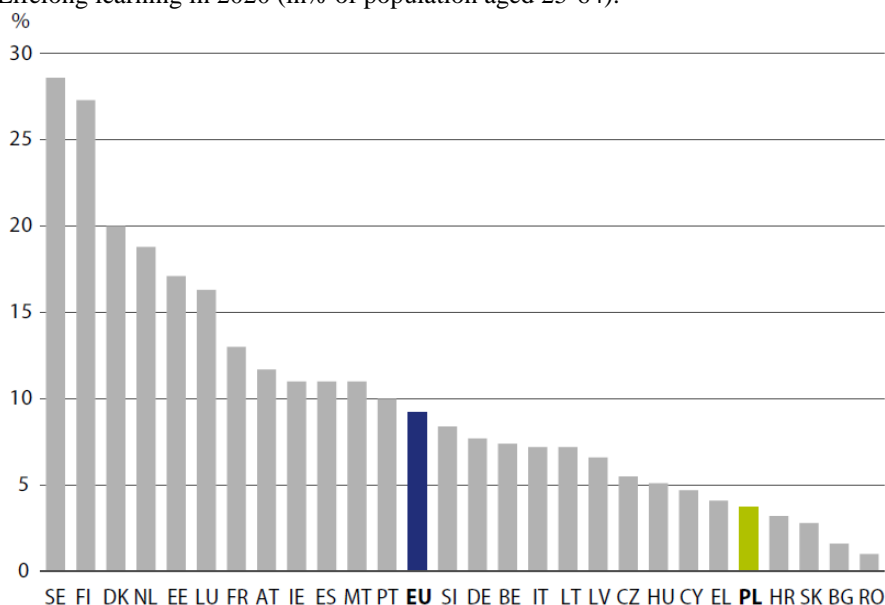
²⁰ *Adult education 2016*, Central Statistical Office, Gdańsk 2018, p. 15.

²¹ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-56_en (accessed on 08/04/2022).

inhabitants of Poland (5 years earlier, this percentage was 30%). Self-education is undertaken mainly by young and better educated people. It concerns women (3 p.p. difference) and city dwellers more often. The most popular methods of self-education include the use of the internet / computer programs (84.5% of respondents), the use of books, trade magazines (80%) and the use of help from family members, friends and co-workers (47.2%).²²

The table below presents the most recent data on the participation of adult Poles in lifelong learning compared to the EU.

Graphic no. 10 Adults participating in education and training in 2020 (in% of total population aged 25-64) / Lifelong learning in 2020 (in% of population aged 25-64).



Source: *Poland in the European Union*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 9.

One of the most important barriers in undertaking additional education by adults in Poland, especially for people with lower incomes, is the financial barrier, i.e. relatively high costs of educational activities. At the same time, research shows that only 22.5% of people undertaking education in the non-formal system incurred the total costs of education on their own (personally or with the help of a household member). Over 49% of the respondents stated that the costs of educational activities were partially or entirely incurred by the employer, future employer or by public institutions. Women more often than men themselves incurred expenses related to lifelong learning (18.8% as compared to 15.9% of men). In the case of women, a smaller number of respondents indicated that the employer finances or co-finances their training (41.7% compared to 46.0% for men). The reason for this could be a situation in which women more often than men undertook training because of their own needs and the desire to develop their interests.²³

It is also worth noting that the costs of lifelong learning were more often incurred by inhabitants of rural areas (18.4%) than inhabitants of cities (16.9%), and less frequently paid for their further education by the employer (38.8% compared to 45.8%) in the city). Which may be the result of the employment structure, as a smaller proportion of rural residents, compared to people living in cities, were employees. A big surprise resulting from the research is the fact that the unemployed to a large

²² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-56_en (accessed on 08/04/2022).

²³ *Adult education 2016*, Central Statistical Office, Gdańsk 2018, p. 45.

extent financed their non-formal education completely or partially (it concerned 43.4% of educational activities).²⁴

In the next step, let's look at the types of organizers of lifelong learning / vocational training for employees of enterprises in Poland.

Graphic no. 11 Implementers of external courses in 2020 for enterprises.



Legend (from up):

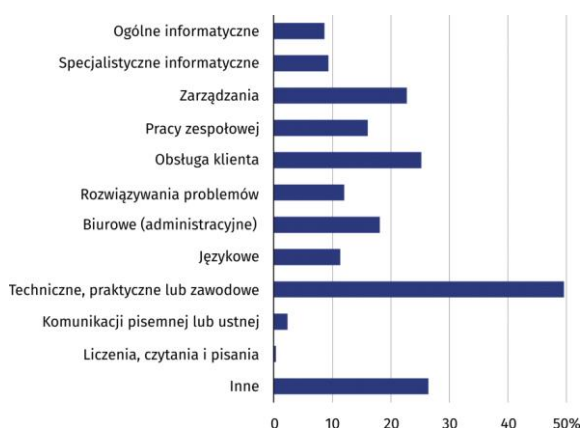
- universities and research and development institutions
- public lifelong learning institutions
- private training institutions
- private companies whose main activity is not training
- employers' organizations, chambers of commerce, industry and professional associations
- unions
- other.

Source: *Characteristics of continuing vocational training 01/12/2021 in enterprises in Poland in 2020*, GUS, 2021, p. 5.

Thus, we can observe that most often various types of courses and training for employees, paid for by employers, were organized by private training institutions and in-service training centers.

In the next step, let's look at the skills that the participants have acquired thanks to the courses and training financed by the employers.

Graphic no. 12 Skills acquired by participants (company employees) on courses in 2020.



²⁴ *Adult education 2016*, Central Statistical Office, Gdańsk 2018, p. 45.

Legend (from up):

- general IT
- special IT
- management
- teamwork
- customer service
- problem solving
- administrative
- languages
- technical, practical, vocational
- written or oral communication
- other.

Source: *Characteristics of continuing vocational training 01/12/2021 in enterprises in Poland in 2020*, GUS, 2021, p. 4.

The most frequently acquired competences by participants of courses and training organized by enterprises for their employees or future employees were practical, technical and professional skills. Then there were skills in the area of management and customer service. Administrative and teamwork skills were further listed.

In the last step, let's take a look at the reasons why companies did not organize courses and training for their employees to raise their competences and skills.

Graphic No. 13 Reasons for not providing continuing vocational training in 2020



Legend (from up):

- current qualifications and skills correspond to the needs of the company
- the company has a policy of employing people with an appropriate level of qualifications
- the company had a problem with identifying training needs
- no relevant training offer on the market
- too high training costs
- the company focussed on initial training and not on continuing training / lifelong learning
- the company invested in training in previous years and did not see such a need at present
- the staff employed did not have time to participate in training
- other reasons.

Source: *Characteristics of continuing vocational training 01/12/2021 in enterprises in Poland in 2020*, GUS, 2021, p. 5.

As we can observe, the main reasons are: employers' failure to perceive the need to raise competences / skills by employees and the recruitment policy that ensures employers employ people with the required competences. Other reasons for the lack of organization of training for employers was

the focus on the development of professional competences and not on lifelong learning process, also the lack of time for employees to participate in training.

Differences in education of people over 50 and younger people in Poland.

Age is a characteristic feature of participation in the education of adult Poles - the older people are, the less they participate in raising the level of education and developing their knowledge or skills. In 2016, 67.8% of people aged 18-24 benefited from formal education, among people aged 25-29 - 16.3%, while among people aged 50-69 this percentage was only 0.5%. Participation in non-formal and informal education also decreased with the age of the respondents. On average, 25% of people aged 18-49 and only 12% of people aged 50-69 participated in courses and training (non-formal education). Also in self-education there was a trend of decline in participation with age. The older the people are, the less likely they are to self-educate. Among the respondents aged 18-24, 42.5% of people used informal education, while in the group of people aged 50-69 this share was only 24.3%.²⁵

More light on the low inclination of adult Poles to participate in lifelong learning is shed by the AES 2016 research. The survey shows reserve for this process. 61% of adult Poles indicated that they do not participate and do not want to participate in education and training. Another nearly 25% said they are seriously considering quitting education and training. Which gives a total of $\frac{3}{4}$ adult Poles with a negative attitude towards lifelong learning. On the other hand, a different question asked - about participation in education understood as taking care of the development of their skills, most of the respondents want to learn and participate in education.²⁶

The research also shows the trends taking place in the last decade in the context of the age of adult Poles participating in lifelong learning. In 2011, 44% of Poles aged 18-69 participated in any form of education, and 5 years later it was almost 45.9%. The positive changes are even more pronounced if we take into account the population of people aged 25-64. About 43% of Poles over the age of 25 participated in some form of education in 2016 (in 2011 it was only 36%). Unfortunately, the percentage of adult Poles participating in lifelong learning clearly decreases with age. While about half of 30-34-year-olds are educated, about 41% of people aged 45-49, only 34% of people aged 55-59. At the same time, research shows that in 2016, among Poles aged 18-69, as many as 54.1% of respondents did not participate in any form of self-education.²⁷

According to the results of the Labor Force Survey (LFS), in 2020 the participation rate of people aged 25-64 in education in Poland was almost half lower than in the European Union countries and amounted to 3.7% (with an average of 9.2% for the European Union). The relatively low educational activity of adult Poles compared to other countries is also confirmed by the results of the Adult Education Survey. In 2016, 25.5% of the respondents aged 25-64 participated in formal or non-formal education. Among the European Union countries, a worse result was recorded only in Romania, Greece and Bulgaria.²⁸

Tab. no. 14 Continuing education of adults aged 25-64.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Poland	3.7	4.0	5.7	4.8	3.7

²⁵ *Adult education 2016*, Central Statistical Office, Gdańsk 2018, p. 18.

²⁶ *ZSK Quarterly*, No. 3/2021, Educational Research Institute, Warsaw 2021, p. 7.

²⁷ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-56_en (accessed on 08/04/2022).

²⁸ *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 33.

including women	4.0	4.4	6.3	5.4	4.3
EU	10.8	10.9	11.1	11.3	9.2
including women	11.7	11.9	12.2	12.4	10.0

Source: *Human capital in Poland in 2016-2020*, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2021, p. 32.

When analyzing the existing forms of lifelong learning for adults in Poland, periodic studies show that between 2011 and 2016, the percentage of adult Poles participating in formal education decreased slightly - from 13.6% in 2011 to 11.3% in 2016. Almost 68% of people aged 18-24 and 16.3% of people aged 25-29 studied in schools or at university. In the case of non-formal education there was a slight increase in the participation rate - from 20.9% in 2011 to 21.4% in 2016. People aged 25-44 were the most active (25% of the respondents). The highest level of participation in non-formal education concerned people in the 35-39 age group (almost 30%). In the older age categories, the participation rate in non-formal education is unfortunately declining.²⁹

The research on the lifelong learning of adult Poles aged 18-69 shows that people with higher education (31.6%) and general secondary education (28.5%) most often participated in formal education. Among people with higher education, every fourth respondent completed postgraduate studies. Most people participating in formal education were educated in the following fields: technology, industry, construction (18.3%) and business, administration and law (17.5%). Among people studying at the tertiary level, 12.9% completed postgraduate studies, where students most often chose teacher education and pedagogy. It is worth noting that almost half of people studying in the formal education system received additional training in various forms of informal education, and 30.4% in non-formal education. Such activities were also most often undertaken by people with higher education (42.1% in non-formal education and 57.1% in informal education). There were more men (52.3%) than women (48.1%) among non-formal education participants. On the other hand, more women (31.0%) than men (29.7%) participated in non-formal education. The most popular field of non-formal education was technology, industry, construction (18.4%) as well as business, administration and law (17.1%).³⁰

Among people aged 18-69 studying in the formal system, the most common reasons for starting education were: increasing the chance of getting or changing a job (50.0%), improved career prospects (49.8%) and obtaining a diploma (41.0%). Among the employed, the following reasons were dominant: improvement of development prospects (64.2%) and increasing the chance of receiving a new job offer or changing the profession (45.1%). Also among non-formal educators, the main reasons for starting education resulted from professional reasons (77.4% of the respondents). Among the training mainly related to work, the most frequently chosen were educational activities related to business, administration and law (23.5%), technology, industry and construction (17.1%), services (13.4%) as well as health and social care (12.5%).³¹

The average number of hours devoted to non-formal education in the twelve months prior to the survey was 55 hours and was greater for women - 59 hours than for men - 51 hours. More than half of the respondents (58.3%) devoted to learning up to 24 hours in total, including as many as 33.8% participated in educational activities, the duration of which did not exceed eight hours. This may indicate

²⁹ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-56_en (accessed on 08/04/2022).

³⁰ *Adult education 2016*, Central Statistical Office, Gdańsk 2018, p. 25.

³¹ *Adult education 2016*, Central Statistical Office, Gdańsk 2018, p. 29.

a situation in which a significant proportion of the respondents participated in on-the-job training or participated in occupational health and safety courses that are obligatory for employees.³²

In the table below, we can observe the structure of people aged over 25 participating in any activity related to improving professional qualifications or skills.

Graphic no.14 Structure of people aged 25 and more participating in any activity related to improving their professional qualifications or other skills in 2005-2007, 2007-2009, 2009-2011-2013 and 2013-2015 by gender, education, place of residence and age (in percent).

Cechy demograficzno-społeczne	Odsetek osób w wieku 25 lat i więcej uczestniczących w podnoszeniu swoich kwalifikacji zawodowych czy innych umiejętności w latach				
	2005-2007	2007-2009	2009-2011	2011-2013	2013-2015
Ogółem	11,7	11,9	10,7	9,6	8,7
Kobiety	56,8	51,9	54,0	56,1	54,6
Mężczyźni	43,2	48,1	46,0	43,9	45,4
Wyższe i policealne	57,5	57,4	62,2	63,4	68,2
Średnie	28,5	29,0	24,7	25,2	22,6
Zasadnicze zawodowe	11,8	11,9	10,6	9,5	7,1
Podstawowe i poniżej	2,2	1,7	2,5	1,9	2,1
Miasta powyżej 500 tys.	23,6	24,1	25,2	27,3	25,3
Miasta od 200 do 500 tys.	17,0	17,2	17,2	16,9	21,5
Miasta od 100 do 200 tys.	8,4	8,0	8,0	8,4	8,5
Miasta od 20 do 100 tys.	19,6	19,2	20,0	18,4	18,4
Miasta poniżej 20 tys.	11,8	10,4	10,6	10,6	9,0
Wieś	19,6	21,0	19,0	18,4	17,4
25-29 lat	25,8	27,3	25,7	22,8	20,7
30-34 lata	20,9	18,7	19,9	19,8	17,6
35-39 lat	14,3	16,4	16,2	16,6	17,2
40-44 lata	12,8	12,0	12,6	12,7	15,2
45-49 lat	10,4	10,6	9,2	9,2	9,1
50-54 lata	9,3	8,4	8,0	8,5	8,3
55 lat i więcej	6,4	6,6	8,5	10,3	12,0

Source: Czapiński J., Panek T., *Social Diagnosis 2015*, Warsaw 2015, p. 153.

As we can see, young people still dominate among the people in training (38% were aged 25-34). People aged 35-44 accounted for approximately 32% of participants, and people aged 45-54 - approximately 17-18%. Among the 55 and over age category, only 12% raised their qualifications.³³

Coming to the end of our analyzes, let's take a look at the results of the LFS / BAEL study on the participation of adults in education during the 4 weeks prior to the study. These data provide the basis for the so-called Adult Learning Benchmark of European Cooperation in Education or Training (ET 2020, aiming to achieve EU as a whole by 2020 the uptake of adult participation in education or training for adults aged 25-64 in the 4 weeks prior to the survey to at least 15%). The available research results show that the situation of Poland is unfavorable in this respect. In 2015, participation in the EU amounted to 10.8% (in both formal and non-formal education), in 2017 - 10.9%, and in 2019 - 11.3% (10.8% excluding the United Kingdom). In Poland, it was respectively 3.5% (2015), 4.0% (2017) and 4.8% (2019), i.e. twice less than the EU average. Thanks to the Eurostat data for the 55-74 age group, we can observe that participation in lifelong learning by older Poles is clearly lower than the European average. In the EU it amounted to 4.8% in 2015, 4.9% in 2017, and 5.2% in 2019 (4.8% excluding Great Britain), including women - 6.0% (5.6% excluding Great Britain), men - 4.3% (3.9% excluding Great

³² *Adult education 2016*, Central Statistical Office, Gdańsk 2018, pp. 40-43.

³³ Czapiński J., Panek T., *Social Diagnosis 2015*, Warsaw 2015, p. 154.

Britain). In Poland, it was 0.6% (2015), 1.0% (2017) and 1.4% (2019), respectively, of which 1.7% for women and 1.0% for men.³⁴

Finally, let's look at the results of the BKL and AES studies. The results of the BKL Study in 2010-2014 in the case of Poland were similar to the results of the LFS / BAEL study. However, after methodological changes, the survey from 2017 gave our country much higher results. In the 25-64 age category, the participation of Poles in education and training was over 20% (compared to 4.0% in 2017, but according to a different methodology). On the other hand, according to the AES survey, the participation of adult Poles aged 55-64 in education and training in the 12 months before the survey was 13.4%. In the BKL 2017 study, the result of similar participation for adult Poles aged 55-59 was 28%, and for those aged 60-64 - 19%.³⁵

Conclusions and recommendations.

The research analyzed in the report shows that adult Poles, especially people over 50, are characterized by a deficit in such key competences as: using the mother tongue, knowledge of foreign languages, IT and digital skills, soft skills (personal, social, civic) and entrepreneurial competences.

An adult, as he has to decide on his own to start participating in the process of lifelong learning, must be characterized by a strong motivation to education. Positive associations and previous good learning experiences are also very helpful. Strong motivation is especially crucial in the case of older people (50+) who, due to the fact that they are approaching the end of their professional activity, are less likely to study related to employment. While people under the age of 50 decide to participate in training and education for reasons of work (to do it better, to be promoted, change their job for a better one, to have a better position on the labor market, their work requires frequent updating / improvement knowledge and skills), people aged 50+ who already have a relatively short period of professional activity ahead of them (many Polish women and many Poles retire at the age of 55/60) do not see the need for training.

Participation in lifelong learning in the modern world is extremely important not only for professional reasons, but also for personal development and psychophysical well-being of a person. Participation in various forms of lifelong learning allows an adult to develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. Thanks to participation in lifelong learning an adult can diagnose his or her resources (skills, predispositions, talents, opportunities, interests, but also limitations or deficits); acquires awareness of their strengths and weaknesses; learns how to effectively manage their resources; develops their skills and takes care of the development of physical, mental and emotional condition.³⁶

In order to increase the number of adult Poles, especially people aged 50+ in lifelong learning and the development of key competences, it is necessary to change the awareness of these people in society. Awareness of the advantages and possibilities of acquiring / improving their competences is the starting point for the entire process of taking up education by these people. In the next step, lifelong

³⁴ *Information on the situation of older people in Poland in 2019*, Ministry of Family and Social Policy, Warsaw 2020, p. 177.

³⁵ *Information on the situation of older people in Poland in 2019*, Ministry of Family and Social Policy, Warsaw 2020, pp. 177-178.

³⁶ *ZSK quarterly*, No. 3/2021, Educational Research Institute, Warsaw 2021, p. 25.



learning must be promoted more widely. Adults must know where and what forms of education they can take.

The processes of educating key competences must, of course, be adapted to the specific needs of people aged 50+, e.g. in terms of not very long training cycles, architectural accessibility of places of education (due to the specific health needs of older people), financial availability (e.g. financing or co-financing of training / courses by the state / employers), accessibility of the provided content and training materials (as people aged 50+ often have little IT / digital skills).

In the process of encouraging and motivating adult Poles, especially after the age of 50, to raise key competences, it is important to overcome existing stereotypes, such as thinking that education is for young people, that education is mainly related to professional work, that having a family and responsibilities in private life, there is no time for education.³⁷

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