

What does an **Adult Education Centre (AEC) change in a small town or village?**

Each resident, regardless of their age and income level, gets the opportunity to learn something important and interesting to bridge the existing gaps, to study something what will help them become more successful or feel happier. Anyone ready to share their knowledge with others gets the chance to become an educator.

In addition, an AEC is a meeting place for people. Adult Education Centres can and shall play a key role as both places for acquiring knowledge and skills and platforms that unite the local community and stimulate its development.

These are the reasons for the development of Adult Education Centres to be one of the priorities of DVV International Belarus. The ways in which such centres help address global challenges, e.g. migration, poverty or political inclusion, are manifold. Moreover, the AECs most certainly play a crucial role in the exercise of the human right to education, being an important tool for reducing poverty and facilitating local development.

DVV International, in cooperation with its Belarusian partners, exerts targeted efforts to create and develop AECs in the Belarusian province.

ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES: COMMUNITY EDUCATION



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What is an AEC for DVV International?

- *AEC considers adult education to be its main task and promotes it. This is reflected in the strategy, charter and general documents of the AEC.*
- *AEC gives adults the chance to develop professionally and personally, integrate into society, become active citizens and diversify income. It is a centre that offers a wide range of opportunities for quality education in various fields.*
- *AEC is open to young people and adults from the local community regardless of their gender, nationality, ethnicity, religious beliefs, educational level. Its services are also available to people with low income.*
- *AEC is run by adult education professionals and cooperates with qualified adult trainers/educators.*
- *AEC conducts regular needs and market analyses to use the findings as a basis for the development of its educational programmes.*
- *AECs can be based on different models and thus differ from each other; they can also operate as subdivisions within other organizations.*

Adult Education Centres can offer the adults in local communities three main services:

1. Education and training. This is the key type of activities in AECs (at least 50% of the events are dedicated to E&T). Educational programmes are offered in at least three of the following areas: professional development, civic education and social competencies, health and nutrition, languages, culture and the arts. Both long-term courses and one-time events are held at the AEC.

2. Orientation and career guidance. Guidance and consulting activities help people assess their competencies, identify educational needs and opportunities for further development, including the professional one, and find the corresponding educational opportunities in the region.

3. Empowerment through Community Initiatives. AECs collaborate with community initiatives, support them (through providing premises, equipment, expertise and advice, facilitating networking) and help them achieve greater independence and sustainability.

Why does DVV International support the development of Adult Education Centres? The reasons are as follows:

- **They help reduce poverty.** AECs offer skills development programmes, career guidance, entrepreneurial and financial literacy courses.
- **They facilitate local development.** AECs strive to offer the society the non-formal education programmes that meet the needs of local target audiences and the local or regional labour market, and they also adapt quickly to changes in local or regional conditions.
- **They enhance social inclusion.** AECs offer training opportunities to vulnerable populations (the elderly, people with disabilities, rural residents, etc.).
- **They stimulate the formation of an active civil position.** AECs initiate interaction and cooperation to address local challenges, stimulate civil participation in local decision-making processes, reinforce democratic processes and thereby facilitate social stability and order.

SUCCESS STORY

Barkulab Adult Education Centre, Bykhov

The Barkulab Adult Education Centre was founded in 2019 as a structural subdivision of the Bykhov District Local Development Fund. The Bykhov district is one of the largest rural areas in the southern part of the Mogilev region. As of 1 January 2020, the population of the district totalled 30.4 thousand people (17.1 thousand of them lived in Bykhov and 13.3 thousand – in rural areas).

The educational system of the Bykhov district consists of 33 educational institutions, including: 18 general secondary education institutions, 7 pre-school educational institutions, 2 additional education institutions for children and youth; the State Educational Institution “Bykhov District Curriculum & Instruction Office”, 3 family-type foster homes. There had been virtually no institutions and organizations in the region that implemented educational programmes for adults on a systematic basis and positioned themselves as institutions of additional education for adults until the Barkulab AEC was established.

The centre has been functioning for more than a year, and it has already managed to achieve considerable success.

What has already been accomplished?

- A team of local educators has been formed;
- The Adult Education Centre has its permanent office – a spacious room in the very centre of the town;
- The development strategy for the Barkulab Adult Education Centre until 2022 was developed;
- A study of the educational needs of the Bykhov district residents was conducted, and 203 people took part in the corresponding survey;

According to the survey findings, 77 percent of the respondents need additional education.

- Based on the identified needs, educational programmes for the district residents were developed and implemented in 2019, namely “Basic Entrepreneurship”, “Basic Ceramics”, “Domestic Floriculture”, “Dementia as a New Social Challenge”. In 2020, the classes in computer literacy, English, and make-up for beginners were added to the list of courses;
- Training was organized within the framework of the Basic Business Planning course for the unemployed who wanted to start their own business;
- The first courses on a paid basis were held;

The survey findings revealed that the people were ready to receive additional education on a paid basis: 75.4% of the respondents were willing to pay for the classes.

- A circle of partner organizations was formed, the first partnership agreements in the field of non-formal adult education were signed;
- The concept for the non-formal adult education development in the Bykhov region was developed;
- The Barkulab AEC website was created, barkulab.by, it also has accounts in all the popular social media.

The activities of the centre are aimed at promoting the ideas of adult education, creating a variety of educational services (from hobbies to professional competencies), developing the professional skills of the local educators and improving the institutional structure of adult education. Moreover, special focus is placed on the inclusiveness of education, as well as the development of online learning.




**Feedback of
Alina Ponomareva
about the Make-up for
Beginners course:**

The classes turned out to be very effective, the result surpassed all my expectations! Thank you very much for the great amount of practice and comprehensible presentation of the material, assistance, advice and useful guides! It was a pleasure for me to study in such an energetic team. Having completed this course, I don't need a make-up artist any more! Thank you!

**Feedback of
Ekaterina Kileso
about the Computer
literacy course:**

The clear, well-thought-out organisation contributed to the successful acquisition of knowledge that will be useful in my professional life. During the course, I became convinced that there is always more to learn. New issues open up new possibilities for this. Thank you! Keep up the good work!



Adult Education Centres can take many forms: an AEC can be a large building where courses in various fields are held, or it can only occupy one office or room in a building owned by another organization. An AEC may even have no classrooms at all, but play the role of a manager that connects people who want to learn something and the sites that offer the corresponding training (community centres, libraries, local social service centres).

The partners might have engaged in creating Adult Education Centres per se with the support of DVV International as late as in 2019, however, numerous steps had been taken in the preceding 10 years that contributed to promoting an Adult Education Centre concept:

1. The Rural Education Centre (the Vseobuch (universal education) Training Centre) and Your Chance Additional Education Centre for Adults, offering their services to vulnerable populations (the Kobrin Social Service Centre), worked in the Kobrin region as early as in 2010, backed by the support of DVV International.

2. Pensioners of the township of Shumilino, Vitebsk region, had the opportunity to take part in educational activities within the framework of the ≤55≤ Adult Education Centre project implemented in State Additional Education Institution “Shumilino District Centre for Children and Youth”.

3. The Village Renaissance centre for culture and education has been operating in the village of Stoly (Pruzany district, Brest region) since 2016. It dates back to 2014, when a small-scale project with the same name was implemented, fuelled with a great desire of caring citizens to preserve the original culture of the village and the work of the famous folk master N. Tarasyuk. Today, the centre has its own closed pavilion (that can be transformed depending on the type and the topic of the event) where various cultural and educational events are held.

4. The Association of Life-Long Learning and Enlightenment created Regional Resource Centres for the Development of Additional Education for Adults in Gomel, Vitebsk and Grodno in 2016, whose task was to promote the role of non-formal education in regional development and the availability of educational services for vulnerable populations.

5. The Centre for Non-Formal Education and Engagement of Residents in Arts was established in the Korma district (Gomel Region) within the framework of the Learn to Act project. In addition, the Korma District Centre for Additional Education of Adults has been operating in Korma since 2018, and its representatives participate regularly in training events organized by DVV International Belarus.

Besides the Adult Education Centre in Bykhov, DVV International Belarus currently supports **two more AECs in the regions:**



sova-center.by

1. **The Sow@ Centre for Additional Education of Adults** in Krasnopolye (Mogilev region), sova-center.by. The Sow@ AEC was established by the Start-Vostok Local Development Fund with the support of DVV International Belarus in 2019. The AEC implements educational programmes based on the interests and needs of the Krasnopolye district residents. The centre strives to create a favourable environment for the development of the creative and professional capacities of the participants in its courses. The first courses started in 2019, and in 2020, the centre continued its work in the directions that were identified as the most relevant for the district residents.



kultyvatar.by

2. **The Kultyvatar Cultural and Educational Centre in Lyntupy** (Postavy district, Vitebsk region), kultyvatar.by. The centre was established in 2017 to address the challenges of employment and self-employment of the local population, develop the local community and improve interaction between the local and the visiting population. The key thematic areas of the centre's work include: the cultural traditions of the region, i.e. cooking, ceramics, woodworking, etc., the eco-friendly lifestyle formation, and the courses that cover the needs of different target groups: youth, teenagers, young families.

We appreciate the efforts of our partners aimed at promoting both the Adult Education Centres concept and the exercise of the right to education for all in the Belarusian province!