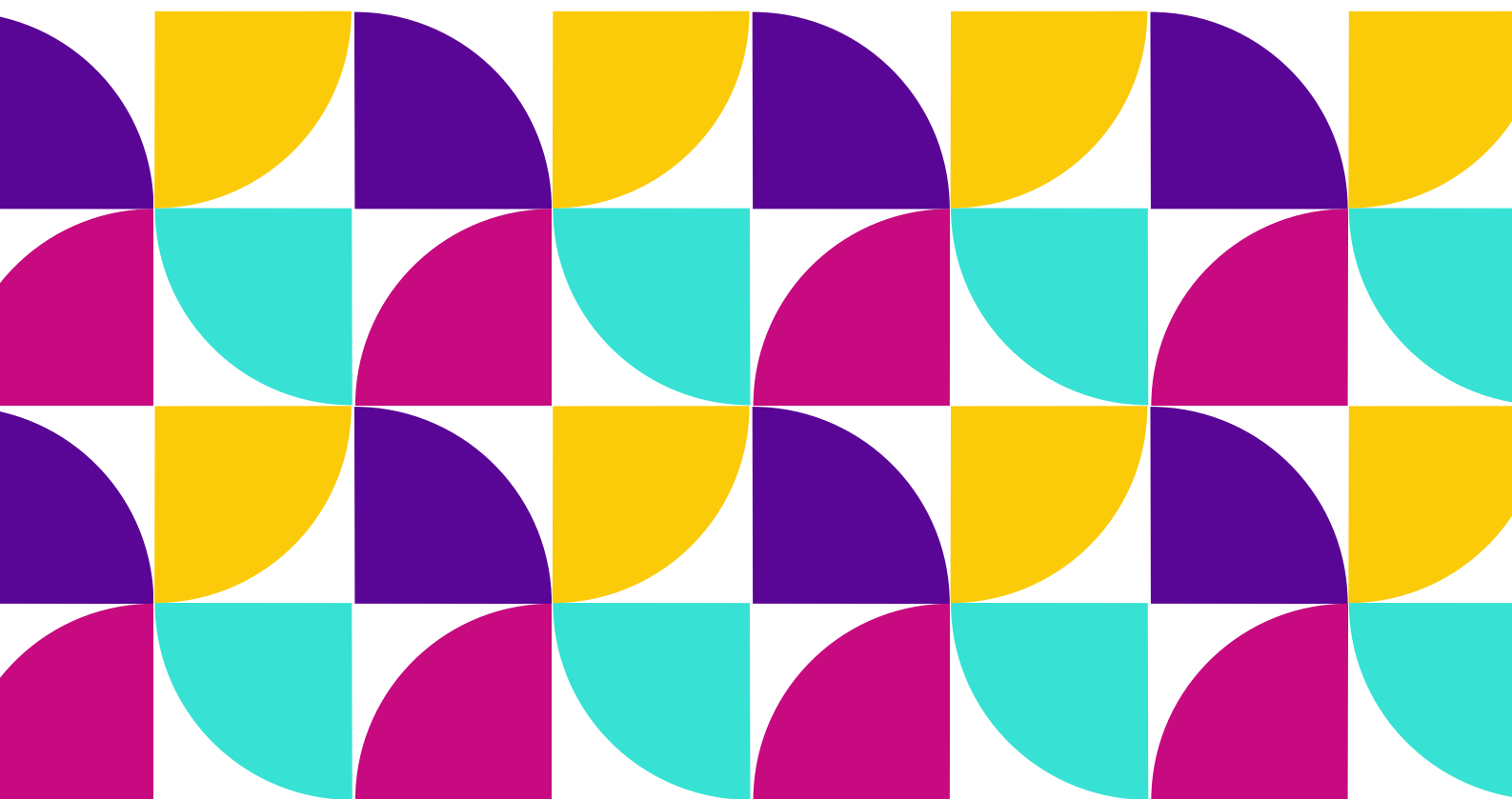


# **FOLK HIGH SCHOOL – THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION**

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALTERNATIVE  
STUDY MODEL IN LITHUANIA AND ESTONIA





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# LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The agenda of study visit to Sweden Vaddo School 13

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Table 2: The agenda of study visit to Icelandic "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" school 13

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Table 3: List of Lithuania and Estonia experts 14

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# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" study programmes	25
Figure 2: "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" school calendar	26
Figure 3: "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" model	34
Figure 4: Väddö Folk High School courses	37
Figure 5: "Väddö" Folk High School model	54
Figure 6: "Sodžiaus meistrai" model	63
Figure 7: Proportion of young people not continuing their studies in Estonia	90
Figure 8: Education drop-outs in Estonia	91

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	6
Introduction	8
1.Methodology	11
2.Multidimension Models of Folk High School: Case analyses	15
2.1 Lýðskólinn á Flateyri, Iceland	15
2.2 Vaddo Folk High School, Sweden	35
2.3 Sodžiaus meistrai, Lithuania	55
3.Analysis of the Lithuanian education environment	64
4.Analysis of the Estonia education environment	74
5.Recommendations for implementing the alternative model in Lithuania	76
6.Recommendations for implementing the alternative model in Estonia	89
Appendix 1: Questionnaire	103
Appendix 2: Folk High Schools Comparison table	106
Appendix 3: Questions for the experts	113

# SUMMARY

Folk High Schools provide an alternative study model for lifelong learning, focused on a personal and social skills development. First started in Denmark, now considered to be the future of education worldwide. Folk High Schools are established to accommodate people of all age groups with various learning needs. It helps to learn new things, develop new skills, get a formal or non-formal school diploma, and possibly find a job in the future. Lithuania has a high unemployment rate among youth and adults, almost one of two Lithuanians aged 15-29 are not employed or studying. There are strategic guidelines related to youth employment policy set out in a Lithuania's documents and programs. At this moment, sectoral ministries in Lithuania are preparing strategic documents detailing investments for the next 10 years (until 2030). Different national authorities have specific measures in place to reduce potential unemployment among young people or increase their participation in the labour market. Folk High Schools might provide an opportunity for unemployed or unmotivated people to learn more about themselves and prepare for the future. This study analyses include three cases to create recommendations for implementing Folk High School study model in Lithuania and Estonia.

Study was conducted during the period of 2021 - 2022 to see how this alternative study model could be implemented in Lithuania and Estonia. The first Folk High School chosen for comparative analyses was "Vaddo School" in Sweden, the second one was "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" in Iceland, and the last one was "Sodžiaus meistrai" in Lithuania. The following topics were analysed in each school: formal/non-formal education, competencies; teachers requirements; study programs and education process; students, entry criteria, impact measurement, success criteria, school KPI's; financial model: funding, prices and fees. For data collection, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were held with different stakeholders from all countries, as well as documents given by schools were analyzed.

Findings showed that all three schools are somewhat different. “Vaddo” school provides students with formal and informal education and has six different departments, including culture & self-development, sustainability course, change course, integration, and two social pedagogue departments. The education in this school is fully funded by the government and a diploma is issued for the formal education course. As apposed, “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” school offers only non-formal education and has two courses: “The ocean, the Mountains and You” and “Ideas, the World and you”. The students paying for the courses themselves and a diploma of participation is given. Regarding “Sodžiaus meistrai”, this school offers only formal vocational education, and the following professions are available: chef, carpenter - joiner, ornamental planting and business worker. The studies are partly funded by the government and after graduation, a professional qualification diploma is received. Therefore, mentioned Folk High Schools are different in various aspects.

After the in-depth analyzes, the qualitative interviews were conducted with experts from Lithuania and Estonia. Further recommendations for implementing the alternative school model are given to Lithuania and Estonia. The Recommendation discusses two scenarios for the implementation of the model in Lithuania: a moderate one, which does not require major systemic changes, and an innovative one, which proposes to pilot a completely new form organization. The recommendations are based on an analysis of the education system in both countries and expert interviews. The socio-cultural context, the attitudes of society and decision-makers have also been taken into account.

# INTRODUCTION

Folk High Schools were founded in Denmark in the mid-nineteenth century and were initially aimed at providing civic education for young people of the peasantry to engage in societal matters. The Danish philosopher and theologian N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) was the main influence for the Folk High Schools, or “the school for the people”. Lifelong learning that focuses on personal and social skills was crucial for both the nation and the state (Borsch, Skovdal and Jervelund, 2019[1]; Lövgren, 2019[2]). Folk High Schools – mostly informal adult education institutions – are now functioning successfully worldwide.

The education model of Folk High Schools is based on a common set of values, and on a holistic view of human beings and of knowledge that is related to a person’s whole life situation. Attendance in Folk High Schools does not prioritize formal qualifications but is aimed at personal and social development, clarification of educational and employment goals, and increased social participation. Since the Folk High Schools are boarding schools, students also share their leisure time and weekends, just like they are expected to take part in daily chores around the school. As such, Folk High Schools constitute small communities based on norms of reciprocity and mutual obligations (Borsch, Skovdal and Jervelund, 2019). These exam-free pedagogical institutions focus on the formation of the whole person and serve as a basis for self-understanding. Personal development and the individual’s experience of what is meaningful are central to this approach (Lövgren, 2019). Thus, mere academic learning is replaced with learning of life, about life, and for life (Borgen and Borgen, 2016[3]).

[1] Borsch, A. S., Skovdal, M., and Jervelund, S. S. (2019). How a School Setting Can Generate Social Capital for Young Refugees: Qualitative Insights from a Folk High School in Denmark. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34(1): 718–740. doi:10.1093/jrs/fez003

[2] Lövgren, J. (2019). Community, Self and the Other: Learning Processes in Norwegian Folk High Schools. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 63(5): 789–804. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2018.1452288>

[3] Borgen S., and Borgen, N. (2016). Student retention in higher education: Folk high schools and educational decisions. *Higher Education*, 71(4): 505–523. DOI 10.1007/s10734-015-9921-7



Folk High Schools focus greatly on diversity and inclusivity. According to Hedegaard and Hugo (2020[4]), in Sweden Folk High Schools enjoy a long-established tradition of organizing courses that are aimed at inclusion and which seem to accommodate people with various learning needs, such as people with disabilities, senior citizens, and people who did not succeed in their previous school careers, for example, unemployed youth and adults. For senior citizens, participation in adult education offers a context where can be included in society, experience meaningfulness, and even create conditions for their own well-being (Hedegaard and Hugo, 2020). The literacy practices (attending an aphasia course) at a Swedish Folk High Schools were emancipatory to the participants with aphasia because they provided ways for the participants to un-mask their inherent competence, increasing their agency (Taubner, 2019[5]). For the young refugees the social-capital-enhancing processes unfolding in the Folk High Schools provided them with some of the social resources and skills needed to 'get ahead' in their integration journey. The school's residential, community and educational arrangements were helpful in overcoming obstacles to social inclusion due to poor language proficiency, unfamiliarity with everyday practices and the separation from established social networks (Borsch, Skovdal and Jervelund, 2019).

[4] Hedegaard, J. and Hugo, M. (2020). Inclusion through Folk High School courses for senior citizens. *Educational Gerontology*, 46(2): 84–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03601277.2020.1712773>

[5] Taubner, H. (2019). Increased Agency through Screens and Co-Creation - Literacy Practices within a Group of People with Aphasia at a Swedish Folk High School. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 21(1): 197–206. <https://doi.org/10.16993/sjdr.635>

As Folk High Schools are often quoted as an alternative approach to foster inclusivity and promote life-long learning, this educational model could be one of the ways to engage unemployed youth and adults in Lithuania. According to the Lithuanian department of statistics (2021), the overall employment rate of the Lithuanian population in the 15-29 age group is decreasing and reached 47.6% in 2020, indicating that almost one in two people in this age group is not employed or studying. In addition, the number of formal education students relative to the total population is decreasing. Youth unemployment can have negative long-term effects, increasing the risk of future unemployment, lower-income, reducing the motivation to start a family and contributing to negative demographic trends. Young people are more vulnerable during the life transitions (such as the transition from the education system to the labour market), due to their lack of work experience, sometimes inadequate education or qualifications, often limited social protection or difficulties in accessing financial resources.

Thus, we examined the organisations of Folk High Schools in Iceland and Sweden: what methodologies and processes of this educational model, what role teachers or mentors and students have in the education process, what are specific requirements or student selection processes for these schools, what programmes are offered, what impact do these schools generate and how they are financed. Based on the case studies analysis, the possibilities of the development of Folk High Schools' educational model in Lithuania and Estonia were explored.

# 1.METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study was to analyze the experiences and practices of the Swedish “Vaddo” Folk High School, the Icelandic “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” Folk High School and the Lithuanian "Sodžiaus meistrai" cases and to assess the potential for introducing these models in Lithuania and Estonia. The methodology chosen for the study includes case analyses conducted by document review, expert interviews, and focus group discussions. The selected cases were analysed according to the detailed study framework (see Annex 1).

Main themes analysed: alternative study model: formal/ non-formal education, competences; teachers requirements; study programs and education process; students, entry criteria; impact measurement, success criteria, school KPI's; financial model: funding, prices, fees. The final summary of comparison of case analyses presented in Appendix 2.

## DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected by detail questionnaire (Annex 1) conducting semi structured interviews and focus group discussions with staff of schools, administration representatives and in some cases other relevant stakeholders. Documents provided by schools were also analysed. The type of documents included: methodological descriptions of educational process, annual report, questionnaires used for evaluation of services filled by students. The data was collected using the same design and questionnaire in all country cases, a comparative analysis of all cases based on the framework of analyses has been drawn up for with the aim to compare data (Appendix 2). All the data collected was analysed using content analyses. Content analysis is a research method used to identify patterns and connecting categories by finding correlations in how concepts are communicated by different stakeholders.[6]

[6] Hsieh H-F, Shannon SE. Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2005;15(9):1277-1288. doi:10.1177/1049732305276687

Interviews. The advantage of the interview, as a data collection method, lies in the possibility to obtain more detailed and nuanced answers to research questions, than using a standardized questionnaire. This means that the research participant (also called an “informant” in qualitative research tradition) can answer and express attitudes and motives. Using this method, informants are interviewed individually, based on pre-prepared interview questions. However, the conversation between the researcher and the informant is not formalized, the participant is free to express their thoughts not only according to the given questions (Bitinas, Rupšienė and Žydžiūnaitė, 2008). [7] During an interview, the researcher aims to establish a close relationship with the informant, to earn their trust, and to give them an opportunity to express their thoughts freely. Only one question is asked at a time, but it is not mandatory to follow the order of the questions – during different interviews questions may be asked in a different order depending on how they arise organically during the conversation. Also, the researcher can clarify questions or ask additional questions based on the responses of the interviewee. More than 12 individual interviews were performed with different stakeholders during the period of August 2021 and April 2022. (Table 1, 2, 3).

Group discussion (focus group) is a qualitative research method for collecting in-depth information about the qualitative aspects of certain topics, that allows analysing specific topics exhaustively, discussing research participants’ perceptions, interpretations, opinions, attitudes and experiences related to the analysed topic. This method gives depth and multidimensionality to the research and allows to better understand the context of the studied situation or phenomenon. Group discussion is an organized conversation of a small group of purposefully selected research participants and is focused on a specific topic. The aim of a group discussion is not a series of questions and answers and not a search for consensus among the group members, but an interaction between them and a discussion that results in a variety of experiences, opinions and concepts. This interaction reveals the relationship of the research participants with the topic, allows to grasp the diversity of perspectives, and to generate new ideas (Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė, 2016). [8] 6 focus group were organized with different stakeholders during the period of August – October 2021 (Table 1,2).

[7] Bronislovas Bitinas, Liudmila Rupšienė, Vilma Žydžiūnaitė. Kokybinių tyrimų metodologija. Socialinių mokslų kolegija, 2008

[8] Gaižauskaitė, I., & Valavičienė, N. (2016). Socialinių tyrimų metodai: kokybinis interviu.

Sweden case analyses was conducted during study visit to Vaddo School in October 2021. The detail plan of the study visit and interviews conducted presented in Table 1. During the meeting both data collection methods were used: interviews and group discussions.

OCTOBER 18 <sup>th</sup> MONDAY	OCTOBER 19 <sup>th</sup> TUESDAY	OCTOBER 20 <sup>th</sup> WEDNESDAY	OCTOBER 21 <sup>st</sup> THURSDAY	OCTOBER 22 <sup>nd</sup> FRIDAY
Tour of <u>Vaddo</u> Folk High School	Students interview: what is the added value of Folk High Schools	Interviews with School administration	Interviews with <u>Norrtälje</u> municipality	Reflection of the study visit in Sweden
Focus Group with the student	Focus Group with the teachers	How is the school run		
Lecture on How and Why the Folk High Schools are designed as they are	Lecture about the courses and the programs	Business model of Folk High School	Focus Group with Stockholm Folk High School representatives	
	Focus Group with mixed participants: methodology of Folk High School applied in the programs	Action Plan for future Folk High Schools based on Swedish model		
		Development of the plans		

Table 1: The agenda of study visit to Sweden Vaddo School

AUGUST 25 <sup>th</sup> WEDNESDAY	AUGUST 26 <sup>th</sup> THURSDAY	AUGUST 27 <sup>th</sup> FRIDAY	AUGUST 28 <sup>th</sup> SATURDAY
Focus Group with <u>Administration and</u> <u>teachers</u>	Introduction to the methodology of Icelandic Folk High School. Interviews with representatives	Boat ride, a captain will take the group to the sea, to visit the Icelandic fjord	Focus Group with mixed participants: Folk High School methodology
Night Hike in <u>Flateyri</u> mountains	Focus Group with School's students		Workshop about local nature in Iceland
	Evening trip with team		

Table 2: The agenda of study visit to Icelandic Lýðskólinn á Flateyri school

Lithuanian and Estonian expert interviews. The aim of the interviews with the Lithuanian and Estonian experts was to assess whether the presented Folk High School models could be implemented in Lithuania and Estonia and what are the socio-economic prerequisites for their implementation. 7 interviews were conducted with experts from Lithuania during March and April 2022. 6 interviews were conducted with Estonia experts. The list of experts is presented in Table 3. The main topics covered by experts interview (See Appendix 3): 1) problems persisting in education system (drop-off, emotional wellbeing of pupils, schools performance, vocational trainings issues and etc.); 2) existing model for carrier consultation, professional orientation and drop-off prevention; 3) possibilities to adapt alternative study model based on Folks school experience.). Detail analyses of interviews material is presented in section 4.1.

No.	Field of expertise	Type of organization	Practical experience of expert
D2	Implements national youth policy objectives and strengthen young people's motivation and access to education, employment, and active participation in society	Youth Agency under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Republic of Lithuania	27 years
D4	Implements national youth policy objectives and strengthen young people's motivation and access to education, employment, and active participation in society	Youth Agency under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Republic of Lithuania	25 years
D3	Implements the Policy of Non formal education	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of Republic of Lithuania	10 years
D5	Takes part in implementation of the State pre-school, pre-primary and general education policies, induce education institutions, ensure quality of education.	National Agency for Education of the Republic of Lithuania.	30 years
D1	Implements education policy in locally	Local Municipality	25 years
D6		Former Student of Folk High School	
D7	Management of an art education institution, teacher of design graphics and other art subjects, lecturer of information technology at a university, quality manager and team coach competence of a vocational educational institution, management of many projects for young people.	Art education institution based on basic, secondary and vocational education and for students without educational requirements	22 years
D8	Gymnasium development manager, chairman of the city council, mayor, master's thesis on the history of public schools in Estonia	Local government	18 years
D9	Teacher of a vocational educational institution, group supervisor, study and coping skills course supervisor, psychotherapist, trainer	Vocational training institution and private sector	30 years
D10	Trainer of specialists related to special treatment of minors, author and supervisor of social programs for young people, high school teacher, university lecturer, therapist and counselor working with young people, trainer of social and communication skills	Private sector, non-profit organization	31 years
D11	Teacher, creator and leader of the school, master's thesis on school culture based on the school he created, trainer of social and communicative skills, dealing with children and young people with special educational needs	Private school owned by a non-profit association	20 years
D12	Helping NEET young people to work and study, managing the unemployment fund's youth guarantee support system, managing a social program for young people with a background in breaking the law	Non-profit organization operating in the educational, social and internal defense field	8 years

Table 3: List of Lithuania and Estonia experts

## 2. MULTIDIMENSION MODELS OF FOLK HIGH SCHOOL: CASE ANALYSES

### 2.1 “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri”, Iceland



Flateyri is uniquely situated on a small peninsula in the middle of Öndarfjörður, which many believe is the most beautiful fjord in Iceland. Flateyri is in Öndarfjörður and belongs to Ísafjarðarbær district, which is comprised of several communities. There are five villages and towns in this district; Ísafjörður, Hnífsdalur, Suðureyri, Flateyri and Þingeyri. The district's population is just over 3500 people, but it has almost all facilities and amenities, with the main service centre located in Ísafjörður.

Flateyri is the largest settlement in Öndarfjörður, which also has farms and rural inhabitants. The village population is around 200 people. The locals in Flateyri are known for their welcoming attitude toward newcomers – community welcoming for new residents, immigrants, visiting artists or people who have summer houses there. The activities and sports depend on the initiative of locals. Groups of people from village and nearby have joined up to play volleyball, badminton, go kayaking and do fitness training, as well as practising yoga. The Flateyri sports hall is open specifically for students of the Folk High School for several hours every week.

Flateyri has cafés and bars, a short distance away is local restaurant, basic grocery store and the social centre of the village. During the school year, one café and bar is open every Saturday for school parties. Students and locals appreciate this greatly and meet there regularly for various events. Other places are only open sporadically in winter.

The stay at Flateyri Folk High School offers so much more than just coursework and studies. While studying, students are living and eating together, taking care of their surroundings, having fun and belonging to a community where everyone shares the same responsibilities and the same rights.

Every week students and teachers make time to meet up, chat, learn from each other and even entertain one another. This can be done in form of discussions, organised lectures, slideshows and even concerts, that is coordinated and organized among the group members. Apart from this, everyday students are starting together, during breakfast discussing the matters, organizing their work and divide responsibilities.

There are two study programmes. The first study programme is the “Ocean, the Mountains and You”, the second – “Ideas, the World and You”. Both programmes are being taught in Icelandic, however, the school is currently developing a new study program for international students that will be taught in English.



Lýðskólinn is a school for life. It offers non-traditional and non-formal education for anyone over 18 years of age, lasting one school year (September- May). Students gain experience and new skills by self-exploration, cooperation, and curiosity, under the guidance of teachers (mentors) from a wide range of professions. A large part of courses is spent in the outdoors, where knowledge is deepened through practical experience, field trips, exercises, and togetherness.

## 2.1.1. THE ALTERNATIVE STUDY MODEL: FORMAL/ NON-FORMAL EDUCATION, COMPETENCES

At Flateyri Folk High School people get to know new people and grow as individuals. Students gain new experience and skills, simply by trying, and doing, by being with others. Insights, experience and competence is created by introspection, collaboration and curiosity.

The courses at Flateyri Folk High School are based on discourse and mutual learning between students and teachers. The main focus is given to discovery and strengthening each individual's unique abilities in an environment full of challenges, but at the same time, rich in support and teamwork.

The Folk High School plans course in a way that allows students to receive an introduction to subjects, instructions and information both in printed form and digitally. These are more or less traditional classes, with the exception that the main emphasis is on a search for information, conversations with locals and discussions in class, instead of conventional lectures given by teachers. The students spend a lot of class time outside the classroom, with their teacher and fellow students, increasing their knowledge of a subject through practical experience, field trips and training, and through fellowship with others.

Education at Flateyri Folk High School is framed as non-formal. Diploma is given at the end of the studies, but it is a formality, something for the students to keep as the memory. Students also get a transcript of records with the list of accomplished courses and number of hours. Currently, these documents are not officially recognised by other institutions or schools.

## **EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMMES/ CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

Career and Guidance counsellor is employed for 20 days per school year. Her arrival is announced to the students in advance. They can book an appointment in advance or while counsellor services is provided – meeting can be held live or on-line. The sessions are not measured or monitored - organized in an informal, non-bureaucratic manner, that is based on trust towards the counsellor professional work. “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” mission is to make everyone feel good about themselves and to feel safe in the school. Counselling is just one part of it. It is not meant to solve the future employment of students. The main goal of these sessions is to motivate, increase self-confidence, introduce them to future options that could possibly improve their life quality.

## **MAIN DIFFERENCE/ BENEFITS OF ALTERNATIVE STUDY MODEL**

In “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” no pressure is put on the students and they are not compared or ranked upon outcomes of their work: there are no grades, no exams, no judgement. The subjects are challenging and test students’ mental and physical abilities. These challenges lead to transformation, this is where people meet and grow.

Students are actively involved in shaping their studies and can always influence the subjects. The emphasis is on fellowship, introspection, self-care and life skills, where individuals respect each other and take responsibility for themselves, their participation in the studies and society. The Folk High School is based on equality, individuals within the school community are involved in shaping it and figuring out things together. Therefore, the focus is given to collective responsibility, awareness and activity. Studies are organised in relaxed environment - students have a lot of free time, and they are encouraged to be active, but it is up to them to decide how they are going to use time that they have. There are no expectations other than to show up in the classroom. At “Flateyri” Folk High School it is made sure that everyone feels noticed, welcomed, appreciated and accepted for who they are. Many students come in seeking a unique experience and want to learn how to live alongside people of different backgrounds in a beautiful and peaceful environment. Premises at the School are also different. They do not look like a classrooms, but more like a living room with computers and some tools.

Another important aspect is the living arrangements. Students live together and share responsibilities, such as cleaning or cooking. They come up with agreements on how living together will work and have to follow it. Finally, important aspect is community of Flateyri. Students are encouraged to get involved in the life of the village, meet local people and become a part of everyday life.

## **KEY BENEFITS/ STRENGTHS OF THIS TYPE OF EDUCATION MODEL**

Students will acquire new skills, learn about the world around them and about themselves. However, what they will take from their stay at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” is very much up to them. For most, “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” is a life-changing experience. Students gain friends for life, confidence, independence and knowledge that cannot be measured or easily accounted for.

## **LEADING COMPETENCIES/ SKILLS SCHOOL IS ORIENTATED TOWARDS**

The school motto is: ‘Freedom, knowledge and growth.’

Students have the **freedom** to learn according their own individual criteria. Thus, the schoolwork does not revolve around exams, grades or degrees, but it creates a frame and situation where students can learn and educate themselves. The student is responsible for their studies, the focus is on discovering and strengthening the unique talents which everyone has, in a challenging environment which, at the same time, is rich in support, feedback and teamwork.

Students acquire **knowledge** purely for knowledge’s sake. They do this by discussing things, testing and performing. Insight, experience, and skill are created through introspection, collaboration, initiative, and curiosity. The student is at the centre of the school community and receives support from teachers, fellow students and other residents in the village. Thus, they gain knowledge, skills, and abilities by participating in projects related to the environment, economy, society and culture of their microenvironment.

It is believed that the main competences, that students acquire during their time in school, is improved self-confidence, compassion and developed social skills. As there are various courses of only 2 weeks length, time is very limited to learn any skill properly. Consequently, students are given the option of exploring, not drilling the skill.

In the Folk High School, it is aimed to develop the growth of both - the individual and the community, by giving and receiving in return. "Flateyri" Folk High School wants to have a positive impact on its environment, the community and society. They care about sustainability, the interplay between environment, economy, society and welfare and respect the needs of others, while allowing ourselves to flourish. It is considered their responsibility that the society they live in would thrive.

## 2.1.2. TEACHERS, MENTORS: REQUIREMENTS, TEACHING PROCESS

Flateyri Folk High School has three permanent employees: a headmaster, an academic manager, a project manager, as well as a part-time counsellor and teachers for each course.

Teachers at "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" are professionals in their field, with years of experience. Results within their work are usual requirement, as well as recommendations from professionals relevant to the field of studies. Iceland, however, has a small population, meaning there are not that many professionals from specified fields – it could be only five people who can recommend each other. If all potential teachers are busy and the course cannot be organized, the school creates a different course with a new set of competences needed.

The selection process is very informal. Trusting one's senses and sensing if a person has the right attitude is important in the search for new hires. Additionally, informal referrals are employed. As "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" is situated in a region of 7500 people, at some point school staff get aware of all who might be suitable for what the school needs. In case it does not work out and "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" cannot find the right teacher, they either hire someone else for the next semester or change the course. Additionally, since the school started, potential teachers contact "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" with proposals for a course. If the school administration like the idea, potential teacher and feel that the proposed course might be better than what is already offered, they just change it.

If possible, teachers from the region are preferred, as most courses are related to the local Westfjordan experience. Thus, it's often less problematic if the regarding weather conditions, mostly in winter, when roads might get closed due to snow. Teachers come to "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" for the length of their course, usually for 1 or 2 weeks. The most important that person would be someone who is passionate about the subject they are teaching. The attitude of the teacher must be positive, they have to be quick, witty, with a sense of humour. Person has only two weeks to bond with various kinds of people, so it might seem challenging. However, because the whole concept of the school is based on trust, no pressure, no expectations, no goals to reach, this makes it easier than it might seem. Students simply are asked to have fun with the theme, the teacher gives them all they need to succeed and make them enjoy the process.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS**

Relationships are based on a friendship, mutual respect, coming from curiosity. The teacher is more of a mentor, a helping figure who instructs and listens in equal manner. They must respect the boundaries of students and only request activities related to the subject of the lecture that the student wants to take part in. Challenges are allowed, but they must be justified and supported by a clear and well-explained aim.

Motivation is an extremely important factor, the teacher must be ready to cheer, support, give energy even if it is lacking on the side of students and continuously excite the group about what is being done or planned. This is often very difficult. The mutual expectations must be limited only to a necessary level. If a student doesn't like an assignment and motivation and explanation doesn't work, teacher encourage them at least to be around. But if they decide not to be present, that is fine too, as the reasons might be related to mental health or other personal issues. One can never know how things will work out, because every year the group is different, with unique dynamic, personalities, inner issues, etc.

There were situations in the past when a group was not satisfied with a teacher or a course. Firstly, both sides were heard in order to identify what went wrong. Usually, the reason is unmet expectations. This is why at "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" before their mutual experience starts both students and teachers are instructed to simply focus on the curiosity aspect of the learning experience, not to reach a specific goal. Additionally, during their stay at "Lýðskólinn á Flateyri" teachers have to be a part of the school and the local community.

## **ROLE OF A TEACHER**

In Iceland, the concept of authority does not exist. The sense of equality is very deeply rooted in society by the way of life. A teacher will be liked if they have experience and a positive attitude. All teachers at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” are respected professionals within their field. Courses start with them presenting their past successes and at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” interest is often built up around the teachers before they come over. In most cases, teachers have already an established reputation and students know who they are. Iceland is a small country and the likelihood of people knowing each other, having a common friend or relatives, or being presented in the media, is very high. Also, “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” is often presented as having the best of the best, so it boosts “the authority” of teachers that might not be very well known to the students.

## **PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING**

At “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” courses are planned in a way that students receive an introduction to subjects, instructions and information both in printed form and digitally. The main emphasis is on a search for information, conversations with locals and discussions in class, instead of conventional lectures given by teachers. The students spend a lot of class time outside the classroom, with their teacher and fellow students, increasing their knowledge of a subject through practical experience, field trips and training, fellowship with others. This varies from course to course, but there is an introduction explaining the course and its aim, followed by an assessment (nature walks, field trips, online research). Sometimes smaller groups are being formed and each group or individual gets a specific assignment. On some courses, there are small assignments for each day and then a bigger project that is being presented to the public at the end of the 2nd (final) week of the course. Some courses (Ice climbing, Guiding, Mountaineering, etc.) are implemented outside and depend on weather conditions and the stamina of the group. Thus, the learning process is very fluid, a teacher must always have a plan B and sometimes run a plan F. Lectures vary from course to course, but the general rule is: it will be excellent only when most students attend and they all enjoy their time together, including the teacher.



Courses are too different to have one exact model. The quality of the course depends on the constant motivation, mutual listening, practical assignments, as little theory as possible, hands-on and result at the end (exhibition, presentation, being able to kayak across the fjord, climbing a frozen waterfall, creating a short movie, etc.)

## 2.1.3. STUDY PROGRAMMES

At “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” there are two study programmes that are being taught in Icelandic. The first study programme is the “Ocean, the Mountains and You”, the second study programme is “Ideas, the World and You”. Additionally, the school is developing a new study program for international students that will be taught in English. The study programmes are presented below (Figure 1)

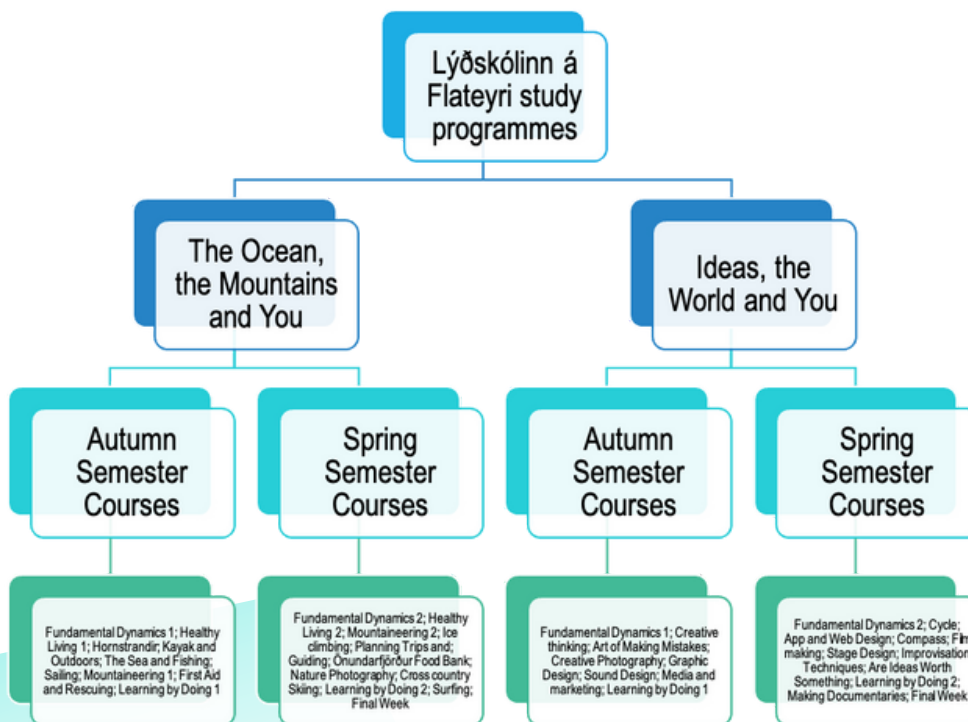


Figure 1: “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” study programmes

## CURRICULUM

- **“Ocean, the Mountains and You”** is the program for those who dream of experiencing nature, who want to learn to travel around in it, work with it, utilise it and explore it safely. If the student is fascinated by nature, Öundurarfjörður has everything for them to thrive in Flateyri Folk High School. Students are spending a great deal of time outdoors and in all kinds of weather and situations, they may not have experienced before.
- **“Ideas, the World and You”** - program is for those who want to develop and grow as creative individuals. Students receiving knowledge and training in the creative processes, from the concept to the realisation and dissemination. The school introducing students to numerous and diverse creative subjects in two-week bouts during the winter, giving an insight into a varied world of endless possibilities and an opportunity to find where their own interest lies.

Accepted students are formally welcomed to Flateyri in September and graduate in May. “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” calendar for the year 2021-2022 is organized in the following manner:

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Students come to Flateyri	9 September 2021
Formal welcoming takes place	11 September 2021
Autumn semester starts	13 September 2021
Winter holiday	11 December 2021 – 3 January 2022
Spring semester start	4 January 2022
Easter holiday	11-18 April 2022
Graduation	7 May 2022

Figure 2: “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” school calendar

There are no official teaching materials at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri”, but the content of the courses is flexible and might be changed due to requests from the students or weather conditions. There are no criteria for certification or accreditation other than attendance. The student should participate in at least 80 per cent of the meetings.

Some courses are consisting of two parts, divided into semesters. At “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri”, each course lasts one or two weeks. Students with the teachers work on the assignments or go for a field trip usually from 8:45 to 16:00, with a lunch break at 12:00. There are no exams as the school believes learning is a total experience that cannot be measured through traditional methods. Active participation, however, is the important factor and the “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri’s” certificate, awarded at the end of studies.

## **TEACHING PROGRAMME SELECTION**

There are two teaching programmes that have been created with the school and they are still followed as they were designed and approved. There are some courses within these programmes that have been replaced or changed. Changes usually happen, when school can no longer work with a specific teacher or when it is decided that a different course would meet students expectations better. Changes have also happened upon request from students. Also, there are cases when teachers approaching “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” directly with their own ideas for a courses.

## 2.1.4. STUDENTS, ENTRY CRITERIA

Students are usually young people aged 18-30, who want to explore their strengths, find new friends and hobbies and be accepted just the way they are as individuals. Many are seeking a unique experience and want to learn how to live alongside people of different backgrounds in a beautiful and peaceful environment.

Currently, most of the students in “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” were between 19-25 years of age, coming from all parts of Iceland, but predominantly from the greater Reykjavík area, where most of the Icelandic population lives and the Westfjords, where the school is situated. There is an equal gender ratio at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri”.

### **SCHOOL ENTRY CRITERIA**

The “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” is looking for students who are enthusiastic, willing and ready to participate, share responsibility and explore new things. It is important to be open for new experiences and possibility test yourself in new environment. Daring to jump – that’s the right attitude of a student.

The school only accepts electronic applications sent through the admission’s site. Along with the application, Folk High School expecting to receive information about the student: who they are, where they come from and why they think the Flateyri Folk High School is ideal for them. Moreover, the school expects to learn about students’ interest and experience in the field of program they are applying for. When selecting students, this information weighs much more than education and experience. This introduction can be delivered in writing or in a short video.

**There are also several other criteria for admission:**

- Anyone who has reached the age of 18 years can apply for admission to Flateyri Folk High School.
- Teaching language is Icelandic and a basic understanding is a must.
- Applicants for the program "*Ocean, Mountains and You*" need to consider that only a small part of studies is carried out indoors, in a traditional classroom. Students spend a great deal of time outdoors, in all weather conditions and sometimes in physically challenging situations. Outdoor and mountaineering experience is not necessary, as the courses for these subjects are tailored to beginners. However, students need to be mobile and up for anything.

For the Outdoor programme, the only criterion is physical ability as student needs to be fit to go on hikes. Therefore, this programme is not suitable for people with a higher level of physical disability. There are no criteria for participation in the Arts & Design programme. For both programmes, individuals that have a positive attitude towards meeting other people and trying new things are selected.

## 2.1.5. IMPACT MEASUREMENT, SUCCESS CRITERIA, SCHOOL KPI'S

There are no exams or grades in “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri”. It is stated that students will acquire new skills, learn plenty about the world around them and about themselves. However, what they get out of the stay at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” is very much up to them. For most students, “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” becomes a life-changing experience. They gain friends for life, confidence, independence and knowledge that cannot be measured or easily accounted for. Currently, there are 32 students at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” which is the highest number so far. The school aims to have 40 students next school year, and 60 in 2024.

### **SUCCESS CRITERIA FOR INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES**

Data is collected after each course from students and teachers. Students rate the quality of each course and their teacher. Teachers rate the work of students, but only as a group. They also rate the staff, the general atmosphere at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” and submit their proposals.

The questionnaire with numeric ratings, open-ended questions and a final questionnaire, sent one month after the end of a school year, are used to measure the satisfaction of courses and general atmosphere at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri”. Questionnaire for students consists of four groups of questions: 1) questions related to studies and schoolwork, 2) questions about facilities, organization and social life, 3) questions about the stay at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri”, and 4) background questions (which program was chosen, age and gender).

The Folk High School sends out an anonymous questionnaire at the end of each school year, where the contentment with the studies and the impact on the general wellbeing of the student is measured. “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” is in the fourth year of existence and had not conducted in depth impact measurement yet. Such research is planned after the fifth year, in 2023.

## 2.1.6. FINANCIAL MODEL: FUNDING, PRICES AND FEES

Numerous municipalities, organisations, institutions, funds, companies and individuals have supported the foundation and running of Flateyri Folk High School with generous contributions. In particular, Ísafjörður Municipality has supported the project through subsidising services, facilities for the school without repayment, as well as generous financial support and insurance for the operation of the school for another year.

Inhabitants of Flateyri and the surrounding area have supported the school conscientiously, through the preparations and foundation of the school. Not only have they welcomed the school with open arms, provided knowledge and been an endless source of ideas, but over 80 residents have signed up as financial supporters and support the Folk High School through monthly payments.

“Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” receives funding mainly from the government of Iceland. The local municipality subsidised the school in the first year and helped by exempting it from paying property tax and other fees. “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” receives additional financing through school fees that the students need to pay for each semester and for their accommodation. Folk High School also get some support from The Directorate of Employment and The Directorate of Education.

## **STUDIES FEE**

Studies at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” are paid. The fee is 300.000 ISK (around 2100 Euros) per student per semester. Fee includes breakfast and lunch on all schooldays, course materials and trips, projects related to schoolwork. Fee do not include accommodation, students have to provide food for themselves outside school hours, on weekends and holidays. Travelling to and from Flateyri is not included, students must arrange transportation themselves at the start of the school year and around the holidays.

Fees are paid for each semester separately. A confirmation fee of 50.000 ISK must be paid two weeks after receiving an acceptance letter from the school. This fee cannot be refunded. The rest, 250.000 ISK for each semester, must be paid in full by 15 September for the autumn semester, and 15 December for the spring semester, to guarantee your place at the school. It is also possible to negotiate a payment distribution before these dates.



Fees are not refunded once the semester has started. If a student needs to leave their studies due to circumstances beyond their control (for example an illness or an accident), they can apply to have their fees refunded. They need to send a letter to the school board, detailing the reasons for their departure, accompanied by a medical certificate. In case of a refund, the fee for whatever time has already passed will be withheld. There are two semesters, but students can decide to stay only for one.

Studying at “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” can be covered through scholarships for studying: vocational training funds of unions usually support their members’ education at Folk High Schools, excluding accommodation and living costs. Moreover, every year, student and youth services seek scholarship applications.

As meals outside school hours, cost of living arrangements and travelling to and from Flateyri are not included in the school fees, there is considerable additional costs for each semester. Thus, a student must plan expenses regarding life outside the school and social life in general, as well as travelling to and from Flateyri and other personal expenses. It is not advisable for students to work alongside their studies, except maybe an easy part-time job outside school hours.

## ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME

“Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” is limited in securing other types of funding. The school gets some support from The Directorate of Employment and The Directorate of Education. Additionally, it regularly applies for local grants to get funds to buy basic equipment. “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” got discounts from the Municipality, but that was only during the first year of the school’s existence.

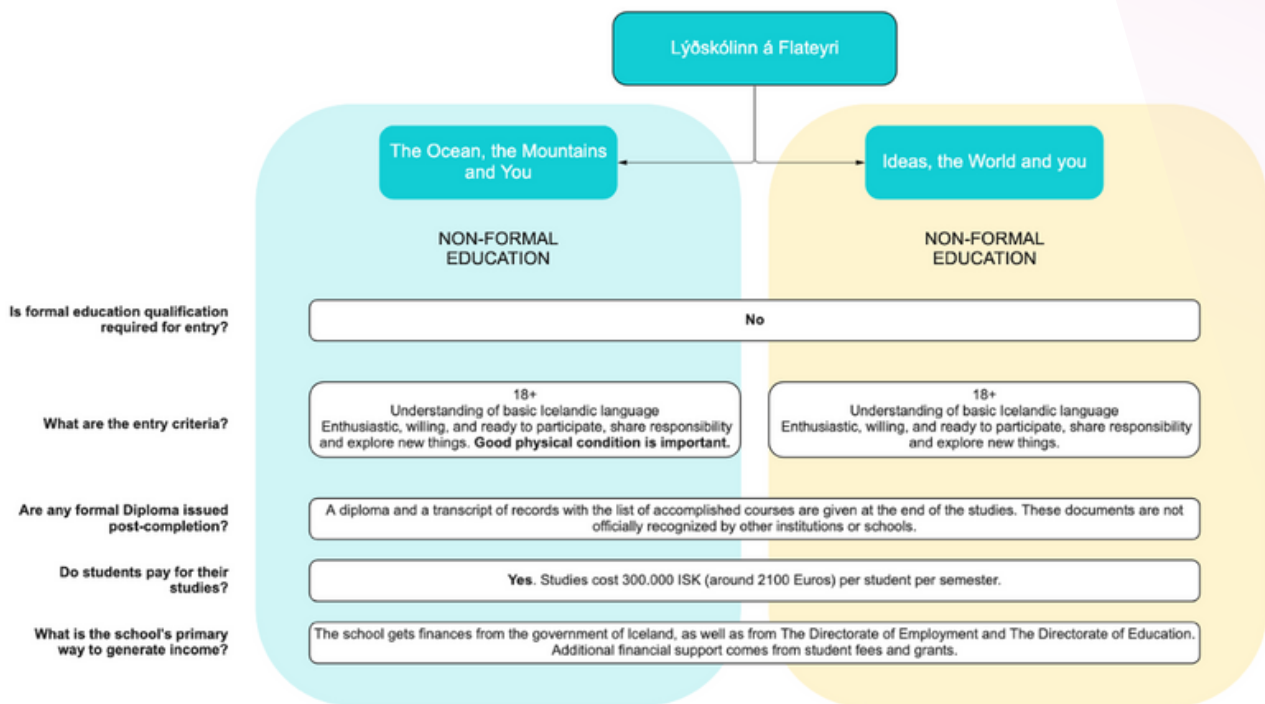


Figure 3: “Lýðskólinn á Flateyri” model

## 2. MULTIDIMENSION MODELS OF FOLK HIGH SCHOOL: CASE ANALYSES

### 2.2. Vaddo Folk High School, Sweden



Vaddö Folk High School (Väddö Folkhögskola) is one of the 154 Folk High Schools in Sweden. It is located in Stockholm County and is the oldest Folk High School in Stockholm. The school was established in 1879 and initially was run by Stockholm County Council. In 2002, the school opened an additional branch named Västerhaninge Folk High School, specifically oriented to host a General Education course for pupils who were not able to finish school due to different reasons (gang involvement, incarceration, substance abuse, difficult homingsituation and other).

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Since the beginning of Folk High Schools history, there is three fundamental values that every school should meet: to make education available for everybody, Life-long Learning, democracy.

There are two types of Folk High Schools: the idea or region driven schools.

- **The Idea-driven school** is usually initiated based on demand in the community on the particular subject. For example, a music school provides many courses for musicians to try different styles, has a recording studio and provides additional accreditation for applying to music universities. Another example would be, the Feminist school in Stockholm that provides courses for gender equality legislation analysis, lobbying groups and debates in the Parliament. These schools are usually oriented towards one particular topic as a key objective and provide various courses within that subject.
- **The Region-driven school** is usually based on region's demand, local council, or political party. In Sweden, Folk High Schools are perceived as a positive symbol of good reputation, wealthy region and council who invests in its community. Therefore, quite often, schools are initiated and funded by a particular political party. These types of schools usually provide a wide variety of courses to choose from. They are not that narrowed to one topic but more concentrating on region labour skills demand.

## 2.2.1 THE ALTERNATIVE STUDYMODEL: FORMAL/ NON-FORMAL EDUCATION, COMPETENCIES

Väddö Folk High School, with its wide range of courses and boarding schools, is an alternative to other adult education. While Folk High Schools do not provide students with a formal education degree, they offer extra credit towards university applications and the ability to build graduates' portfolios. In addition, the school can provide different courses for individuals at different career paths and stages. Please refer to Figure 4:

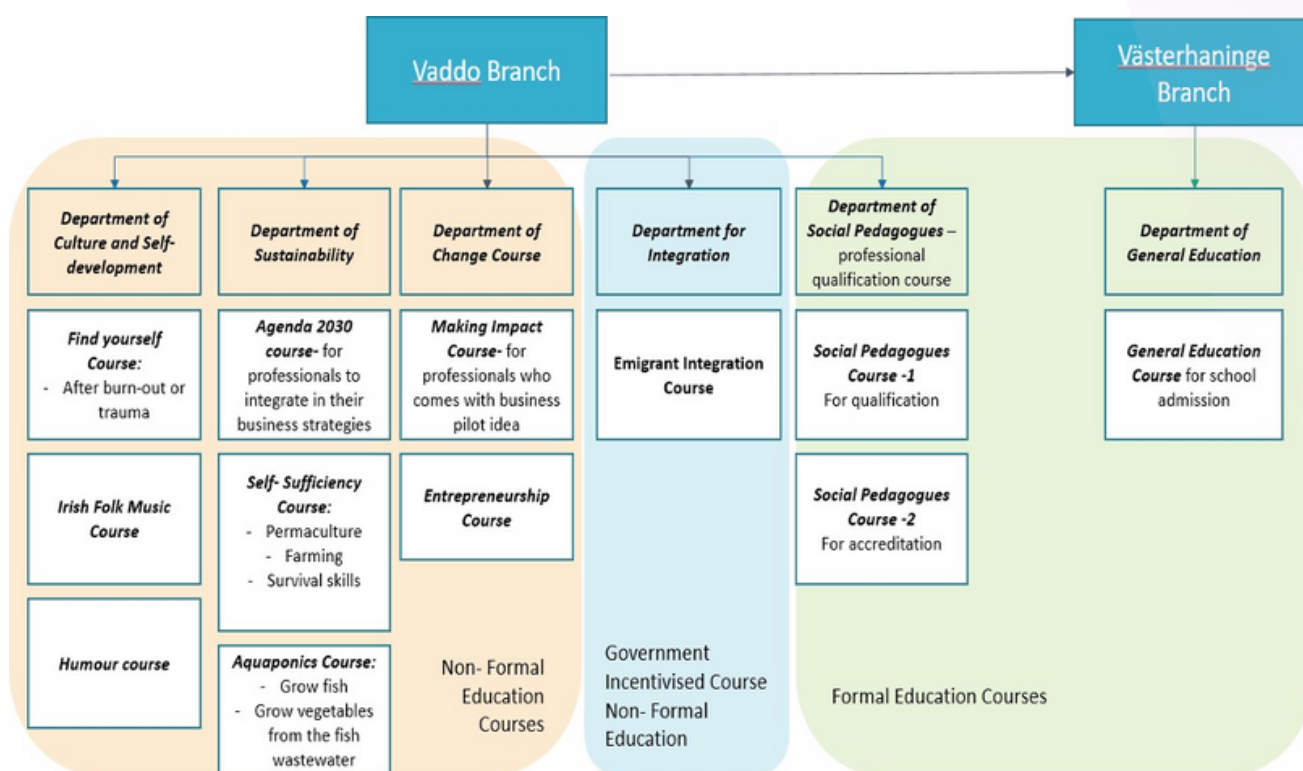


Figure 4: Väddö Folk High School courses

Väddö Folk High School is a region-initiated school, that provides a wide variety of courses. Including the formal and non-formal types of education. Study programmes in the school are both short-term and long-term. Short-term courses are dedicated to a particular topic and last 10 to 20 weeks (weekends only). Long-term courses are from 1.5 to 2 years long. Prior study programs were orientated towards Health Practitioners (trainers, coaches, instructors); now, it is changing towards Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business studies based on the market demand.

Folk High School fills all formal education flow gaps. Some students come right after graduating school, and some join after dropping out of high school. Some join the Folk High School to try different subjects and make university choices and some gain extra credit for university entry. Some enter Folk High Schools to change their career paths and gain practical knowledge on their skills. There are courses for people who already run a business and require mentoring and career coaching or improving their technical skillset. Students can build their portfolio and technical skills for their current or future business and receive support from the community during the process.

## **FORMAL DIPLOMA AND CERTIFICATION**

Diplomas are issued for formal-education courses such as General Education and Social Pedagogues courses. The formal education system accepts those diplomas. General Education course provides school completion attestation, and Social Pedagogues course provides formal professional qualification certificate accepted by the industry standards. In addition, Folk High School acts as a qualification agency for all government institutions requiring Social Pedagogue accreditation (jail personnel, foster care, retirement home personnel, youth workers, etc.).

Non-formal education courses like the Change course or Sustainability course diploma is not issued. However, schools provide additional credits for applying to universities. In addition, students' real-life projects during the course can be used as portfolio entry and work experience accepted by employers.

On the other hand, Department of Art courses are oriented towards providing mental support, emotional well-being, and different skills to cope with complicated situations in life. These courses are not aimed towards project work or objectives to achieve; it is based on a group therapy approach. Therefore, no diplomas are issues. As part of the Change course and Sustainability course programmes are split into two parts. The first part is theoretical knowledge, and the second part is real-life project work. Some entry criteria require bringing your business pilot idea, and some offer projects for local businesses. Once the study project is complete, students can be offered a permanent position or project execution role for the idea they developed.

**Two main objectives of the Folk High School are:**

1. To provide students with real-life projects to work on during their studies.
2. To provide local community skills and free business growth ideas.

There are no official agreements within the local business for employment. However, the school provides a real-life experience that can be used as a portfolio entry. In addition, there have been cases when students were offered a permanent position after school project proposal. It is much more common for students to enter with their own business ideas to pilot during their studies with a business mentoring approach.

**The key difference of Folk High School compared to any other school are their three key values:**

**1. Making education available for all** - provides students with the unique possibility to live, study, work and debate their ideas with the group.

Therefore, they experience the closest demographic representation of the Sweden society. From the interview with students, this factor is the most significant in their experience.

**2. Life-long education** value creates a very vast niche for Folk High School to fill gaps in the education system:

- To provide a second chance for students who dropped out from school in community-based surroundings with more flexible study methodologies;
- School graduates can take a gap-year and try different subjects in a group of very vast demographics. They report the most significant advantage being guided, and receiving support from their group in university choice. In addition, attending Folk High School will provide them extra credits during university entry;
- Folk High School is attended by professionals who already run their business, but requires additional skills or market-relevant experience. For example, business owners are joining the Agenda 2030 course to update their strategic objectives or understand EU requirements for sustainability;
- Re-qualification and career change is yet another reason for enrolment for the Social Pedagogue course;
- Self-development courses aim towards individuals who cannot work due to burn-out, stress, or personal trauma, providing coping techniques and group therapy courses.

**3. The community or democracy** is the main difference and one of the highest virtues that students and teachers highlight. Living together in a community, sharing home, kitchen, working on group projects with people from very different backgrounds, ages, and experiences - makes the most significant impact for all students. The creation of interpersonal relationships, role models, business partners, mentors and close friends or, in other terms - the creation of a democratic community - is one of the key lessons of every course within the Folk High School.



## **KEY BENEFITS/ STRENGTHS OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION MODEL**

The most significant aspect influencing Folk High School success in Sweden is the Government funding that provides free education for all tax-paying students (international students must pay taxes for three months to be eligible for free education) and government-funded grants to take time off work. As a result, the total amount of funds per student comes around the average Swedish salary, creating favourable circumstances for individuals to take career breaks every five or so years to return to Folk High School, gain new skills, or rest from everyday stress.

Secondly, due to cultural or historical aspects, Folk High Schools are seen as a positive choice in individuals' lives, such as self-development, professional skill upgrade, or just professional time of work. Therefore, it is supported by the professional community and perceived as a good choice and investment in oneself.

Thirdly, students report that the key benefit is living and studying with a small sample of demographic representation of real-life society. That teaches acceptance and respect, widens their perception of other cultures, sexual orientations, age groups and disabilities

## SYSTEM OF GRADING

The grading system varies on three types of courses:

- Formal education courses such as the General Education course and Social Pedagogue course have formal education issued evaluation system, examination and attendance rates.
- Courses such as the Change course and the Sustainability course tracks attendance rate, group project marking by the other group members, and one-to-one feedback delivery sessions with the teacher. The objective is not to meet the highest grades but to learn the most skills learning as a group. What is more, the school believes that it is impossible to grade an individual on what they had learned, only judging based on what the student allowed the teacher to see. The objective is to learn from each other, not to be marked on the specific deliverable. 'You cannot mark the learning they take away as they are learning from living with each other'- quote from the teacher. Achievement is not an objective; experience- is.
- On the other hand, the Self Discovery courses have no grading or evaluation system. It is not aimed to evaluate their ability to deal with trauma only to provide a safe environment to express it.

## 2.2.2 TEACHERS, MENTORS- REQUIREMENTS, TEACHING PROCESS

In Folk High School, teachers play a vital role. Teachers should be experienced, passionate, able to communicate with people, empathetic. They support their students in many different ways, not only by educating them but also by showing the importance of the process, rather than the result. Trust is the essential in the education process; the teacher is often seen as a friend you can seek help and advice, rather than an authority figure. The Folk High School pedagogic approach is more about the dynamics of the group, where a teacher can step back and let the group teach themselves. That is why students selection criteria are much oriented towards group formation diversity (gender, age, background, experience, dreams and hopes). The teacher is a mentor for an individual, and the group is teaching itself: students learn what it is like to be a teacher from the process itself as they need to teach someone else. Unlike in formal education, Folk High School teacher chooses how they want to proceed with their course, what they want to teach, what kind of students they want in their group and how the study process works. Being able to decide how to teach is very motivating and rewarding for passionate teachers. The school has a student council and a course council with student representatives and representatives from different school personnel categories. There is an option to buy service from a sub-contractor; for example, Social Pedagogues are outsourced course - this model only pays for the venue, classrooms, and accommodation.

One of the biggest advantages of working for Folk High School noted by the teachers is the freedom and trust. Freedom to select their students, create and run courses as per their individual desire, and make quick changes to the programme without long approval processes from the school. The teacher takes end-to-end responsibility for the course management.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHER SELECTION

Teacher selection methods and application requirements are as diverse as the courses they teach:

1. There is a state-regulated requirement to have professional certification and qualifications for the formal education modules, just as in formal education institutions. Therefore, teachers must be accredited and certified in formal-education courses (the General Education and Social Pedagogues) to teach those modules.
2. In regards to non-formal education courses, teachers do not require to have formal education certification to teach. An individual can express an interest to teach, present a programme with teaching materials and practical exercises. Moreover, demonstrate how Folk High School values will be demonstrated in the teaching curriculum. What is more, it is important to demonstrate the impact on society and local business. Teachers themselves are responsible for course promotion and a minimal number of applicants to approve their course.
3. Some Folk High School provides Folk High School Teachers course concentrating on alternative teaching methods. However, "Vaddo" School has less than 10% of certified Folk High School teachers.

The relationship between teachers and students very much varies between types of courses. For example, in short-term weekend courses, students come to education and topic-based teaching, where the teacher is a knowledge and assessment figure. On the other hand, teachers are part of their community and personal relationship circle for full-time students, where students live on premises for 1-2 years. They usually have weekend trips together, evening movie nights or joint activities.

## **PROCESSES AND TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING**

Non-formal education courses like the Change course and Sustainability course are formed in two sections: theoretical and practical. The teacher prepares theory materials and teaches in a group of 15-20 students. Usually, the teacher teaches half of the class, and the other half of the students teach/explain the same topics in different ways or different methods. As part of the methodology, teachers use the 'teach the teacher' approach, where topics are distributed to smaller groups of 5, and the groups need to prepare to teach a particular topic to the class.

The second part of the course is the practical application of the knowledge. Students usually come with business ideas that they would like to pilot or engage local businesses to offer pro bono projects. The group projects are performed in the same small groups of 4-5 that are unbreakable throughout 1-2 years.

Teachers' role is usually perceived as mentors and facilitators; course objectives include not only the theory part of the subject, practical, real-life project but democratic ways of living and working together and resolving any disputes or mismatches between each other in a group setting via debates, expressing opinions in the respectful and inclusive matter. Teachers note that more than often, these kinds of life skills are the primary reason why people choose to live and study on-campus. On the other hand, the Discover Yourself course is a weekend or evening-only course. The objective of this course is to create a safe environment to experience trauma through the help of painting, dancing, singing or laughing— in these course teachers are comedians, dancers or spiritual healers (reiki, meditation). The system has no structure or theoretical part. Students are free to join any activity they feel like on that particular day. They are not preparing any performances or art exhibitions. There are no structures or outcomes within this course programme. The overall objective is to create space just be with no expectations or deliverables.

## EXCELLENT LECTURER MODEL

- **Initiative** - someone who takes the initiative to create a course, promote it, and keep it interesting for the students;
- **People-orientated** - the idea of Folk High School teaching is an individualised experience for the student. They are putting individual experience above deliverables;
- **Empathetic** - teachers usually act as mentors, coaches, friends, and facilitators for the course curriculum and life on campus;
- **Socially responsible** with greater community values in mind- the key objective of the school is to raise social awareness and accountability between individuals. Not only learn for personal gain, but with every group, projects create the idea that serves the greater good of the community.

## 2.2.3 STUDY PROGRAMMES

According to one of the Folk High School teachers, the traditional education system created in the 20th century was built around sustaining the system rather than transforming it. Nowadays, a more transformative society is required to change the world and be part of a solution towards a better future. Folk High Schools aim to build a new generation of people questioning the norms and pre-existing frameworks, not only within education, employment systems but how society operates as a whole.

In Folk High School, students learn how to live in a mini-ecosystem, defining roles and responsibilities while doing real-life projects with local businesses that create sustainable and socially responsible solutions. “There is no other place where you can play with new ideas and have government funding”- quote from the Change course student.

All but formal education courses and Immigrant Integration courses are managed and curated by the teacher. The selection process, study materials and teaching methodology are chosen solely by the teacher. This allows teachers to try different things during the live course, change and adapt based on individual and group needs. Freedom in decision making and course adaptability increases teachers motivation, accountability and level of dedication promoting the course.

**“Vaddo” Folk High School has several criteria for Programme selection:**

- 15% of all teaching programmes must consist of a General Education course- a requirement from Government.
- All teaching programmes must demonstrate the inclusion of three key Folk High School values in their teaching objectives.
- For a new course to be approved, it must achieve a minimum of 20 students enrolment. The student feedback form will determine if the programme will continue next season.
- Student selection processes are, as well, individual teachers’ responsibility.

## **TEACHING PROGRAMME SELECTION**

**The General Education** course is mandatory for all Folk High Schools in order to gain state funding. A minimal requirement of 15% must be achieved annually.

**The Social Pedagogue** course is a new selection for “Vaado” School added only in 2019. Prior to that, the school was concentrating on health practitioners. The change was made per demand in the market and Government institutions’ needs for re-qualification and accreditation of this type of specialist. As per school board comments, these courses come with a stable flow of students (therefore income) and do not require additional personal or time investment as the course is fully outsourced.

## EXCELLENT LECTURER MODEL

### Two main reasons influence the selection of alternative courses:

- Firstly, an individual/teacher presents a course idea and has knowledge or experience to run the course. Also, teachers own the promotion and communication processes and provides evidence of a minimum of 20 full-time student application forms with approved funding. This is a case for Change and Sustainability courses.
- Secondly, the demand for the course comes from the local community requiring particular labour skills. For example, the Aquaponics course was initiated due to the local community's need for this skill. Therefore, the course teacher had to propose the programme and provide evidence of 20 students with approved funding.
- Alternative course success and approval to start next season/ class directly depend on the student satisfaction survey.

## 2.2.4. STUDENTS, ENTRY CRITERIA

Individuals of all age groups (older than 18, but exceptions apply) can become full-time or short-time students. In order for international students to qualify for the place (state grant), they have to live and pay taxes in Sweden for a minimum of 3 months. This option is quite popular among international students as study fees and grants lump-sum is usually higher than full-time employment salary. The school promotes demographic diversity; therefore, each course must demonstrate it during selection process.

Schools objective is to contribute to social issues, therefore offering courses targeting specific issues: sustainability, immigration, stress and burn-out at work, school drop-outs, skill demand in the market.



## **STUDENTS- DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Students' selection criteria are oriented to represent society by covering as wide demographic split as possible:**

- Age: 18-55
- Race: mix of nationals and international students (quite wide racial variety witness on the campus)
- Ethnicity: all applicants accepted (university contain served halal food supporting Muslim religion and vegetarian food supporting Hindu believes)
- Gender: equal split between men and women are required during selection processes
- Marital status: all individuals accepted, the immigrant course provides day-care for children and joined Sweden classes for children and parents
- Income: all level of financial background join the school, some who already run their business, some who wants to start their career and some who are re-qualifying or still figuring out what to choose
- Education: all levels of education from entry to PhD

## **ENTRY CRITERIA FOR SCHOOL**

Each course performs an individualised selection process, as per teachers requirements. However, usually, the student submits a motivation letter during the application, followed by an interview process. No passing rate or tests are required for alternative education courses. Demographic diversity is the key selection criteria.

Some specific requirements may come up per individual course:

- **The Self-discovery** course wants to understand individuals traumatic experiences to select a group of similar experiences;
- On the other hand, **Agenda 2030** course selects individuals who are already running their own business or coming on behalf of the organisation to increase the maturity level of the course and concentrate only on business application and implications of regulation;
- **The Change** course during selection processes asks for students' business ideas to be worked on during the two-year programme.

Formal certification or accreditation are only issued to formal education courses like General Education and Social Pedagogue courses. Alternative education courses do not issue any certification. However, students report valuing real-life experience and practical skills much more. School notes that they cannot evaluate learning from living.

Study programmes are free for the students. School receives 700 SEK from the Government per student. Students pay extra for the food and accommodation. However, they can apply for study grants, which are around 1500 SEK per year.

## 2.2.5. IMPACT MEASUREMENT, SUCCESS CRITERIA, SCHOOL KPI'S

School serves as an anchor for the ethical questions and social issues in the community. Therefore, success criteria and teaching methods must maintain and encourage this social perception and image.

Programme success criteria are directly linked to achieving three key school values, as the school's role is not to teach a particular subject but to educate students on how to live in a society: how to build a career, how to live with others, how to consider social issues and how to take an accountable role in a democratic society. Therefore, **success criteria are oriented not on a subject of the programme but on how we can teach the three key values through that particular programme.** Around 160-200 students, including full-time and part-time students. Around 40 students were living on the "Vaddo" campus during the pandemic time before numbers were double.

### **SUCCESS CRITERIA FOR INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES AND OVERALL SCHOOL**

The school must achieve and report to Government three key KPIs:

1. 15% of all students must be General Education course students;
2. Folk High School must demonstrate incorporation of three key values in all courses;
3. Health and Safety and Inclusion policy compliance.

Individual courses set success criteria based on the programme:

- Formal education courses have passing rate requirements set by the state;
- Alternative education courses set individual assessments such as group work, group engagement and social justice;
- Student feedback remains the primary success indicator that is reviewed by the end of each course. If the student satisfaction rate is low, the course will not be continued, or the teacher will be requested to make tangible changes.

Government issues an annual request for reporting, which includes standard templates and policies. The report requires a number of students in the General Education course and proof of compliance with Health and Safety and Inclusion policies.

## 2.2.6. FINANCIAL MODEL: FUNDING, PRICES, FEES

Students are required to complete their studies. If a student leaves the studies in the first three weeks, the state stops funding. If they continue, the state confirms funding for the next six months. It is a way to protect the school and have confirmed funding in advance.

## **PRIMARY SOURCE OF SCHOOL INCOME**

School is primary funded based on the 700 SEK fee-bucket per student per month. Amount of funded students are set within the Government based on the size of the region and performance rates. Additional funding roots are:

- Students pay for the accommodation and the food;
- Outsourced courses, like Social Pedagogues, are paying for facilities;
- School venues are rented for conferences or business meetings for the local community;
- Government incentivised courses add value;
- School has created their private NGO for fundraising;
- Considerations to open School business cooperation for corporate affairs and investment.

Around 50% of overall School expenses are dedicated to teachers' salaries, the other 50% for school property maintenance. Since the joining of the new President, large investments were made into savings, not only profits. For example, investment in changing plumbing, roof and main hall was made to save maintenance fees and increase the market value of the venues to be able to rent to the business. Investment into heating and electricity facilities were made to increase savings. In addition, the acquisition was made into the communication and social media team to increase student applications and business network awareness.

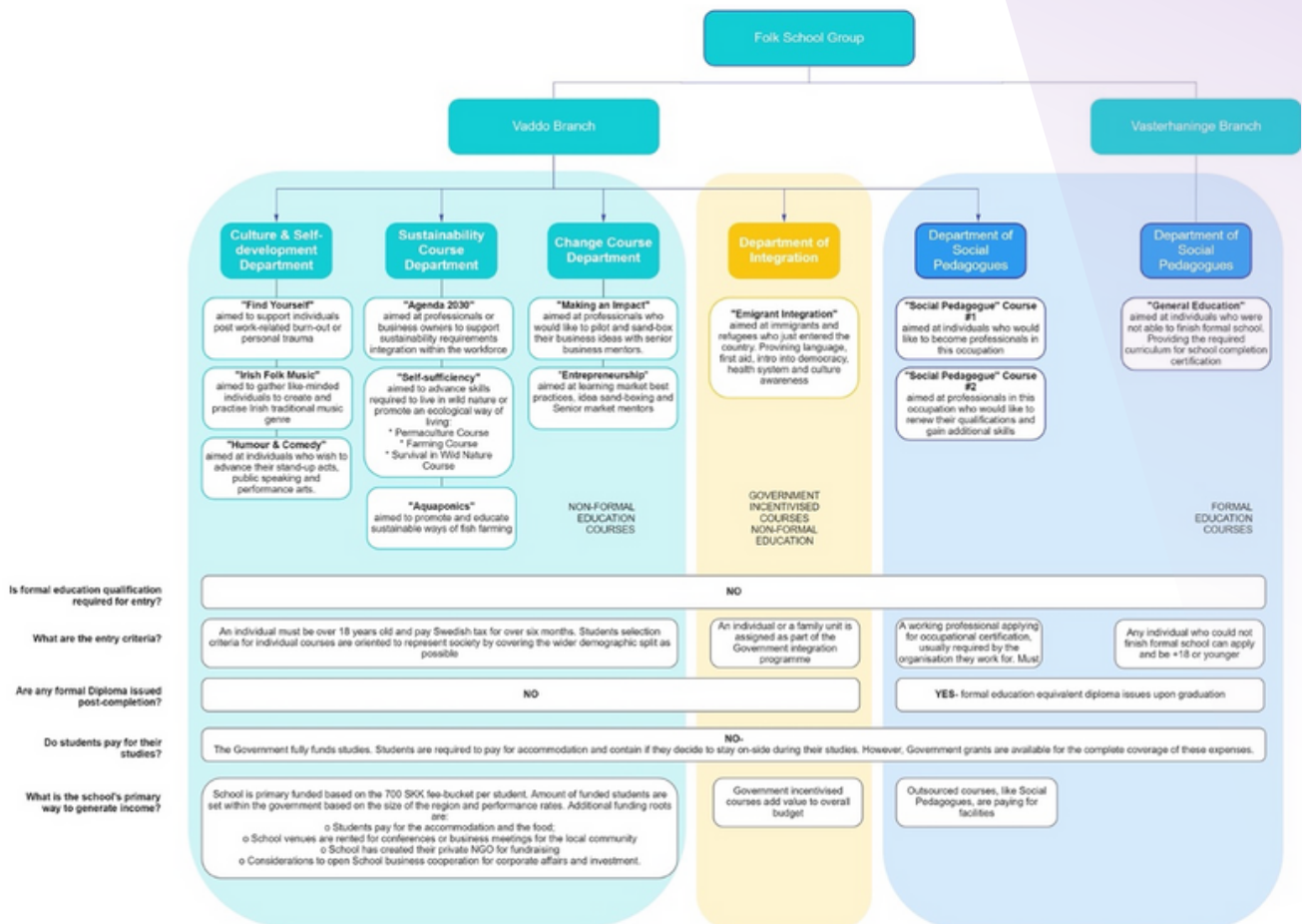


Figure 5: "Väddö" Folk High School model

## 2. MULTIDIMENSION MODELS OF FOLK HIGH SCHOOL: CASE ANALYSES

### 2.3. Sodžiaus meistrai, Lithuania



The School of Crafts "Sodžiaus meistrai" is a non-governmental vocational school that has been operating for 20 years. The school educates craftsmen with the aim of providing young people with an exceptional vocational learning experience. The school focuses on the acquisition of practical experience and skills through open teacher-trainee cooperation. The school is located near Vilnius, in the Trakai region - surrounded by nature. Excellent conditions are created for students to stay in modern dormitories. There are also modern conference rooms, ceramics studios, woodworking workshops and modern greenhouses. The institution's spaces are dedicated to creativity, dreams, sports, socialising and inspiration. Teachers and students work together to create a space where it is pleasant to learn and relax, and get creative ideas. The school stands for collaboration, initiative and self-expression. The community cherishes human values and fosters friendship, respect, responsibility, honesty, and sincerity.

## 2.3.1. THE ALTERNATIVE STUDY MODEL: FORMAL/ NON-FORMAL EDUCATION, COMPETENCES

The school is based on a unique dual-teaching methodology, adopted from French partners, which relies on the creation of an environment that encourages openness and the gathering and active participation of craftspeople. For two weeks each month, students study the theoretical and practical aspects of their chosen craft in the school. The other two weeks are spent doing an apprenticeship in a company in the chosen vocational field. The training is carried out in small groups (up to 15 young people), giving personal attention to each learner. The school's teaching methodology helps to develop the work skills needed for the profession and gives real apprenticeship experience. The training methodologies were also developed in collaboration with "Les Compagnons du Devoir et de Tour de France" in France, a prestigious vocational training association with the longest tradition in Europe. This association also promotes apprenticeship-based learning.

The institution provides formal initial and continuing vocational training and qualifications. The diploma is recognised in the labour market[9].

The institution uses a dual-training approach and apprenticeships:

- Dual training - 2 weeks at school, the other 2 weeks at a specific company, at the apprenticeship site (50% school/50% company; apprenticeship programme: 30% school/70% apprenticeship);
- Dual training or apprenticeship applies to every student- all students are eligible for dual training and additionally students over 18 years old are eligible for apprenticeship programme.

[9] <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/4d986490d23511e4bcd1a882e9a189f1>



The institution's educational approach is adapted to the needs of the labour market - when students arrive to school, they are matched with a potential job. If, for some reason, a student loses the first job, they have to find another employer on their own, but the school can help. Vocational school graduates have the skills and abilities to find their own jobs.

## **METHODOLOGY OF TRAINING**

The teaching methods used are lessons, seminars, active learning, experiential learning, teamwork, and reflection. Classes are held with Lithuanian and foreign lecturers under different mobility programmes.

Students are assessed using a 10-point scoring system. At the end of the course, a practical and a theoretical exam are given. The theoretical exam will be on-line from 2022 and the practical exam assessment will be written by the lecturer in charge of the training site. Failure to complete and/or obtain a grade for the practical course will result in no possibility of taking the examinations.

The school uses the curriculum from the KPMPC database.[10] The training programmes are licensed. The licensed programmes implemented in the school are developed in accordance with the approved procedures.[11] The school also offers non-formal programmes in arboriculture /ceramics/ blacksmithing. These programmes are developed by vocational teachers according to the needs of the students. These programmes do not receive public funding.

[10] <https://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/profesinis-mokymas-3/programos-ir-istekliai/modulines-profesinio-mokymo-programos/>

[11] <https://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/profesinis-mokymas-3/profesinio-mokymo-kokybe/pasirengimo-vykdyti-profesini-mokyma-ekspertize/>

## 2.3.2. TEACHERS, MENTORS – REQUIREMENTS, TEACHING

All teachers are professionals - not just teaching, but also working in their own fields. The constant renovation of workshops and kitchens, the provision of all the necessary tools for training, etc., creates an exceptional learning environment for the students, enabling them to assimilate the learning material more quickly and comfortably, and to gain the necessary experience.

To achieve quality education, a team of teachers has been assembled, all of whom are practitioners rather than theoreticians, working part time in their own fields. Because the training is conducted in a small groups, teachers are able to give individual attention to each student, prioritising quality over quantity. As the school has no general education subjects, all the time is spent on vocational training.

A teacher must be licensed and have the following:

- the qualifications required for the profession (a teacher who has qualified as a chef and who has worked in the profession for at least 3 years);
- at least 3 years of professional experience in the field;
- have completed 180 hours of pedagogical-psychological training;
- a university degree in education.

Further evaluation of teachers:

- Creative thinking and openness to innovation; ability to work with young people; communication skills; motivation; interest in the professional field, desire for development and life-long learning; ability to work as part of a team; and cooperation skills.

The school currently employs 20 staff members: Manager; Deputy for Education and Administration (responsible for the administration and maintenance of the TAMO database, registers, data protection, admissions system, timetabling, attendance, payments, communication, training and apprenticeship contracts, etc.); 6 vocational teachers; a teaching assistant; 5 hourly teachers; a project manager (responsible for publicity and implementation of the projects); a housekeeper; a hostess; a caretaker; a dormitory supervisor; and a bookkeeper.

Teachers work 2 or 1 week per month and have additional jobs. The cookery teacher has classes almost every day from 8.30 am to 3 pm. Each teacher is responsible for their own groups.

### 2.3.3 STUDY PROGRAMMES

The programmes offered at the school are selected according to the needs of the labour market in cooperation with businesses. This is why it is easy for students to find an apprenticeship and a job when they graduate. The school offers 3 professions: carpentry, cookery and sustainable landscaping. Adults are also invited to learn the profession of arborist in the non-formal adult education training programme.

As the school actively cooperates with businesses, they provide apprenticeships. They are also involved in developing and improving the school's practical facilities and curriculum. Graduates meet the needs of the modern labour market.

The programme is organised in semesters: semester 1 from September to January; semester 2 from February to June. 2021-2023 plan[12] Subjects taught during the semester are compulsory and provided by the programme. In order to collect the required number of credits, some subjects are chosen as electives. The approved programmes are: cook, carpenter, ornamental planting and business worker.

## 2.3.4. STUDENTS, ENTRY CRITERIA

### **SELECTION OF STUDENTS AND REQUIREMENTS**

Advertising of the school and admissions takes place during open days, through Facebook ads, sponsored articles, etc. Admission of students is through the LAMA BPO centralised system.

All young people aged 16 and over are eligible to enrol. Students can choose programmes depending on their educational background: if they have primary education or have followed a personalised programme in general education, they can study only as a chef; if they have completed grade 10, they can study as a chef and a carpenter. If they have completed 12 grades, they can study all school programmes.[13]

Students can apply for a government funded place: a government-funded initial vocational training programme place is open to people who have not completed/acquired basic education or secondary education; a government-funded continuing vocational training programme place is open to people who have already obtained a first qualification or a post-secondary qualification.

[12] <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/85e9a8c0ced911eb91e294a1358e77e9?jfwid=xthl8nbwc>

[13] <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/0a309b80396411e7b66ae890e1368363>

Non-government-funded place: tuition fees for a non-government-funded place are EUR 650 per academic year. Scholarships are funded from the state fund and or from sponsors. The State provides €20 each for 60% of the students who come to learn a profession for the first time. Sometimes, higher amounts are awarded for achievement from sponsors' funds.

## **RELATIONS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

The relationship between teachers and students is formal but communal. Teachers are authorities for the teenagers and can inspire them to learn the craft. The overall relationship is open, sensitive, analytical, creative, and generically educative. There is also the use of freelancers for teaching, supervision, strategic issues.

## **2.3.5. IMPACT MEASUREMENT, SUCCESS CRITERIA, SCHOOL KPI'S**

The success of a school is measured by the achievements of its students. For example: one student obtained a pastry chef qualification in a restaurant and a private company, and then went on to set up his own pastry bakery. The young man notes that he chose the school because of the exceptional opportunities to work and earn immediately. The young people who learned the craft of carpentry immediately set up their own company after leaving school. The students enjoy the warm and welcoming atmosphere at the school and say they still consult their former teachers. They note that motivation is particularly important and that teachers are always supportive and encouraging.

## **ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS/ABILITIES/COMPETENCES**

The competences to be acquired are described for each training programme. The competences acquired are assessed by a theoretical and a practical examination. Semester grades are based on the overall results achieved. Teachers communicate with the apprenticeship companies and receive feedback.

## **MEASURING/EVALUATING SOCIAL IMPACT**

At school, students feel part of a community and learn to take responsibility for themselves and the community as a whole. School recently is working on impact measurement tool, that is expected to be used since 1 September, 2022.

## **2.3.6. FINANCIAL MODEL: FUNDING, PRICES, FEES**

Funding sources:

Government subsidy – 30%, 70% of the incomes comes from grants, support, projects;

Regarding infrastructure sustaining – for a last 10 years financing comes from mostly private funds.

Main expenses:

Teachers' salaries are financed by the student basket - 70%;

Students' payments for personal working equipment account for 2% of costs.

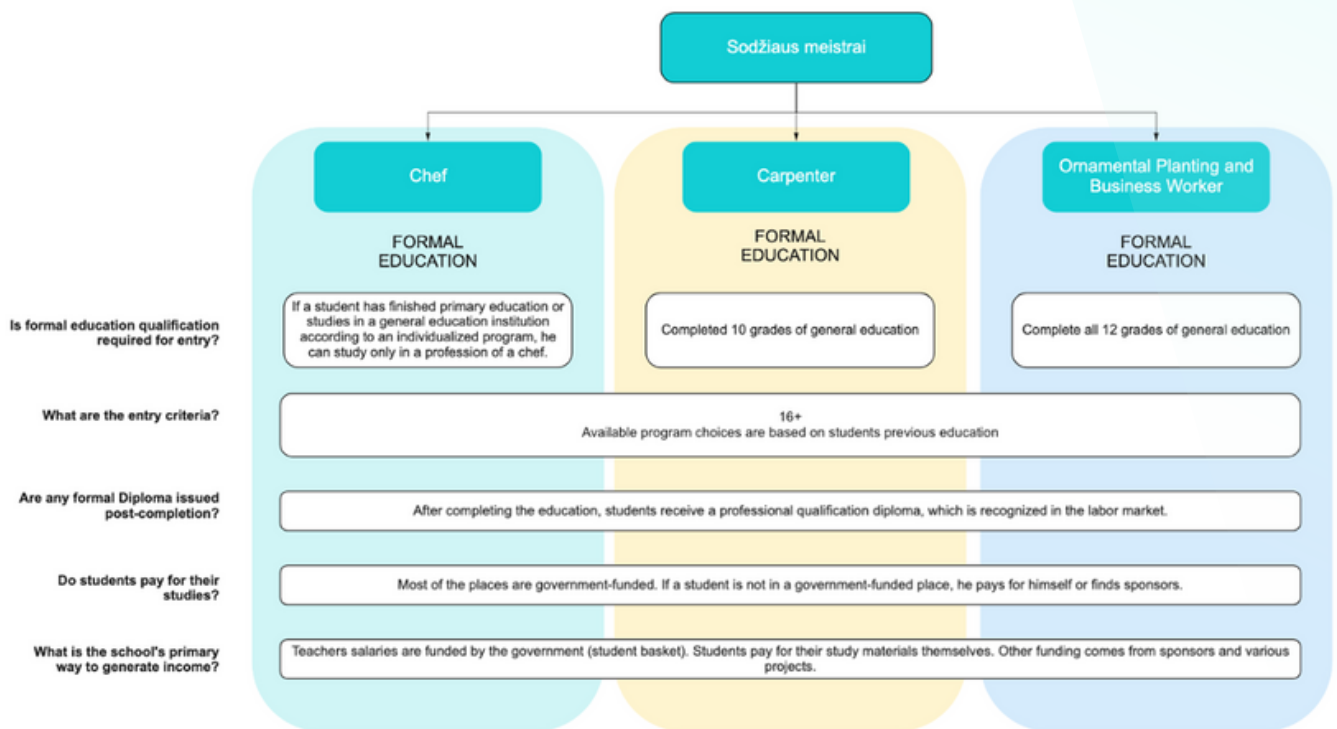


Figure 6: "Sodžiaus meistrai" model

### 3. ANALYSIS OF THE LITHUANIAN EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

Lithuania's education system consists of three levels: general education; vocational training; and higher education studies. General education lasts 12 years (of which primary education lasts 4 years, basic education 6 years and secondary education 2 years). Compulsory education for pupils is up to 16 years. The quality of general education is ensured through the application of general curriculum requirements set at national level. Vocational training can be initial and continuing. Initial vocational training is intended for the acquisition of a first vocational qualification for persons aged 14 and over. Continuing vocational training is designed to upgrade a person's existing qualifications or to acquire other qualifications or competences for a particular job/function. Continuing vocational training can be formal and non-formal. Since 2015, a Vocational Training Diploma has been awarded upon completion of vocational training programmes.

The current public school model dates back to the industrial age and was based on the way of thinking and the needs of states at that time.[14] Changes in the functioning of society and technological developments have created new challenges for schools. One of the most pressing educational problems in Lithuania is the disparity in student achievement. The differences in pupils' achievements are among the highest in the European Union, far from the average of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. In half of Lithuania's municipalities, one in five tenth-grade pupils does not reach a satisfactory level in mathematics (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport data, 2018).

[14] [http://www.nmva.smm.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/GM\\_koncepcija\\_11-121-V.V..pdf](http://www.nmva.smm.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/GM_koncepcija_11-121-V.V..pdf)



In less than a third of municipalities, almost all pupils reach a satisfactory level of Lithuanian language skills. The second problem is the well-being of pupils in schools. 31% of pupils feel lonely and 54% say they have been bullied at school (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport data, 2018). The Good Schools Concept, launched in 2013, defines a Good School as "a school that strives for meaning, discovery and learning success, based on community consensus and learning." The following key aspects of school performance have been identified as reflecting the school's mission: school life, the learning environment, the local community, personal maturity and achievement, staff, leadership and management. [15] Despite the attempts to change the education system and to improve the quality of education, common problems are still relevant and forces the need to discuss an alternative.

### 3.1. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The development potential of a society is reflected in the proportion of young people who are educated. Lithuania has already exceeded the Europe 2020 target of having at least 40 per cent of the population aged 30-34 with tertiary or equivalent education, with 59,6 per cent of people of this age having a tertiary level of education in 2020. This share has maintained a steady upward trend over the last decade and is among the highest in the EU.

Analysing the education and occupation trends of Lithuanian youth several things can be noticed. Firstly, the overall number of pupils in the educational establishments [16] (including general and vocational schools, colleges and universities) is decreasing. At the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, there were 41 higher education institutions in the country – 19 universities and 22 colleges – with 104,000 students, including 71,9 thousand in universities (73,000 in 2019-2020) and 32,5 thousand in colleges. Compared to the previous academic year 2019-2020, the number of students in universities decreased by 1,1 thousand (1,5 per cent) and in colleges by 0,5 thousand (1,5 per cent).

[15] [http://www.nmva.smm.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/GM\\_koncepcija\\_11-121-V.V..pdf](http://www.nmva.smm.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/GM_koncepcija_11-121-V.V..pdf)

[16] <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?indicator=S3R315#/>

Secondly, the majority (70,6 per cent) of school-leavers and graduates continue [17] their studies in the same year, however, the number of pupils and students who received education [18] dropped: in 2019 there were 68 708 students, in 2020 the number decreased to 66,031. This includes all types of education: general lower secondary, general upper secondary, higher college, and higher university. On average 14-15 per cent of young people drop out after their first year, while in some colleges and universities this figure is as high as 22-25 per cent. Thus, our country has a relatively high drop-out rate. Additionally, the number of school-age children not attending school [19] increased – in the period of 2019-2020 there were 16 319 pupils in the 7-17 age group not attending school, from 2020 to 2021 the number reached 17 362.

Data from the Department of Statistics show that the number of people in life-long studies relative to the total population is also decreasing. Comparing the figures from 2011 to 2016, the number of people engaged in non-formal and self-education increased slightly from 19,6 per cent in 2011 to 22,3 per cent in 2016. In 2005, even 45 per cent of respondents reported self-education. When comparing the number of students by gender, a higher proportion of women participate in non-formal education activities or engage in self-education. In some sectors, the decline of students in non-formal education is rather rapid, for example, comparing the number of students attending technical creativity classes in 2019 and 2020. On the other hand, the number of pupils attending information technology classes has been increasing recently.

[17] <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=c57dc41c-ecbf-49ee-b121-b6703c8a4922#/>

[18] <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?indicator=S3R311#/>

[19] <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?indicator=S3R305#/>

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According to data from the Lithuanian Statistics Department (2021 [20]), the overall employment rate of Lithuanian youth after completing their studies (25-29 age group) is 6,6 per cent. Meanwhile, the employment rate of young people [21] of the same age living in the country is 80 per cent, meaning that at least 20 per cent do not find appropriate forms of self-fulfilment in the form of work, education or business opportunities.

When analysing the reasons that prevent people in the age group from 25 to 65 from participating in formal or non-formal education, the most frequent reason is the lack of motivation to learn, with a rate of 81 per cent in 2016. It is notable that the significance of this reason has been increasing, while the importance of the other reasons that were relevant in the previous years (e.g. the cost of learning, employment at work, age or health) has been decreasing. Analysing the relevance of the reasons by gender, similar tendencies can be observed, with the lack of a need to study is important for both men and women. However, it should be noted that, compared to men, women are more likely to indicate “being busy at home” as a reason for not wanting to study in non-formal or formal education. Although the influence of this indicator is declining, the overall tendency of its relevance shows that this reason is more important for women.

[20] <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/darbo-rinka-lietuvoje-2021/uzimtumas-nedarbas-ir-laisvos-darbo-vietos/nedarbas>

[21] <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/darbo-rinka-lietuvoje-2021/uzimtumas-nedarbas-ir-laisvos-darbo-vietos/uzimtumas>

The need to strengthen the guidance system is reflected in the skills mismatch in the labour market in Lithuania. In 2019, 57,6 per cent of the population aged 30-34 in Lithuania (EU average: 40,7 per cent) had a higher education qualification, but graduates were in lower-skilled jobs: only 42 per cent of first cycle university graduates, 65 per cent of second cycle university graduates, and 30 per cent of college graduates were working in jobs requiring a higher education qualification. OECD research indicates that fragmented vocational guidance services in Lithuanian schools do not ensure a smooth transition of young people from the education system to the labour market. Career planning is also needed after entering the labour market, at all ages and educational levels. Lifelong learning competences that are not developed lead to a lack of adaptability of the older population to survive in the labour market and to adapt to changing labour market conditions.

In order to assess how the above-mentioned challenges in formal education and career guidance are planned to be addressed in the future, the next section provides information on the priorities and planned measures in Lithuania's strategic documents.

## 3.2 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICY GUIDELINES IN LITHUANIAN STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS AND PROGRAMMES

In order to ensure that youth employment policy is implemented in accordance with the needs of Lithuania's youth and in the interests of the country, it is important to identify the common guidelines for youth employment policy identified in Lithuania's strategic documents and programmes.

One of the first legal acts outlining the guidelines for a modern youth policy in Lithuania was the "National Youth Policy Concept" established in 1996. The document defined the main objectives and principles of youth policy implementation. However, this document was repealed in 2003 with the approval of the Youth Policy Framework Law[22]. This law focuses specifically on the activities of the institutions that regulate and implement non-formal youth development. It is important to mention that the Government Programme of the Republic of Lithuania[23] for 2004-2008 included, as a separate part, a chapter on youth policy, which contained provisions and measures that would help to improve the legal framework regulating youth policy and its implementation.

In the analysis of relevant strategic documents, the National Youth Development Programme 2011-2019 [24] could also be highlighted. This programme focuses on the development of young people by creating favourable conditions for them to become active and motivated citizens. One of the objectives of the programme is to ensure the development of social protection, education and health systems that meet the needs of young people.

On 14 February 2021, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (SADM) order on the action plan for the implementation of the "Youth Guarantee Initiative[25]" was approved. The plan aims to ensure that every young person who is willing and able to work is offered a job, further education, including apprenticeship vocational training, an apprenticeship or a traineeship to acquire professional skills in a workplace.

[22] Lietuvos Respublikos Jaunimo politikos pagrindų įstatymas 2003 m. gruodžio 4 d. Nr. IX-1871.

[23] Lietuvos respublikos vyriausybė nutarimas „Dėl Lietuvos respublikos vyriausybės 2004–2008 metų programos įgyvendinimo priemonių patvirtinimo“ 2005 m. kovo 24 d. Nr. 315.

[24] Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė nutarimas „Dėl nacionalinės jaunimo politikos 2011–2019 metų plėtros programos patvirtinimo“ 2010 m. gruodžio 1 d. Nr. 1715.

[25] Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro įsakymas „Dėl jaunimo garantijų iniciatyvos įgyvendinimo veiksmų plano patvirtinimo“ 2021 m. vasario 4 d. Nr. A1-108.

The main objective of the plan is to "ensure that all people aged 15-29 who are not in employment, in education or in training receive an offer of at least 28 calendar days of work, further education (including vocational training in the form of an apprenticeship), an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a four-month period following the date on which they lost their job or completed/stopped their formal education programme". It is important to note that the services identified in the Plan must be provided to inactive young people and the unemployed aged 16-29. The Plan foresees improving the availability and quality of vocational guidance and career counselling services, as well as the development of professional guidance for students. It will also ensure the monitoring of the implementation of measures for inactive young people and the Youth Guarantee Initiative. The implementation of the envisaged measures is expected to ensure a comprehensive provision of activation and motivation services for the young unemployed and inactive young people. One of the main objectives is to increase the integration of young people into the labour market through the application of effective active labour market policy measures, by developing cooperation between the government, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and businesses to promote the integration of young people into the labour market and/or the education system, and by promoting self-employment, traineeships and entrepreneurship.

Currently, Lithuania's sectoral ministries are preparing strategic documents detailing investments for the next 10 years (until 2030). It should be noted that all planned progress investments (in terms of change and recorded impact indicators) have to be detailed in the development programmes of the line ministries. Different national authorities foresee specific measures to reduce potential unemployment or increase labour market participation of young people.

In particular, it is worth highlighting the measure of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania "Establishing a Vocational Education and Training System Responding to Market Needs". This measure is expected to address significant problems: Increasing the attractiveness of vocational training; improving the quality of vocational training; increasing the popularity of apprenticeships and developing a work-based learning system that exploits the potential of vocational training to provide the practical skills needed for the labour market; and promoting the planning of admissions to vocational training in line with the needs of the regional and national labour market; increasing the flexibility and openness of the vocational education and training system; improving the readiness of vocational education and training to adapt to the challenges of digitalization and the Green Deal; increasing the involvement of social partners in vocational education and training; and ensuring the training and competence development of vocational teachers, so as to ensure that the system provides all teachers with the necessary skills.

The implementation of the programme is expected to have a significant impact by increasing the share of apprenticeship students in vocational schools out of the number of students qualified in the respective year (8 % in 2025; 15 % in 2030); and by increasing the share of students who are pursuing secondary education (ISCED 3) in addition to a vocational qualification (ISCED 2). The share of employed 20-34 year olds who obtained a vocational training diploma with or after secondary education 1-3 years ago (2025: 80%; 2030: 82%), etc. will increase.

Through the measures of the SADM "Increasing Employment of Vulnerable Groups" and "Increasing Employment of Vulnerable Groups", it is planned to address problems related to specific youth activities. The following significant problems have been identified:

- 32% of people from different social groups registered with the Labour offices would only be employed through a combination of integrated services and active labour integration measures;
- Almost one in three people registered in the Labour offices are unqualified, a third of the workforce is working in a job that is not related to their field of education;
- People who can enter the labour market encounter obstacles in different regions.

These measures are expected to result in a reversal of the long-term unemployment rate, in % (1.7 in 2025; 1.5 in 2030), and a reduction in the share of unemployed people registered as re-employed within 12 months of permanent employment, in % (16 in 2025; 14 in 2030).

## **CAREER PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

The "New Generation Lithuania" program aims to address career planning issues and strengthen the vocational education system in response to market needs. To address the problems of the system, reform is planned - the Vocational Guidance System for Balancing Labour Market Supply and Demand, which will include a number of measures to be implemented.



The reform of the Vocational Guidance (VG) system will be implemented to address these problems. As part of the reform, a description of the procedure for vocational guidance will be developed and validated by a decision of the LRG, regulating the principles of the lifelong career counselling and planning system, the roles and responsibilities of each institution. Career education and career planning guidance is expected to start at an early age (from grade 1). The career guidance and planning system will help pupils at an early age to identify areas of interest and decide on possible future career scenarios. Children will gain knowledge about competencies acquired in educational institutions and learn about the transition between different levels of education. The guidance model and its regulation, which is currently being developed, foresees that career guidance services in schools should be provided by career specialists.

A career planning system has already been started. In early 2021, a VCC in Alytus was already operational and by the end of 2022, 10 more VCCs will be launched. Career guidance will also become an integral part of the MVG system, providing access to career counselling for people with education and/or professional experience, not only through the MVG information system but also through the network of Regional Career Centres.

To summaries this section, career guidance, improving the quality of formal and non-formal education, and preparing young people for the labour market will be financed from a variety of sources, both from the national budget and the EU Structural Funds. This is expected to successfully address the current situation and not only reduce the number of young people dropping out of formal education, but also to ensure quality jobs that meet the social needs of young people. The Folk High School model can be a big help in addressing these issues. More detailed recommendations for the implementation of this model are given in the next section.

## 4. ANALYSIS OF THE ESTONIA EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

As stated on the webpage of the Estonian Ministry of Education (2022) The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020[26] sees learning as a lifestyle. The learning process itself is based on values like:

**-Responsibility** – people are aware that learning and self-development are their own conscious personal choices as well as responsibility.

**-Necessity** – the learning process is guided by the individual's personal interests and abilities and supports their development, whilst keeping in mind the requirements of the labour market.

**-Opportunities** – a system of lifelong learning offers high quality, contemporary and flexible learning opportunities that are tailored for individual needs.

Lifelong learning begins with general education. There is a common system applied for general education in Estonia. In practical terms, this means that a common curriculum is taught in all levels of education, regardless of the language of study. The length of the study period consists of at least 175 teaching days (35 weeks) and four intervals of school breaks.

All municipal schools have designated service areas, meaning that the schools must ensure vacancies for all school-aged children living in their designated area. Parents can influence the school's development through school board.

General education is divided to **pre-school, basic** and **upper-secondary education**.

[26] <https://www.hm.ee/en/estonian-lifelong-learning-strategy-2020>

**Pre-school education** is delivered to children between the ages of 18 months to seven years in especially dedicated educational institutions.

**Basic education** serves as the mandatory minimum of general education requirement, which can be acquired either partially in primary schools (grades 1 to 6), basic schools (grades 1 to 9) or upper secondary schools that also teach basic school curricula.

The basic school is divided into three stages:

- stage I – grades 1.-3;
- stage II – grades 4.-6;
- stage III – grades 7.-9.

Graduating the basic school requires that the student learns the curriculum at least a satisfactory level together with passing three basic school graduation exams consisting of the Estonian language or Estonian as a second language, mathematics, and an exam on a subject of the student's choice as well as completing a creative assignment.

Following graduation from basic school, there are a number of possibilities for continuation of the educational path. There is a possibility to acquire general secondary education at **upper secondary school**, vocational secondary education at some **vocational education institution** or simply an occupation.

**General secondary education** is acquired at the upper secondary school level. Upper secondary schools are designed to help students become creative, multi-talented, socially mature and reliable citizens who have discovered a field of endeavour that is best suited to their individual interests and capacities for continuing their future educational path. The study programme at upper secondary school is arranged into mandatory and voluntary courses.

Graduation from upper secondary school requires the student to complete a curriculum consisting of at least 96 individual courses passed at a satisfactory level as a minimum, passing the state exams consisting of the Estonian language or Estonian as a second language, mathematics and a foreign language exam, passing the upper secondary school exam as well as completing a student research paper or practical work during the entire study period.

Attaining general secondary education entitles students to continue their studies at a higher educational institution or to obtain vocational education.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE ALTERNATIVE MODEL IN LITHUANIA

### **KEY CHALLENGES FOR FORMAL EDUCATION IN LITHUANIA**

6 Lithuanian experts were interviewed during the period of March - April 2022. The detail methodology and affiliations of the experts are presented in Chapter 1.

Experts who participated in the study tended to have a more positive view of Lithuania's formal education system, with the prevailing opinion being that "the education system is not poorly functioning" [D5]. However, individual parts of the system were viewed rather critically. The challenges to formal education in Lithuania identified by the survey participants can be divided into three main groups:

1) The relationship between teacher and pupil based on authority and passive transmission of knowledge, where "the teacher does not see the child as his/her equal" [D1] and "the teacher is still the transmitter of knowledge" [D4]. The participants stressed that the teacher community is not adapting to the new model of communication based on the equality of pupils and teachers: "teachers often complain that they are not an authority for children, that they lack respect, but <...> respect and authority is not something that comes immediately, it is determined by the behaviour of the teacher" [D1]. In addition, the school itself as a system is often very closed, and the teaching staff hardly changes;

2) A curriculum content that is no longer relevant to real needs and not sufficiently oriented towards practical skills, with insufficient emphasis on career education. Career guidance and profiling in each school is "as perceived by the administration and lacks systematicity" [D3], and the educational process itself is "not oriented towards long-term learning but towards the chiselling out of skills, starting in primary school, with little focus on practical education" [D4]. The ongoing project to update the curriculum content was seen as an opportunity to improve these aspects, but participants in the study noted that the results of the update are difficult to predict, as the project itself is "quite difficult to get going so far" [D1];

3) Provisions on the quality of vocational training. Experts stressed that, despite the excellent infrastructure of vocational training institutions and their orientation towards the development of practical skills, a negative image of vocational schools is still prevalent in Lithuania: "vocational schools are seen as schools where children of a lower level of achievement go" [D1]. While in the West "only those who feel inclined to academic work go to university" [D3], in Lithuania "the prevailing attitude is that "a child must have at least a bachelor's degree" [D4]. This attitude is probably linked to the unpopularity of the gap year as a self-discovery opportunity: "the gap year is not yet catching on, it is not yet popular to be able to travel and think about what you want to do when you volunteer" [D4].

These challenges of the formal education system identified by experts reveal the importance of the existence of alternatives for career guidance and preparation of young people for the labour market (see more in section 2), and show that the Folk High School model, due to its orientation towards the development of personality and the development of practical skills, could have an important niche in the Lithuanian education system.

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR FORMAL EDUCATION IN LITHUANIA**

Regarding current alternatives to career guidance and labour market preparation for young people, or ways to help young people who have dropped out of formal education to return to school or to integrate into the labour market, experts noted that "we do not have a system that is permanently in place" [D3]. The limitations and challenges identified by the experts in helping young people to return to education or to integrate into the labour market were related to the lack of continuity and coherence of support initiatives. Work with such young people is usually carried out in the context of relevant projects which are discontinued after the funding ends. One expert gave the example of the introduction of a career guidance system: "the system got off to a good start a few years ago. Career guidance points were set up with EU funding, but after the project the centres were closed and things came to a standstill" [D5].

The reasons why some young people drop out of education are complex and it is not easy to bring them back. Experts noted that helping young people who have dropped out of education is often linked to the age of the young person. Education up to the age of 16 is compulsory, so if a young person drops out of school, "children's rights and social services agencies and child welfare commissions get involved" [D5]. However, if the young person is already 18 years old or drops out of high school, there is no coherent system of support. In addition, the provision of help to young people can be limited by societal attitudes: "In Lithuania, there is a lack of help for adolescents or young people, or of awareness of the need for help in general, because there is often a perception that the young person is at fault - he or she did not want to study, there were some psychological errors, he or she did not behave properly" [D1].

Although there is no coherent system of support for returning young people to the education system or integrating them into the labour market in Lithuania, the experts who participated in the study highlighted several good examples of this practice:

- The "JUDAM" project implemented by the Department of Youth Affairs, which aims to reduce the number of young people aged 15-29 who are not in employment, education or training and are not registered with the Employment Service. The experience of the project's career guidance specialists shows that individual attention is crucial in reintegrating young people into the education system or the labour market;
- Activities of youth voluntary organisations (YVOs). The YVOs have a volunteer or mentor and aim to find the organisation best suited to the needs of the volunteer and to ensure quality implementation of the volunteering activity and the assessment of the competences acquired;

- Open Youth Centres, with a particular focus on socially and pedagogically neglected young people, taking on career guidance functions;
- The non-formal education basket has considerably expanded non-formal education opportunities. On the other hand, there is a tendency to focus only on arts and sports, and there is a lack of non-formal education activities for older children, social and technological clubs, etc.;
- The Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas Craft Training Centre, where young people not only learn crafts but also develop their social skills. However, it has been observed that this centre is specialised and rather narrow. The candle workshop and the social assistance and integration centre "Bethany" stood out alongside other initiatives of Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas;
- The Waldorf school model, which focuses on relationships and the development of the child's individual abilities, employment and crafts. However, these schools are relatively closed, with a strong internal school community, but less successful in integrating into wider communities.

In summary, Lithuania does not have a unified and continuous system of career guidance and labour market preparation for young people, or a system of support for young people who have dropped out of formal education to return to school or integrate into the labour market. Existing individual examples of good practice reveal a significant unmet need for a coherent model of career guidance for young people, based on both practical skills training and holistic personal development, taking into account social circumstances.



## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING THE FOLK HIGH SCHOOL MODEL IN LITHUANIA**

The social impact and importance of the Folk High School model. The experts stressed that the Folk High School model would have the potential to address social problems, reduce social exclusion, and ensure inclusive education for children with individual educational needs, emphasising the model's orientation towards the development of social skills, its focus on self-knowledge, and the development of skills that are important in the labour market. The model also has the potential to empower and activate communities, which is particularly important for Lithuania. Experts note that the view of community "has degenerated <...> they are really meant to absorb funding <...> community is imagined in the regions, while, say, in the big cities, it is as if they are not needed" [D3].

The suitability of the People's School model for different social groups. The experts considered that the vernacular school model would be appropriate for the whole of society, without singling out specific groups, and stressing the importance of being able to choose what is most appropriate for each individual: 'it must depend on the needs of the individual and take into account the socio-economic context of the individual' [D5]. However, it was unanimously felt that the vernacular school model would be particularly beneficial for the education of various socially at-risk groups, such as children from care homes, and those who are not in employment or education (NEET). On the other hand, some experts have stressed that creating a school that accepts pupils on the basis of certain characteristics risks indirectly contributing to the deepening of social exclusion, and that it is therefore important for both groups at risk and those not at risk to "live together, it is very important, they have to learn to live together" [D4]

Introducing the Folk High School model in Lithuania. In the opinion of the experts, the People's School model in Lithuania could have a threefold function: 1) as an option for young people who have completed their general education programme, but do not yet know what they would like to do in life (or who want to have a gap year); 2) as a crisis management institution, i.e., to be a crisis-relief organisation providing services to socially at-risk groups and focused on their reintegration into the labour market or education; and (3) to provide opportunities to learn about a profession, prepare for work and test oneself (Folk High Schools as part of vocational guidance, career education).

Given the limited alternatives available in Lithuania for career guidance and preparation of young people for the labour market, according to the experts, Folk High Schools would function best as an intermediate stop for a young person who has completed general education and is looking for a further path in life, where he or she "can find out where he or she is going and in what direction he or she wants to go, and where he or she wants to go <...> there is a great need for such schools, especially for those who are inclined to learn about themselves, to make a choice of a career, to try out a different profession" [D1]. Self-discovery, self-focusing and career counselling services and advice are very much needed for all young people, not only for those at social risk, but "for groups that sort of don't fit into any group, for example, the young person who has done nothing wrong but parents are not very supportive, or you are an orphan and you don't know what to do" [D2]. However, despite the benefits and added value that a grassroots model would bring, experts tended to believe that it would be difficult to implement such a model in Lithuania: "Lithuanians are not community-minded, we're very individualistic, we want to standardise everything" [D5].

## **Experts identified the following main challenges for the implementation of the Folk High School model in Lithuania:**

- Folk High Schools provide non-formal education, which can create difficulties in recognising and formalising the competences acquired in such schools;
- possible parental resistance if the child expresses a desire to attend a Folk High School before completing secondary education or plans to complete it later. Moreover, the process of returning to formal education is not clear (for example, whether children should have the option from the age of 16 or only from the age of 18);
- the importance of local community mobilisation and available resources in the implementation of the Folk High School model (e.g. conditions and infrastructure for the implementation of the school, possible community resistance and preparation for the reception of young people who may be exposed to various social risks);
- Attracting and retaining teachers and other professionals because of the educational process inherent in the model (e.g. 2-4 week courses in a remote location).

Experts tended to be of the opinion that integrating the Folk High School model into the current general or vocational education system would simplify the implementation, although opinions were divided. On the one hand, it was noted that a form of non-formal education would be more attractive to young people themselves and would avoid the risk of formalising and standardising teaching materials. On the other hand, Folk High School model integrated into the vocational education system would be more attractive to society and less administratively complex. This would be a more complex route to implementation, as it would require accreditation, qualification requirements for teachers, etc., but it would ensure the award of a formal diploma that is important in the Lithuanian labour market.

Financing of the Folk High School model. Experts felt that a hybrid financing approach could be used, where the state pays part of the cost of education, the founders or sponsors contributes, and the pupil pays the rest. A hybrid funding model should also have an appropriate mechanism to balance the ratio of affluent to non-affluent pupils: "there could be some support from the state according to the financial resources available, taking into account the capacity of the municipalities, the pupil's financial capacity, and the pupil's socio-economic status" [D1]. In addition, the experts stressed the importance of the sustainability of funding: funding for Folk High Schools should not be channelled through the development of projects, as this source of finance is not sustainable. A more reliable and stable funding would be, for example, on a basket basis.

In summary, the experts believe that the introduction of the Folk High School model in Lithuania would make a significant contribution to the well-being of members of society, both those at risk and those not at risk, as well as to the empowerment of local communities and to the preparation of young people for careers. There is currently no other such long-term and sustainable alternative to career guidance and job preparation for young people that focuses on the development of practical skills, personal development and skills relevant to the labour market. As the survey revealed, there is both a large unmet need for such an initiative in Lithuania and an unfilled niche for other alternatives in the labour and education market.

## 5.2. POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW MODEL IN LITHUANIA

Considering the insights of Lithuanian experts, the situation of the Lithuanian education system and the social and cultural context, two scenarios for the implementation of the new model are proposed:

**I. Moderate scenario.** This scenario proposes to integrate certain elements of Folk High School into the existing formal education system in order to address the main problems of the system: unpopularity of vocational training, lack of social-emotional education, poor career guidance. This model could be implemented by setting up a formal vocational school integrating some elements of the Folk High School:

- Additional courses or classes not only to prepare for a career but also to provide social knowledge about the environment, sustainability, entrepreneurship, social and emotional resilience, etc. additional modules with guests (non-vocational teachers);
- Additional staff posts could be created to build on the experience of "Sožiaus meistrai" to work more actively with employers, the local community, local farmers to create a database of stakeholders to accelerate the employment of young people;
- A separate system should be set up to promote volunteering and community mobilisation. To this end, new learning modules should be developed, offering additional social credits (which could be counted towards university entrance);
- The main target group would be young people aged 15-19 who are in formal education or at risk of "dropping off" or have already "dropped off" of the system;

- Partnerships with community centres, complex social service centres could be envisaged to address social problems, with a view to extracurricular occupation;
- Dormitory services, weekend employment programmes can be offered where possible.

**Advantages of the scenario:**

- Lower maintenance resources, as formal education is financed through the pupil basket;
- The possibility of generating additional income by organising non-formal education activities for young people;
- Easier integration into the mainstream education system, more visibility of the model;
- Provides a formal certificate of completion, attractive to future clients;
- Requires less preparation, less adaptation of methodologies;
- Would help to address drop-off problems by making education more attractive than in a traditional vocational school.

**Scenario weaknesses:**

- Complex bureaucratic burden: accreditation of programmes, formal requirements for programmes, teacher qualifications;
- Fragmented problem-solving, low impact on social problems;
- Relies on formal state resources, less opportunities for community involvement;
- Less attractive to young people, especially those with social challenges, e.g. NEET.

**II. Innovative scenario.** Creating a new educational model in Lithuania based on the philosophy and values of Folk High School. Key elements should include examples from case analyses comparative table (see Appendix 2 for details):

- Avoiding social labelling - addresses the problems of people who do not fall into social vulnerable target groups;
- Democratic, experiential and reflective education;
- A model based on community mobilisation.

**Students:**

- Can target vulnerable young people at some social risk, e.g. young people who have grown up in care institution;
- NEET young people, if a hybrid funding model for funding services is developed;
- Young people aged 20-25 who are studying or have completed their studies but are not motivated to work and do not find attractive alternatives;
- People in social crisis seeking community support and self-fulfilment.

**Advantages of the scenario:**

- Activities are based on practice, experiential learning by testing and reflecting on one's own experiences;
- Interesting, engaging and sociable lecturers - experts in their field;
- The opportunity to spend a gap year in a useful way;
- Informal contact with all members of the community, development of community skills;
- Making non-formal education more attractive to young people;
- Lifelong learning principle, making education available for all;
- Helps to solve social problems, to acquire skills that are important in the labour market (in some cases, employers are looking for motivated workers who are able to perform certain functions);

- Can be a crisis intervention body, i.e. an organisation that also provides social services aimed at reintegrating these groups back into the labour market or into an educational institution;
- Reducing social segregation, involving different social groups learning and living to be together.

**Scenario weaknesses:**

- Does not provide a formal education diploma, less attractive to the public (e.g. parents who should pay for their children's education);
- Services would be fee-based and/or would put continuous pressure on the developers to ensure financial stability;
- Possible resistance from local communities, especially if the institution offers accommodation, organises events, etc.;
- Challenges in attracting expert teachers, well-known professionals in their field, to give their time to such non-formal training;
- The challenges of attracting prospective students, especially if the services were paid. In this case, well adapted facilities and additional activities and employment should be offered.



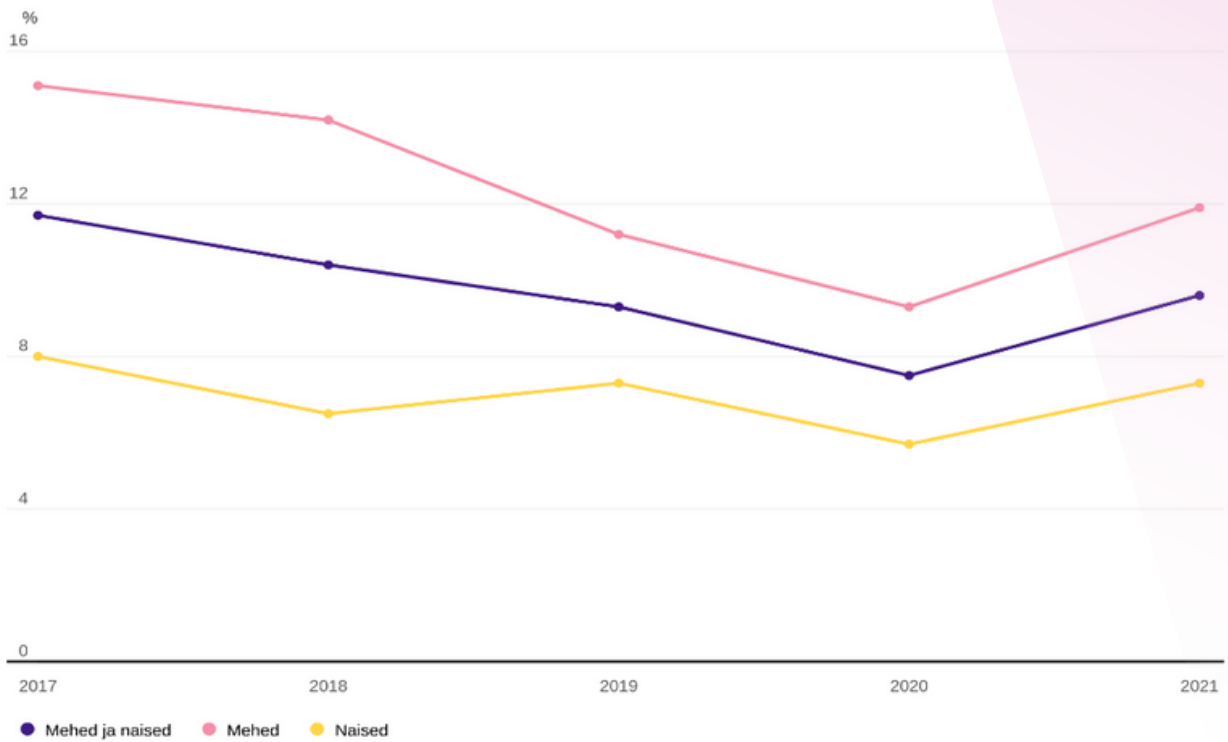
## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE ALTERNATIVE MODEL IN ESTONIA

### 6.1. MAIN CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTISES

6 interviews with experts were conducted (in the field of vocational education, art education, higher education, specialists in the field of employment of young people at risk of exclusion, specialists in the field of formal education and one researcher of the history of the Estonian Folk High School).

### 6.1. MAIN CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTISES

The main issue in the context of education and vulnerable youth is sustainability of a interventios - key challenges are being addressed on a project basis. There is a lot of research done on this topic in Estonia and one of the main problems is that formal education still tends to assess its success simply by measuring learning outcomes and drop-out rates are rising. Proportion of young people with primary or lower education who do not continue their studies amongst 18 – 26-year-old based on gender (years 2017 – 2021):



Vaata interaktiivset graafikut [juhtimislaud.stat.ee](http://juhtimislaud.stat.ee)

Figure 7: Proportion of young people with primary or lower education who do not continue their studies, 18-26. Purple – man and women, pink – man, yellow – women

7–26-aastased üldhariduse katkestajad haridustaseme järgi | Kogu Eesti, 2017–2020

Allikas: Eesti hariduse infosüsteem (EHIS), statistikaamet

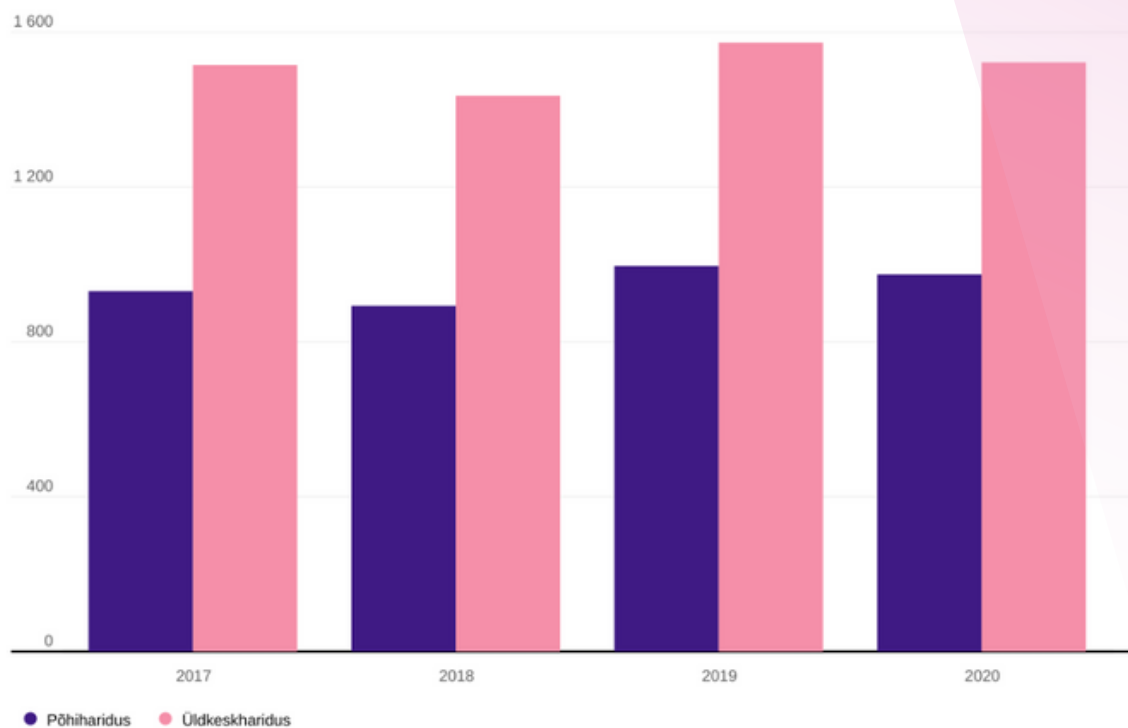


Figure 8: 7 – 26 year-old people who have dropped out (divided by the level of education) in Estonia. Purple indicating basic education, pink upper secondary education

### **Key challenges in the field:**

- Teachers' incompetence in dealing with young people with special needs / at risk;
- Shortcomings in early detection of problems;
- Incompetence in involving a supportive network;
- Low use of inclusive and motivational learning methods;
- Inadequate relationship management (exp. lack of conscious management of group dynamics and teaching of social competences, lack of knowledge and use of conflict resolution methods);
- The assessment system applied in formal education (emphasis on summative numerical and verbal assessment) does not support the involvement of these young people or the development of self-management skills, although the formative assessment described in the national curriculum would allow it;
- Lack of systematic support for young people at risk (e.g. with a low level of education, lack of Estonian language skills, history of delinquent behaviour);
- Lack of involvement of employers;
- Lack of a systemic approach by the state;
- Lack and complexity of co-operation between different ministries and their different sub-agencies.

A study is currently being conducted at the Centre for International Social Studies of Tallinn University, accordingly dynamic model of multilevel social inclusion of young people will be developed.

It is based on a dynamic approach to social exclusion, according to which social exclusion is not a characteristic of the individual, but a situation that may arise under the influence of environmental factors and can be prevented or balanced by institutional interventions.[27]

There are several NGOs and associations that have been working with NEET young people (not in education, employment, or training) successfully. Unfortunately, despite of years of experience and good results in impact assessment, those organisations have received irregular and project-based funding. There is little clarity at the local level how this issue should be managed.

## SERVICES PROVIDED BY “NOORTE TUGILA”



[27]

[https://www.tlu.ee/sites/default/files/Instituudid/%C3%9CTI/RASI/2022\\_RASI%20toimetised%20nr%2021\\_TASK-U.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0upOlfn-ihX0qVFatho\\_2vuEs4INoGgLKM\\_NLi613asySEgCJOybBTg4k](https://www.tlu.ee/sites/default/files/Instituudid/%C3%9CTI/RASI/2022_RASI%20toimetised%20nr%2021_TASK-U.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0upOlfn-ihX0qVFatho_2vuEs4INoGgLKM_NLi613asySEgCJOybBTg4k)

The program ran from 2015 to 2021 and was focused at young people aged 15 - 26 who were not studying or working. The activities were funded from the European Social Fund co-financed program "Inclusion of young people at risk of exclusion and improvement of young people's employability" implemented by the Education and Youth Board. A very positive example, the program operated practically in all Estonian counties. But at the end of the project funding, Tugilad also closed.

The ideology and objectives of the program were similar to Folk High Schools models presented.

## **STEP-PROGRAM**

Operated on a project basis in the years of 2015 - 2021. The activities were financed from the European Social Fund 2014 – 2020 through the Ministry of the Interior. STEP program helped young people aged 15 - 26 with the history of delinquent behaviour to find work and continue education. Currently, with the support of the Solidarity Corps funding, STEP helps young people up to the age of 30 to work, advises them, finds volunteers to support them and suitable leisure activities. The program is unsuccessfully seeking follow-up funding and is on the verge of closure, although the impact assessment report shows that the program is very successful (63% employment rate, which is considered to be very high for this target group; 50% continue working after 6 months; decrease in recidivism; cost-effectiveness 2.5 times).

## **CODE -PROJECT AT TARTU ART SCHOOL**

The CODE stands for young people who, for various reasons, do not study or work (NEET) or need extra time and knowledge to choose a profession. In addition to Tartu Art School, public and third sector organizations from Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, and Latvia are participating in the project. The project is funded by the EEA and Norway Grants, the Fund for Youth Employment. The project is very necessary for NEET young people who have artistic ability and talent, but who, for a variety of reasons, have dropped out of school and become socially vulnerable.

All of these (and many more) projects develop the social skills and self-awareness of NEETs, help them to practice everyday tasks, develop life skills, learn to be considerate of others and enable them to acquire skills, either while studying or already in the labour market, similar to those in Folk High Schools.

The vision of the Youth Development Plan prepared for the period 2021-2035 states that in 2035 young people will live a healthy and fulfilling life in all regions of Estonia and have been able to change the community and country so that Estonia has the best environment in the world for growth, living and self-fulfilment.[28]

The development plan sets out the following action points:

- Ensuring the necessary support and equal opportunities for young people;
- Reducing the risk of young people being left out and alone;
- Understanding the causes of young people's risk behaviour and risk of exclusion and designing services based on their real needs;
- Considering the solutions and ideas that young people themselves offer;

[28] [https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/noortevaldkonna\\_arengukava\\_2021-2035\\_kinnitteet\\_12.08.2035.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/noortevaldkonna_arengukava_2021-2035_kinnitteet_12.08.2035.pdf)

- Discovering and developing young people's talents and strengths;
- Supporting young people's entrepreneurial aspirations, creativity, and ideas;
- Creating preconditions to strengthen young people's trust and connection to the state;
- Participation and consultation of young people at all levels of government;
- Empowering young people to be active citizens;
- Ensuring the availability of quality youth work;
- Continuous support for the development of youth work;
- Encouraging the development and future growth of the competencies of youth workers.

All the above actions are compatible with the ideas of the Nordic-type Folk High school.

## **THE NEED OF FOLK HIGH SCHOOL MODEL IN ESTONIA**

Most of the experts thought that there would be a need for Folk High School model in Estonia, especially so-called country-type Folk High Schools. Our informal educational institutions are today scattered among local governments, between different institutions, parts of the education system and time-bound projects. Folk High School model could potentially add a lot to the goal of moving towards „**seamless education**“, where it is possible to move smoothly from one level of education to another, from one type of school to another, and to have the opportunity for the acknowledgement of previous learning experience. This means being able to move down the learning path according to your capacities and chosen pace. This could be the optimal approach in life-long learning. One must be able to study at different times of one's life, not only in school, but also in various courses, online environments, and so on. There is a need for a system that allows all learning experiences to be registered and recognized.



The concept of „seamless education“ also indicates that learning takes place in different environments (in school, hobby school, youth work centre, cultural institution, at work etc), between which there is greater cooperation. There is a lot of debates in Estonia about greater integration of general, vocational, higher and non-formal education (e.g. the national curricula of basic schools and upper secondary schools provide opportunities for combining different environments)[29] but in reality it is difficult to do and there is no clear plan for that or good practices so far.

One good example is the “Year of Choosing a Profession”. From 2019, Estonian vocational education institutions are able provide vocational education with acquiring also general education. This enables young people who come to vocational school get acquainted with different specialties and decide on further education or entering the labour market. It focuses on the development of key competencies and different transferable skills related to the choice of profession. Readiness to continue studies or enter the labour market is also being pursued. For example, young people who have dropped out of school, young people who are not working or studying, young people who have graduated from basic school but are not sure about their future life, students who need enhanced support, immigrants and / or young people with insufficient Estonian language skills, etc. Attempts are being made to launch this model in 12 vocational education institutions in Estonia, based on the good experiences of Denmark and Finland. The target group is often young people who have dropped out of formal education. One of the important goals here is to increase the young person's self-awareness, to develop self-confidence. The problem is that it has not been possible to communicate it in Estonia in such a way as to refute people's sceptical attitude towards this type of education. It can also be an obstacle to the start of Folk High School. Building strong communication should be an important strategic area here.

[29] National Curriculum for Secondary Education and Upper Secondary Education:  
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/123042021010>, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/123042021011>

The principles of implementing the “Year of Choosing a Profession” are:

- Taking into account the individuality of each learner (e.g. motivation, abilities, skills, previous study or work experience, etc.) and the need for development in planning and conducting learning;
- Designing an individual learning path;
- Involving the learner in setting goals;
- Providing continuous feedback;
- Providing services that support coping with the studies and the development of the learner and are based on his / her needs throughout the learning process (during admission, during learning and transitions).

The learner is involved in setting goals and assessing progress. There is constant feedback on the learner's development (including self-assessment, which helps to increase the learner's responsibility for his / her own learning and decisions). Questions like: Which methods and learning environment support or hinder a particular learner in learning (if necessary, change or diversify teaching methods, select the most appropriate teaching aids, simplify learning texts, etc.)? What kind of individual guidance and counselling is needed based on the needs of the learner (not the possibilities of the school) is provided? are being considered. The emphasis is also on the formation of the study group and the attitudes towards learning, the tutor contributes to the development of an emotional security by creating a cosy and conducive environment for communication. (VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR CHOOSING A PROFESSION: WHO, WHY, HOW? Virve Kinkar, Kaie Bishop, Ülle Nõmmiste, SA Innove)

## 6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE ALTERNATIVE MODEL IN ESTONIA

The Scandinavian-type Virumaa Folk High School operated in Estonia in 1925-1940. 85% of the alumni of that school later became people who worked as leaders in local communities. Such a school should certainly have a two-way relationship with the surrounding community - the local knowledge and specificities that make each school unique, and the graduates who later implement their knowledge on the level of the community. Not to mention the basically unlimited possibilities that can be used to for the maintenance of the school in community cooperation.

There are 3 possible scenarios for implementing Folk High School model in Estonia that can all be integrated:

- As an opportunity for young people who are socially vulnerable or otherwise excluded from formal education to find or regain self-confidence, develop their social skills, self-management and life skills, develop goals for life, make friends and build relationships, learn to recognize society's needs and initiate change, continue their education or find a job;
- As an opportunity for adults who is changing direction and / or making a career break, either to restore mental health, to deepen their understanding of their professional goals through reflection, to create a new life vision, as well as to expand contacts and learn new methods of self-development and change management;

- As an opportunity to be a strong community centre and developer of local life. Becoming a Folk High School may be considered as a next logical step in the development of a particular community for some community associations operating in the area, community centres with changing / shrinking roles, and youth centres. Everyone in this institution would have a role to play in organizing life in the form of a folk high school. A school in a small community would be both a catalyst for local life and an opportunity for local people to pass on their skills and participate in the work and activities of the school more widely.

The following target groups could benefit from such an educational model in Estonia:

- NEETs (young people in this status for various reasons, often talented and overlooked);
- Young people who are "burnt out" (i.e. they can't go anywhere to study after the end of the 9th grade or get into a high school with good results, but quickly lose their motivation there);
- People with another native language who could socialize in terms of both language and culture;
- People with special needs;
- Young people with different gender identities;
- Adults who are considering a career change, seek a new job or are interested in rethink their professional life (so-called interim period);
- Employers (for example they could send their employee to a folk high school to study before burning out and get back a person with higher motivation and fresh ideas);
- Society (higher internal security, less people who need social benefits, citizens with higher self-management capacities);

- Local community (the school could employ people in the area, and this enriches local life, it is definitely important to do joint projects and activities with and for the benefit of the community);
- Teachers and other school staff (self-development and competence development);
- Teachers in the formal education system (dissemination of good practice, opportunity to apply similar models themselves).

## **FINANCING**

One option would be project funding, which all experts was against. Expert: *"If it could be shown that the movement of Folk High Schools would help us to manage the scattered tasks more efficiently and better, then further progress would be a matter of political decision. Later it would be possible to involve the support of today's start-up funds that focus on educational initiatives."*

In addition, the following ideas were mentioned:

- Using the material and technical base of the vocational education system;
- Through rural development projects;
- It is possible that more progressive and better-off local governments could partially support the establishment of schools;
- A partnership with the Unemployment Insurance Fund could be considered (for the financing of adult careers).

## **POTENTIAL SOCIAL BENEFITS AND CONTRIBUTION OF FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS**

In addition to addressing the challenges mentioned above, the following benefits can be created:

- Extending the lifelong learning model and providing internships;
- Creating space for learners' personal development;
- One of the directions of such schools could be the wider and sustainable development of the environment;
- Practical change management training and starting your own initiatives;
- It is also possible to pilot new courses, which will be implemented later in formal education.

## **APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE**

The alternative study model: FORMAL/ NON-FORMAL EDUCATION, competences:

1. Is this type of learning portrait as formal education?
2. Where in the formal education flow would it fit: graduate, post-graduate certification accepted by the traditional education system?
3. Are the formal diploma/certification issued at the end of studies/course? Does the traditional education/ employment system accept this accreditation?
4. Does this model support INTERIM programmes, where students work as interim in local business?
5. Does the school have employment support programmes/ career opportunities?
6. What is the main difference/ benefits alternative study model from the formal education model?
7. What are the key benefits/ strengths of this type of alternative education model?
8. What are the leading competencies/ skills school is orientated towards?
9. Is there a system of grading in this model? Yes, or NO- WHY?
10. Do you see this education model as ALTERNATIVE or believe it should and could be the MAIN formal education model?

Teachers, mentors- requirements, TEACHING PROCESS:

11. What are the requirements for teacher selection? Any qualifications or former education required?
12. What is the role of the teacher in this type of school?
13. What is the type of relationship between students and teachers?

14. How are authority figures formed? For example, is the teacher an authority figure?
15. What are the processes and techniques of teaching?
16. Who is teaching, and what is the learning process?
17. How would an excellent lecture be defined in this model?

Study programmes:

18. How the study programme look like, what are the current Programmes at school?
19. Are the programmes formal: have teaching requirements, grades and materials?
20. How to prepare materials, and how does teaching happen
21. Are teaching materials formally structured, or are they loose and can be changed per the demand?
22. Is there a requirement/ commitment to finish a few models or an entire course to get certified/accredited, or there are no minimum criteria at all?
23. Do the courses consist of different modules?
24. Are there any topics that are mandatory for all programmes?
25. How does teaching programme selection happen at school?

Students, entry criteria:

26. Who are the students- demographics?
27. Are there any entry criteria for school? ( School graduation or any other certification of formal education)?
28. What is the selection processes per individual programme?
29. How do students find the school? Any promotion or collaboration campaigns are running?
30. Are studies for free or paid? Is it paid by individuals or the state?



IMPACT MEASUREMENT, success criteria, school KPI's:

31. What is the overall number of students per year?
32. What are your success criteria for individual Programmes and overall school?
33. Do you use a formal process to measure social impact?
34. What measurements are used to track success or impact?
35. Who is accountable to perform impact assessment?
36. What are impact assessment/ KPI distribution list, audience, processes?
37. Are KPIs based on individual or generalised for the institution overall?
38. What are the KPIs? Do you measure employment or back to formal education data?
39. Are teachers, the school involved in career coaching?

FINANCIAL MODEL: funding, PRICES, FEES:

40. What is the primary source of income for the school?
41. Does the state provide any funding? If yes- for What?
42. How does the financial split look like? What are the primary expenses?
43. What are alternative sources of income possible? Private investors, NGOs, others?
44. Is there any state provided discounts, for example, gas or electricity?
45. Can schools take part in government/ private project work for additional funding?

## APPENDIX 2: FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS COMPARISON TABLE

<p><b>THE ALTERNATIVE STUDY MODEL: METHODOLOGIES AND PROCESSES</b></p>	<p>It is formal education, it provides an initial and continuing vocational training, where students are can receive a <b>professional qualification</b>. Participants who finish their education receive a diploma, which is recognized in the labor market (code 4102). <b>The institution uses a dual teaching method and apprenticeship.</b> Dual, where two weeks of education take place at the school and the other two at a company, the place of practice (50% school, 50% company). For apprenticeship, it is 30% school and 70% apprenticeship. Dual education or apprenticeship (from 18 years old) applies to all students. The school finds the first workplace for a student, if the place is lost, the student must find another one by themselves. However, the school helps with the search if needed.</p>	<p>Education is framed as <b>non-formal</b>. Students have the freedom to learn based on their own individual criteria. The school aims to develop the growth of both the individual and the community by giving and receiving in return. The courses are based on <b>discourse and mutual learning</b> between students and teachers. The main focus is on discovering and strengthening each individual's unique abilities in an environment full of challenges but at the same time rich in support and teamwork.</p>	<p>Vaddo School is a region-initiated school that provides <b>a wide variety of courses, including formal and non-formal types of education</b>. Study programmes in the school are both short-term and long-term. Folk High School fills all formal education flow gaps. General Education course provides school completion attestation, and Social Pedagogues course provides formal professional qualification certificate accepted by the industry standards. Non-formal education courses like the Change course or Sustainability course diplomas are not issued.</p>
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<p><b>THE ALTERNATIVE STUDY MODEL: METHODOLOGIES AND PROCESSES</b></p>	<p>Practice shows that after graduation, graduates choose jobs because they already have experience and feel good about it. The programs are standard, but <b>each institution has the flexibility to adapt the content of the programs to the needs of the market.</b> <b>Competency development methods</b> are the following: exploration of experience, motivation, active learning, experiential learning, assessment, self-assessment, teamwork, reflection, etc.</p> <p>The school programme provides <b>only professional education.</b></p> <p>There are some curriculum guidelines, however, tasks are created by teachers. A 10-point grading system is used, the exam is both theoretical and practical. Practical skills are assessed by performing specific tasks in a workshop</p>	<p><b>One Career and Guidance counsellor</b> is employed for 20 days per school year, his main goal is to make students feel safe and good about themselves. <b>No pressure</b> is put on the students and they are not compared or ranked upon outcomes of their work. The subjects are challenging and <b>test students' mental and physical abilities.</b> Students live together and share responsibilities, such as cleaning or cooking; they are encouraged to get involved in the life of the village. A <b>diploma</b> and a transcript of records with the list of accomplished courses are given at the end of the studies. These documents are <b>not officially recognised</b> by other institutions or schools.</p>	<p>Department of Art courses are oriented towards providing mental support, they are created as a <b>group therapy approach.</b> Part of the Change course and Sustainability course programmes are split into two parts: theoretical knowledge and real-life project work. Three main values of the school: <b>making education available for all, life-long education, and community of democracy.</b> Since 2019 schools orientation has shifted from Health Care professionals towards <b>Entrepreneurship and Sustainability.</b></p>
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<p><b>TEACHERS, MENTORS-REQUIREMENTS, PROGRAMMES</b></p>	<p>Teachers must have the necessary qualifications for the profession, at least 3 years of work experience in the field, and must have completed a specified number (180) of pedagogical psychological hours or higher pedagogical education.</p> <p><b>The school values a person's ability to work with young people</b>, their experience, communication skills, motivation, desire to improve, openness, creative thinking, and ability to learn throughout life.</p> <p>In total, <b>there is 20 personnel</b>, out of which 11 are teachers. The school is described as a <b>"community with boundaries"</b>. The teacher is seen as an authority.</p> <p><b>A successful teacher should be</b> open, sensitive, analytical, creative, learning.</p>	<p>Teachers at Lýðskólinn á Flateyri are <b>professionals in their field</b>.</p> <p>The selection process is <b>done very informally</b>. Trusting one's senses and sensing if a person has the right attitude is important in the search for new hires. If possible, <b>teachers from the region are preferred</b> due to the flexibility weather conditions require. The <b>relationship between students and teachers</b> is more of a friendship based on mutual respect, coming from curiosity. The teacher is more of a mentor, a helping figure who instructs and listens in equal measure.</p> <p>The <b>general rule</b> is: lectures will be excellent only when most students attend and they all enjoy their time together, including the teacher.</p>	<p>Teachers should be <b>experienced, passionate, able to communicate with people, empathetic</b>. They support their students in many different ways, not only by educating them but also by showing the importance of the process rather than the result.</p> <p><b>The teacher is often seen as a friend</b> you can seek help and advice, rather than an authority figure. One of the biggest advantages of working for Folk High School noted by the teachers is the <b>freedom and trust</b>. Teachers must be accredited and certified in formal-education courses, however in non-formal education courses, teachers do not require to have formal education certification to teach. Definition of an excellent lecturer: <b>initiative, people-orientated, empathetic, socially responsible</b>.</p>
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<p><b>STUDY PROGRAMMES AND THEIR SELECTION PROCESS</b></p>	<p>The institution uses the <b>dual teaching method and apprenticeship</b>. The school programme provides <b>only professional education</b>. The school uses programmes from “KPMPC” database. All state-recognized and licensed programs implemented at the school have been prepared in accordance with the procedures (KPMPC), expertise has been performed, and licenses have been obtained.</p> <p><b>The learning process is supported by:</b> lessons, seminars, conferences, projects, solidarity projects, diploma theses, master classes with guest lecturers from Lithuania and abroad, mobility practice.</p> <p><b>Study modules:</b> Chef, Carpenter-joiner, Landscaper, and Business Worker. Students must collect all the credits needed to graduate.</p> <p>Duration: 1 year to 2 years, depending on the programme.</p>	<p>There are <b>two study programmes taught in Icelandic</b>: The Ocean, the Mountains and You and Ideas, the World and You. Additionally, the school is developing <b>a new study program for international students</b> that will be taught in English. Before the school year starts, each teacher submits a detailed programme of the course to the Academic Manager of the school. <b>The course programme is flexible</b> and might change due to requests from the students or due to weather conditions. There are no criteria for certification or accreditation other than <b>attendance</b>. The student should participate in at least 80 percent of the meetings. Each course lasts one or two weeks. Students with the teacher(s) work on the assignments or go on a field trip usually from 8:45 to 16:00, with a lunch break at 12:00. The studies last one year, however, it is also possible to study for one semester.</p>	<p>15% of all teaching programmes must consist of a General Education course- a requirement from Government. All teaching programmes must demonstrate the inclusion of <b>three key Folk High School</b> values in their teaching objectives. For a new course to be approved, it must achieve a minimum of 20 students enrolment. Study programmes are mainly split into <b>three categories</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Formal education programmes</b> (General Education and Social Pedagogue),</li> <li><b>2. Government incentivised courses</b> (Immigrant Integration),</li> <li><b>3. Non-formal or alternative education courses</b> (Change and Entrepreneurship, Agenda 2030, Sustainability and Self- Discovery).</li> </ol> <p>Study programs are both <b>short-term</b> (10-20 weeks) and <b>long-term</b> (1,5-2 years)</p>
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<p><b>STUDENTS-TARGET GROUPS, ENTRY CRITERIA</b></p>	<p>Students are accepted from <b>16 years old</b>. Based on their previous education, they are accepted to different programmes. Acceptance to the school goes through "LAMA BPO" system. Students have to pay 25€ per month for study materials. If the place is not funded by the government, it costs € 650 or € 1,350. Every year they have about 60 students, about 70% of them graduate. Out of those, all of them graduate with a job offer.</p>	<p>Students are usually <b>between 19-25 years</b>, who want to explore their strengths, find new friends and hobbies, and be accepted just the way they are. They come from all parts of Iceland, but predominantly from the greater <b>Reykjavik area</b>. Currently, there are 32 students. The Lýðskólinn á Flateyri <b>is looking for students who are</b> enthusiastic, willing, and ready to participate, share responsibility and explore new things. Along with the application, the school would like to receive information about the student: who they are, where they come from, and why they think the Flateyri Folk High School is ideal for them. When selecting students, this information weighs much more than education and experience. There are <b>not many entry criteria</b>: students must also be older than 18 years and know the basics of the Icelandic language. Additionally, applicants of the Ocean, Mountains and You program must be physically fit to go on hikes. Studies <b>cost</b> 300.000 ISK (around 2100 Euros) per student per semester.</p>	<p>Age: <b>18-55</b>, but exceptions apply. In order for international students to qualify for the place (state grant), they have to live and pay taxes in Sweden for a minimum of 3 months. Gender: <b>equal split between men and women</b> are required during selection processes. Education: <b>all levels of education</b> from entry to PhD. In the selection process, the student submits a <b>motivation letter</b> during the application, followed by an <b>interview process</b>. No passing rate or tests are required for alternative education courses. Study programmes are <b>free for the students</b>, they only have to pay for the food and accommodation, however, study grants are available. An overall number of students per year: 160-200</p>
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<p><b>IMPACT, SUCCESS CRITERIA, SCHOOL KPI'S</b></p>	<p>Acquired competencies are assessed by a <b>theoretical and practical exam</b>. A basic comparison of achievements can be applied, but they only value well-done work. The <b>grades</b> are given because they <b>motivate students</b>. Teachers are responsible for communicating with internships companies, so they receive feedback after employment. The school is <b>working on a special tool</b>, which will help to track the performance of students before, during, and after finishing the institution.</p>	<p>For most students, school becomes a <b>life-changing experience</b>: they gain friends for life, confidence, independence, and knowledge that cannot be measured or easily accounted for. Data is collected after each course from students and teachers to <b>rate the success for individual Programmes and the school</b>. Students rate the quality of each course and their respective teacher. Teachers rate the work of students, but only as a group. The questionnaire with numeric ratings and open-ended questions and a final questionnaire, sent one month after the end of a school year, are used to measure the satisfaction, courses and general atmosphere at Lýðskólinn á Flateyri. <b>No formal process to measure social impact</b> is used at Lýðskólinn á Flateyri, the school also does <b>not have KPIs</b>. In-depth research is planned after the fifth year of the school run, in 2023.</p>	<p>Success criteria are oriented not on a subject of the programme but on <b>how the school can teach the three key values through that particular programme</b>. The school must achieve and report to Government three key KPIs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 15% of all students must be General Education course students;</li> <li>2. School must demonstrate incorporation of three key values in all courses;</li> <li>3. Health and Safety and Inclusion policy compliance.</li> </ol> <p>School success is tracked by the number of students, Government funds, and per-student feedback. The school does not use a formal process to measure social impact.</p>
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<p><b>FINANCIAL MODEL: FUNDING, PRICES, FEES</b></p>	<p>Teachers' DU is funded by the <b>ŠMM (student basket)</b>. All the additional funds are used for hands-on activities. <b>Other funding comes from sponsors and various projects.</b> At the moment, <b>there are 44 students</b> who study in the <b>government-funded places.</b> Other students are paying for themselves, or searching for sponsors. 70% of expenses are for the wages. The government provides <b>a discount for all heating fuels.</b> No VAT relief is available. 20.000-50.000€ are allocated annually for project activities such as mobility, career planning and various trainings.</p>	<p>The school gets finances for the <b>general run of the school</b> mainly from the government of Iceland. In particular, <b>Ísafjörður Municipality</b> has supported the project through subsidizing services, facilities for the school without repayment, as well as generous financial support and insurance for the operation of the school for another year. The school also gets some support from <b>The Directorate of Employment and The Directorate of Education.</b> The local municipality subsidized the school <b>in the first year</b> and helped by exempting it from paying property tax and other fees. Over 80 <b>inhabitants of Flateyri</b> have signed up as financial supporters and support the school through monthly payments. Lýðskólinn á Flateyri gets other finances from <b>school fees</b> that the students need to pay for each semester and for their accommodation. <b>Primary expenses</b> are wages to teachers and staff, followed by expenses on food. Lýðskólinn á Flateyri is limited in securing other types of funding.</p>	<p><b>Students are required to complete their studies.</b> If a student leaves the studies in the first three weeks, the state stops funding. If they continue, the state confirms funding for the next six months. School is primary funded based on the <b>700 SKK fee-bucket per student.</b> The number of students funded is determined by the size of the region and the productivity rate. Students pay for the accommodation and the food. <b>School venues are rented</b> for conferences or business meetings for the local community. School has created their private <b>NGO for fundraising.</b> Around 50 % of overall School expenses are dedicated to teachers' salaries, the other 50% for school property maintenance. The state does not provide any discounts.</p>
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### **APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONS FOR THE EXPERTS**

1. What are the main problems in Estonia formal education related to the inclusion of socially vulnerable young people? What support systems do we have in place to help drop-off young people return to the labour market ? Could you share some examples that you are aware of?

2. Folk High Schools often operate as so-called free schools around the world. These schools do not have grades, a strict curriculum or exams, but are non-formal educational institutions for adults. Folk High Schools allow participants to put what they are learning into practice, teachers act as mentors and there is a strong emphasis on community. Participants are mostly 19-29 year olds who do not have a profession or who have certain social and psychological challenges (e.g. job loss, addictions). In some cases, a diploma of formal education is also available, but most of the time these schools are designed to acquire general knowledge, learn a trade, make friends and get support, and rebuild social ties. Participants commit to completing the whole programme if they want to receive state compensation. Do you think this model of education is needed in Estonia, or are the existing alternatives sufficient to integrate the vulnerable and those experiencing difficulties?

3. Which social groups in Estonia do you think would benefit most from such an education model?

4. How would you see the integration of these institutions into the vocational training system?

5. Who do you think should finance such institutions ? What could be financial model of operation?

6. Folk High School is based on the principle of community. Do you think such initiatives would help to mobilise and empower local communities in Estonia?

Additional explanation if needed:

(Let's say there is a school in a rural area, where people live together, organise events for the whole community, buy products from local farmers, employ local people)

7. What could be the societal benefits of such schools or what societal problems could they address ? What social impact could, should such schools create?

Additional explanation if needed:

( E.g. they do not provide a formal diploma, but perhaps help to solve social problems, provide skills that are important in the labour market. For example, in some cases employers are not looking for a diploma, they are looking for people who are motivated and able to perform certain functions, e.g. in the construction sector, in trade, in the service sector. )

8. Is there anything else we have not mentioned that you would like to add?

