



Establishing a training academy at Akropolis shopping malls in Lithuania and Latvia targeting life-long learning and people over the age of 55

Summary

In collaboration with People 1st International and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Akropolis shopping malls launched the Akropolis Skills Academy across Lithuania and Latvia. The initiative addresses the training needs of tenant retailers by providing learning and development opportunities for over 1,000 individuals, with a specific focus on older workers (55+). The academy delivers both face-to-face and virtual training, setting a new standard for inclusive employment and service quality within Akropolis shopping malls.

Background

Akropolis identified an opportunity to address gaps in workforce inclusivity, particularly in terms of older workers and people with disabilities. Tenant retailers expressed a need for tailored training that would improve service standards and enhance the employability of underrepresented groups. Additionally, Akropolis sought to align training efforts with national certification standards while fostering economic inclusion and job retention. The project aimed to create a framework for life-long learning, upskilling existing employees and meeting the specific staffing needs of tenants.

Our solutions

The Academy was established to provide tailored skills solutions through a comprehensive suite of training programmes. Key resources developed by People 1st International include a Customer Service Excellence Charter, inclusive HR toolkit and training for recruitment and retention of older workers and people with disabilities. Training was delivered both virtually, via a newly implemented learning management system and in person at facilities located within all five Akropolis shopping malls. Pilot sessions focused on customer service excellence incorporating multi-generational and inclusive workplace practices. Tenant HR teams and management also have access to specialised training resources on inclusive recruitment.

Outcome and impact

The Academy has been instrumental in fostering greater economic and employment opportunities across Akropolis malls. Over 240 older workers have gained enhanced customer service skills, improving both their employability and job satisfaction. Tenant retailers now benefit from a more inclusive workforce, equipped with best practices in recruitment and management. The project has created a long-term positive impact, improving the shopping experience for customers and ensuring Akropolis remains a leader in service quality. It has also laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and sustainable working environment, contributing to regional employment growth and social inclusion.

“Partnering with People 1st International to establish the Akropolis Skills Academy has been transformative for the company. Their expertise in inclusive training and tools including the Customer Service Excellence Charter were impactful in elevating the service standards and workforce diversity across Akropolis malls. More than 240 older workers have been trained under the initiative, to date, while tenant retailers have developed competencies to foster more inclusive workplaces. This initiative sets a new benchmark for excellence in the retail sector that EBRD has been proud to support.”

Marko Stermsek —
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)