

---

# European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning

A Final Report to DG Education & Culture of the European  
Commission

Manuel Souto Otero, Andrew McCoshan and Kerstin Junge (eds.)

---

ECOTEC  
Research & Consulting Limited

Priestley House  
28-34 Albert Street  
Birmingham B4 7UD  
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)121 616 3600  
Fax: +44 (0)121 616 3699  
Web: [www.ecotec.com](http://www.ecotec.com)

# European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning

A Final Report to DG Education & Culture of the European Commission

September 2005

ECOTEC Research and Consulting Limited

Priestley House  
28-34 Albert Street  
Birmingham  
B4 7UD UK  
Tel: +44 (0)121 616 3600  
Fax: +44 (0)121 616 3699  
Website: [www.ecotec.com](http://www.ecotec.com)

ECOTEC Research and Consulting Limited  
13a Avenue de Tervuren  
B-1040 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 743 89 49

6– 8 Marshallsea Road  
London SE1 1HL  
Tel: +44 171 630 6090  
Fax: +44 171 630 6339  
31-32 Park Row  
Leeds LS1 5JD  
Tel: +44 113 290 4100

Sophia House  
28 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff CF11 9LJ  
Tel: +44 2920 63 61 06

Bruntwood Business Centre  
11th Floor, Portland Tower  
Portland Street  
Manchester M1 3LF  
Tel: +44 161 238 4965

Orense, 25-Esc. Dcha. 3B  
Madrid 28020  
Spain  
Tel: +34 91 598 08 51

## CONTENTS

<b>1.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
By Manuel Souto Otero (ECOTEC Research and Consulting).....	1
1.1 Project background and project aims .....	1
1.2 Methodological approach .....	6
1.3 Key issues affecting the study .....	8
<b>2.0 Overview of findings: needs and initiatives .....</b>	<b>13</b>
By Manuel Souto Otero, Andrew McCoshan, Kerstin Junge and James Winter (ECOTEC Research and Consulting).....	13
2.1 National motivations for endorsing validation of non-formal and informal learning.....	13
2.2 Addressing existing needs: Key messages on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe.....	14
2.3 Key features of the validation methodologies.....	18
2.4 Take-up and acceptance of validation of non-formal and informal learning .....	21
2.5 Key stakeholders in the area of validation of non-formal and informal learning.....	22
2.6 Summary .....	23
<b>3.0 Austria .....</b>	<b>24</b>
By Kersting Junge (ECOTEC Research and Consulting) .....	24
3.1 Introduction .....	24
3.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public sector .....	25
3.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector .....	28
3.4 Review of existing initiatives: The third sector.....	29
3.5 Stakeholders .....	31
3.6 Conclusions .....	32
<b>4.0 Belgium.....</b>	<b>34</b>
By Simon Roy (ECOTEC Research and Consulting) .....	34
4.1 Introduction .....	34
4.2 Existing Initiatives: Public sector.....	34
4.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	38
4.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	39
4.5 Stakeholders .....	40

4.6	Conclusions .....	42
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Bulgaria .....</b>	<b>43</b>
	By Dr. Anca Dumitrescu (University of Bucharest) .....	43
5.1	Introduction .....	43
5.2	Existing Initiatives.....	44
5.3	Conclusions .....	51
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Cyprus .....</b>	<b>54</b>
	By Anna Manoudi (ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.).....	54
6.1	Introduction .....	54
6.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public authorities.....	54
6.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private sector .....	55
6.4	Stakeholders .....	55
6.5	Conclusions .....	56
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Czech Republic .....</b>	<b>57</b>
	By Olga Strietska-Ilina (Independent Consultant) .....	57
7.1	Introduction .....	57
7.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public sector .....	60
7.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	69
7.4	Review of existing initiatives: Third sector .....	73
7.5	Stakeholders .....	75
7.6	Conclusions .....	77
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Denmark.....</b>	<b>79</b>
8.1	Introduction .....	79
8.2	Existing initiatives.....	81
8.3	Conclusion.....	88
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Estonia .....</b>	<b>90</b>
	By Aili Saluveer (University of Tartu).....	90
9.1	Introduction .....	90
9.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	90
9.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private sector .....	93
9.4	Review of existing initiative: The Third Sector .....	94
9.5	Conclusions .....	95
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Finland.....</b>	<b>97</b>

By Anne-Mari Nevala (ECOTEC Research and Consulting) .....	97
10.1 Introduction .....	97
10.2 Review of existing Initiatives: Public Sector .....	97
10.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	101
10.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	103
10.5 Stakeholders .....	104
10.6 Conclusions .....	106
<b>11.0 France .....</b>	<b>107</b>
By Simon Roy (ECOTEC Research and Consulting) .....	107
11.1 Introduction .....	107
11.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	107
11.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	111
11.4 Conclusions .....	113
<b>12.0 Germany.....</b>	<b>114</b>
By Prof. Erwin Seyfried (FHVR Berlin).....	114
12.1 Introduction .....	114
12.2 Existing initiatives.....	115
12.3 Industry initiatives.....	118
12.4 Third sector initiatives.....	119
12.5 Conclusion.....	120
<b>13.0 Greece.....</b>	<b>122</b>
By Anna Manoudi (ECOTEC Research and Consulting) .....	122
13.1 Introduction .....	122
13.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	122
13.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector .....	125
13.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	126
13.5 Conclusions .....	126
<b>14.0 Hungary.....</b>	<b>127</b>
By Cohen Zoon (ECORYS-Netherlands).....	127
14.1 Introduction .....	127
14.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	127
14.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	130
14.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	131

14.5	Stakeholders' responsibilities.....	132
14.6	Conclusions .....	132
<b>15.0</b>	<b>Iceland .....</b>	<b>134</b>
	By Arnbjorn Olaffson (Educate Iceland).....	134
15.1	Introduction .....	134
15.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	134
15.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private sector .....	138
15.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	140
15.5	Conclusions .....	141
<b>16.0</b>	<b>Ireland .....</b>	<b>142</b>
	By John Konrad (Konrad Associates International).....	142
16.1	Introduction .....	142
16.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	142
16.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector.....	144
16.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	148
16.5	Conclusions .....	148
<b>17.0</b>	<b>Italy.....</b>	<b>150</b>
	By Elisabetta Perulli and Massimo Tommasini (ISFOL).....	150
17.1	Introduction .....	150
17.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	151
17.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	155
17.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	156
17.5	Conclusions .....	157
<b>18.0</b>	<b>Latvia.....</b>	<b>159</b>
	By Vladimir Menshikov (Laboratory of sociological Researchers, Latvia) .....	159
18.1	Introduction .....	159
18.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	159
18.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	162
18.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	165
18.5	Conclusions .....	166
<b>19.0</b>	<b>Liechtenstein .....</b>	<b>167</b>
	By Kerstin Junge (ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.).....	167
19.1	Introduction .....	167

19.2	Review of existing initiatives .....	167
19.3	Conclusions .....	168
<b>20.0</b>	<b>Lithuania .....</b>	<b>169</b>
	By Giedre Beleckiene (Methodological Centre for VET, National Observatory in Lithuania) .....	169
20.1	Introduction .....	169
20.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	169
20.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private sector .....	172
20.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	173
20.5	Stakeholders' responsibilities.....	173
20.6	Conclusions .....	175
<b>21.0</b>	<b>Luxembourg.....</b>	<b>176</b>
	By James Winter (ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.).....	176
21.1	Introduction .....	176
21.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	176
21.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	181
21.4	Review of existing initiatives: Third Sector.....	182
21.5	Conclusions .....	182
<b>22.0</b>	<b>Malta.....</b>	<b>184</b>
	By Anthony Azzopardy (University of Malta).....	184
22.1	Introduction .....	184
22.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	185
22.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	187
22.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	187
22.5	Conclusions .....	188
<b>23.0</b>	<b>Netherlands .....</b>	<b>189</b>
	By Cohen Zoon (ECORYS Netherlands).....	189
23.1	Introduction .....	189
23.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	189
23.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	190
23.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	195
23.5	Stakeholders' responsibilities.....	197
23.6	Conclusions .....	200

<b>24.0 Norway .....</b>	<b>202</b>
By Odd Bjørn Ure (CONSULTUR.).....	202
24.1 Introduction .....	202
24.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	203
24.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	204
24.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	206
24.5 Conclusion.....	206
<b>25.0 Poland .....</b>	<b>211</b>
By Olga Strietska-Ilina (Independent consultant) .....	211
25.1 Introduction .....	211
25.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public sector .....	211
25.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	221
25.4 Review of existing initiative: The Third Sector .....	224
25.5 Conclusions .....	225
<b>26.0 Portugal .....</b>	<b>227</b>
By Mencia de Lemus (ECOTEC Research and Consulting).....	227
26.1 Introduction .....	227
26.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	227
26.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	229
26.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	231
26.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities.....	231
26.6 Conclusions .....	233
<b>27.0 Romania .....</b>	<b>234</b>
By Prof. Anca Dumitrescu (University of Bucharest).....	234
27.1 Introduction .....	234
27.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	234
27.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	236
27.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	237
27.5 Conclusions .....	240
<b>28.0 Slovak Republic .....</b>	<b>242</b>
By Olga Strietska-Ilina (Independent Consultant) .....	242
28.1 Introduction .....	242
28.2 Rebvieu of existing initiatives: Public sector .....	242



28.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private sector .....	253
28.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	255
28.5	Conclusions .....	256
<b>29.0</b>	<b>Slovenia.....</b>	<b>257</b>
	By Nataša Cvetek (BBJ Consult Inc. – Slovenia) .....	257
29.1	Introduction .....	257
29.2	Review of existing initiatives : Public Sector .....	257
29.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private sector .....	261
29.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	264
29.5	Stakeholders’ responsibilities.....	264
29.6	Conclusions .....	266
<b>30.0</b>	<b>Spain .....</b>	<b>267</b>
	By Mencia de Lemus (ECOTEC Research and Consulting).....	267
30.1	Introduction .....	267
30.2	Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector .....	268
30.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	272
30.4	Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector.....	273
30.5	Stakeholders’ responsibilities.....	274
30.6	Conclusions .....	275
<b>31.0</b>	<b>Sweden.....</b>	<b>277</b>
	By Vasilios Nikitas (ECOTEC Research and Consulting).....	277
31.1	Introduction .....	277
31.2	Existing Initiatives: Public Sector .....	277
31.3	Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....	280
31.4	Conclusions .....	281
31.5	Stakeholders’ responsibilities.....	281
31.6	Conclusions .....	283
<b>32.0</b>	<b>United Kingdom .....</b>	<b>284</b>
	By John Konrad (Konrad Associates International).....	284
32.1	Introduction .....	284
32.2	Review of existing initiatives .....	284
32.3	Conclusions .....	292
<b>33.0</b>	<b>Examples of good practice .....</b>	<b>295</b>

33.1	Scouting Gelderland (The Netherlands).....	295
	By Emmy Nelissen and Francesca Froy (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)	
33.2	Corus Group .....	304
	By James Winter and Emmy Nelissen (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)	
33.3	Record book for young people: Slovenia .....	310
	By Papiya Chatterjee (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)	
33.4	Education and Training Service Centre, Iceland.....	312
	By Papiya Chatterjee (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)	
33.5	E.E.D.E., Greece .....	315
	Anne-Marie Nevala (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)	
33.6	Cork Institute of Technology .....	319
	By Ray Coughlan, Cork Institute of Technology	
33.7	ELBUS, Norway .....	324
	Anne-Marie Nevala (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)	
33.8	Koskisen Oy, Finland.....	331
	Anne-Marie Nevala (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)	
33.9	Cockerill Sambre (Belgium) .....	338
	Francesca Froy and James Winter (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)	
33.10	Recreational Activity Study Book: Youth Academy, Finland.....	345
	By Lauri Savisaari (State Provincial Office of Southern Finland, formerly Youth Academy, Finland)	
<b>34.0</b>	<b>Conclusions: validation approaches in Europe .....</b>	<b>353</b>
	By Manuel Souto Otero, Andrew McCoshan and Kerstin Junge (ECOTEC Research and Consulting) .....	353
34.1	Test and examinations .....	354
34.2	Declarative methods .....	355
34.3	The portfolio method.....	355
34.4	Observation .....	357
34.5	Simulation and evidences extracted from work .....	357
34.6	Summary .....	358
<b>35.0</b>	<b>The ways forward.....</b>	<b>360</b>
	By Manuel Souto Otero (ECOTEC Research and Consulting).....	360
35.1	Dissemination of the European Inventory.....	360
35.2	The future for the European Inventory initiative.....	363



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Key Stages in the Methodology for the Production of the European Inventory .....	7
Table 10.1: Competence-based vocational qualifications in Finland .....	988
Table 10.2: Number of National Certificates of Language Proficiency acquired since 1994 .....	999
Table 13.1 Certification procedure are available for the benefit of the language learners in Greece .....	12424
Table 17.1 Entry guidance/counseling (val. %).....	154
Table 17.2 Effects of the guidance/counseling (val. %) .....	154
Table 18.1 Accordance of the results of the state language attestation and the ones of the central examination at school: .....	16161
Table 33.1 Partnership Scouting Gederland Validation initiatives.....	29595
Table 33.2 Partnership Corus validation initiatives.....	304
Table 34.1: Typology of validation methods and a selection of European country examples .....	3599

## LIST OF ANNEXES

Annex 1: Methodological Tools

Annex 2: National Sources and Methodologies for the Collection of Information

Annex3: List of Interviewees

Annex 4: Corus Case-Study

Annex 5: Terms of Reference

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

*By Manuel Souto Otero (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

### **1.1 Project background and project aims**

This section provides information on the context and rationale of the Inventory project. It firstly locates validation of non-formal and informal learning within the wider framework of “lifelong-learning”. Secondly, it summarises part of the results from previous research on validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe. It is against this background that the Inventory project was undertaken. Finally, the section provides information about the specific mandate for, and aims of, the Inventory project. The chapter then goes on to present the methodology used for the production of the Inventory, provides an overview of the key issues affecting the study. Following this chapter the remainder of this report is structured as follows: chapter two gives an overview of the research findings. Chapters three to thirty-two describe the current situation and existing initiatives on validation of non-formal and informal learning in the 30 countries covered by the Inventory. Chapter thirty-three illustrates good practice in validation by means of eight case-studies. Chapter thirty-four presents our conclusions, and chapter thirty-five discusses the future of the European Inventory initiative. Further information on the project’s study tools, existing initiatives and methodologies employed for the collection of information on validation of non-formal and informal learning, further information on selected case-studies, a list of interviewees for the project and its Terms of Reference can be found in the Annexes.

#### *1.1.1 Project background: Lifelong learning and validation of competences*

The notion of lifelong learning is based on the idea that people learn throughout all stages of their life and that formal systems of education and training, as well as informal and non-formal activities organised around these systems, all have a crucial part to play.

Lifelong learning reflects the necessity of building a ‘learning and knowledge society’. It is about employability and adaptability, as well as about personal development and fulfilment, and it recognises the existence of a variety of learning needs and learning forms that cannot be standardised but should rather be combined. In other words, lifelong learning emphasises that there is a need for a broader knowledge base, a need to reconcile the qualities of specialised teaching in education and training institutions and the qualities of experienced-based learning from practical working as well as life situations.

By definition, the concept of lifelong learning enlarges the scope of learning to include a wide range of organisational structures, processes and methods outside formal education and training institutions, as long as they contribute to enhancing the possibilities of self-development and skill formation of the individual. From this point of view, the implementation of this concept also challenges the traditional forms of work organisation, requiring the development of more learning-friendly work environments. This is necessary to meet the individual’s need for continuous and varied renewal of knowledge and the enterprise’s need for a broad array of knowledge and competencies.

There is a certain convergence in the way European Union member states understand lifelong learning and in terms of common trends. At the same time, there is a need to develop a coherent policy framework and strategy. The establishment of a system for learning throughout life requires a stronger focus on the connections between different forms of learning in different learning domains at different stages of life. This implies that a lifelong learning system has to face the challenge of linking a variety of formal as well as informal and non-formal learning processes together.

This often refers back to questions on standards and qualifications. Several countries have recently attempted to establish these connections between different learning settings through National Qualification Frameworks –e.g. Scotland, England, Ireland, amongst others. Currently the new European Qualifications Framework is also being discussed. These frameworks make use of learning outcomes and “competences” as two of their key elements. Using learning outcomes as a key element in qualification frameworks implies a lesser need to be prescriptive in relation to the inputs to the learning process. It is the level of competence achieved at the end of the process that is looked at. In this way, a broader set of learning pathways are legitimised.

What emerges from these discussions and developments is a need for greater visibility, validation and mutual recognition of the learning outcomes achieved in all learning settings (formal, informal, and non-formal). The redesign of education and training systems towards the direction of outcome-based and lifelong learning oriented systems, and of more flexible, inclusive and open structures and processes calls for the development of ad hoc methodologies and systems for measuring competences. Therefore, in this context, the question of identification, assessment and recognition of competences is crucial. Competences have to be made visible and comparable if they are to be fully integrated into such a broader strategy for knowledge reproduction and renewal.

It is therefore reasonable to argue that the question of recognition of informal and non-formal learning is located at the centre of the debate on lifelong learning. In particular, methodologies and institutions for the assessment of informal and non-formal learning can be used to establish connections between various forms and processes of learning.

### *1.1.2 Project background: Overview validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe*

Across Europe there is a concentrated but highly diversified emphasis towards the introduction of methodologies and systems for identification, assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Although in many cases still at an experimental stage, there has been a wave of activity at European, national, sectoral and enterprise level to move in this direction.

The task of validation of informal and non-formal learning is complex given the fact that the rate of change and innovation in terms of methodologies, institutions and policies is high. The diversity and complexity of informal and non-formal learning has to be appropriately reflected by the methodology used to validate them.

However, the validation of informal and non-formal learning cannot be reduced to a question of methodological quality. There is also a political and institutional aspect that is likely to play a fundamental role. In other words, a number of political and institutional preconditions have to be met to make sure that the validation is attributed value and relevance. To be effective, validation procedures should be ‘owned’ by all stakeholders involved. As a result, the questions of participation and information become increasingly important. The transparency of the structures and procedures of validation are also important if acceptance and legitimacy are to be achieved.

Validation methodologies are developed to make informal and non-formal competences more visible and make it easier to transfer them between different contexts. However, the development of a high number of sectoral and enterprise-based methodologies tailored to specific and limited needs may contradict the general objective of increased transparency and transferability. Also, when considering the national level it is possible to argue that no common approach currently exists. The fact that initiatives have been taken at different points in time and within the context of different systems of education and training means that there is a heterogeneous mix of national approaches.

The bulk of methodologies developed at national level during the last decade have been closely integrated into formal education and training systems, making it possible to earn full or partial credit through the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. While this is often presented as a more flexible approach to education and training, the main emphasis is still directed towards established formal qualifications, and only those parts of the informal and non-formal learning defined as relevant within this setting are recognised.

In contrast to this are methodologies defined within a labour market or enterprise setting. In these cases the process may not be oriented towards formal qualifications, but rather seek identification of competences relevant to individual careers or in the context of human resource management. Less constrained by what is defined as relevant by the formal education and training system, these approaches may potentially be better positioned to identify those competences that are not developed within formal education and training and thus transcend formal qualifications. In some instances a balance between education and training and the labour market is sought through the introduction of qualification standards developed through co-operation between educational authorities and representatives of employers and employees. While systems linked to formal education have been dominant so far, the number of approaches linked to the labour market or enterprises seems to be growing.

The increasing activity at sector and enterprise level has pushed competence measurements to a great extent outside the control of public authorities, and in particular outside the control of formal education and training. It might be argued that wider national or European approaches only operate on the periphery of the huge reservoir of competences developed through informal and non-formal learning. This is because a substantial reorientation of vocationally oriented education and training is currently taking place, often initiated at the public level with a move from input-oriented to output-oriented systems. This is also because a large

number of validation initiatives are still at a relatively early stage of development, and it is important not to underestimate the potential of these initiatives.

At national level it is possible to identify clusters of countries that have learned lessons from each other and to show how the existence of a methodological instrument in one country may attract attention from across the border. For example, the Irish approach to accreditation of prior learning is very closely related to UK efforts in this area, without apparently acknowledging the considerable problems that occurred in practice. Similarly, the Finnish system for competence based assessment has, during a period of 3-4 years, attracted considerable attention in the other Nordic countries. These experiences show that mutual learning is possible and positive. Although a substantial transfer or copying of methodologies and approaches has taken place, the degree of local adaptation and change is also considerable.

The existing literature tends to describe national initiatives in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning by reference to clusters of EU member states. This approach is certainly valuable as it puts emphasis on common trends and similarities as well as differences within and between groups of countries characterised by similar experiences. There is also clear scope for deepening the knowledge of the existing initiatives implemented by EU member states and, in particular, to explore methods and systems for validation adopted by central and eastern European countries. This is a key component of the methodology suggested for the study, and we present our results below in this report.

### *1.1.3 Project aims*

Against this background, in January 2004 ECOTEC Research and Consulting was commissioned by the Directorate General of Education and Culture of the European Commission to produce a European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The 2001 European Commission Communication “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality” (COM (2001) 678 final, Brussels, 21.11.01) emphasised the importance of systematic exchange of experiences and the creation of an Inventory of methodologies for the validation of informal and non-formal learning<sup>1</sup>. The Communication, moreover, established as a priority for action that the Commission established an Inventory of methodologies, systems and standards for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which should target the international, national, and sectoral levels, as well as enterprises.

---

<sup>1</sup> Previously, of course, the European Commission’s White Paper *Teaching and Learning* (1995) helped to define and emphasise the relevance of informal and non-formal learning and it presented the idea of a common European approach in the area of identification, assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning. The resulting programmes (e.g. Leonardo da Vinci, ADAPT) initiated a number of experimental activities in this area.



As envisaged in the Communication, the main task for the Inventory to fulfill would be to support and stimulate the development of high quality assessment methodologies and standards at European, national and sectoral levels. Given the increasing political profile of non-formal and informal learning within a lifelong-learning framework, in charging the Inventory with this task the Communication established the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning as a key tool for realising lifelong learning in Europe.

Recent years have seen an increased emphasis on the relevance of learning taking place outside formal education and training institutions and on the systems and strategies to validate such learning processes. Broadly speaking, informal learning can be defined as unplanned learning in work situations and elsewhere. Non-formal learning can be defined as planned and explicit approaches to learning introduced in work organisations and elsewhere, and which are not recognised within the formal education and training system. Informal and non-formal learning are more difficult to identify, measure and recognise than formal learning. This constitutes a problem affecting competence development at all levels and as such needs to be appropriately addressed.

Many European countries are also paying increasing attention to the development of assessment methodologies trying to measure and judge the informal and non-formal learning taking place at work, in leisure time activities and at home. For example, the introduction of the 'Bilan de competence' in France and the development of a variety of approaches to accreditation of prior learning and prior experiential learning in the UK from the late 1980s can be regarded as forerunners of this tendency.

Validation issues concern both formal and informal/non-formal learning. However, it is important to point out that the challenges for assessment methodologies and systems related to informal and non-formal learning are very different from those faced within formal education. Instead of operating within a specified institutional context where learning goals have been (more or less) predefined, assessments of informal and non-formal learning have to take into consideration a variety of learning forms and outcomes. To a certain extent this is because activities previously defined as work, hobbies and family life are being redefined as part of each individual's 'lifelong learning'.

Indeed, learning taking place outside formal education and training bodies is crucially important for individuals, companies and society at large. However, and in spite of numerous valuable contributions, existing information about validation of non-formal and informal learning is still rather limited in scope in many countries, and too widely spread in academic publications, policy papers, or in the developments of the working life of civil servants, company managers and other stakeholders, without any record being maintained of achievements. Making informal and non-formal learning visible and validated is an intrinsically challenging methodological and political task. The European Inventory will help to accomplish this task by collecting updated information on current practices in a wide range of countries and making this information, including best practice examples, available within a single volume to a wide range of audiences.

More specifically, the Inventory, as required in the Terms of Reference for the project, provides:

- a methodology for the collection and updating of qualitative and quantitative information on validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- an updated overview of European methodologies and systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning; and
- the Inventory has been developed in an electronically accessible format for presentation and dissemination of the information collected.

The methodological approach used in the project to fulfil these objectives is described in the next section.

## ***1.2 Methodological approach***

A summary of the methodology employed by ECOTEC to meet the objectives of the project is provided in Table 1. ECOTEC participated in and supervised all phases of the project. Overall, our emphasis was on:

- a participatory methodology which engages all stakeholders in the project and makes its results available to a wide range of actors;
- a comprehensive methodology, which covers individually all 30 countries of the EU/EEA and candidate countries; and
- a multidimensional methodology which makes use of both primary and secondary data and both qualitative and quantitative data.

**Table 1.1: Key Stages in the Methodology for the Production of the European Inventory**

1. Inception
2. Review of available material
3. Initial methodology for the collection and updating of information
4. Meeting with the EC and information to stakeholders in Brussels
5. Write-up of national chapters by national correspondents (ECOTEC and external subcontractors)
6. Setting up of the project web-site
7. Posting of the draft national chapters on the Inventory web-site
8. Feedback collected from Virtual Community members and other users of the project's website
9. 25 interviews with public stakeholders
10. 20 interviews with private sector companies/ representatives and voluntary sector organisations
11. Interim report
12. Second draft of national chapters
13. Language editing
14. Ten case studies
15. Analysis of primary and secondary data
16. Dissemination
17. Final report

The project started with an inception meeting in Brussels which served to clarify relevant operational issues and helped in the agreement of the overall approach for subsequent methodological phases in the research. Following the inception report, ECOTEC produced a methodology for the collection and updating of information by national correspondents – composed of ECOTEC staff and external sub-contractors – and started the review of available material on validation of non formal and informal learning. National correspondents produced 30 national chapters (EU-25 plus European Economic Areas (EEA) countries, Bulgaria and Romania), for which they collected information through literature reviews, websearches and telephone and face to face interviews.

These draft chapters were made available to the public through a dedicated website<sup>2</sup>, launched through the “Virtual Community for validation of non formal and informal learning” and feedback from visitors to the website on the draft chapters was collected for a month. Comments were sent to national correspondents when applicable, to enable them to produce a second version of their chapters, which was later sent to public sector bodies in the relevant country for further review and comments. For this project, ECOTEC’s project team has also collected additional primary data to complement the information gathered through secondary

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ecotec.com/europeanInventory2004/>

review of the literature and the work of national experts, through interviews with public bodies, private companies and voluntary sector organisations. A series of ten case studies were also undertaken, gathering primary in-depth data on validation initiatives by eight organisations in the private and third sector. This strategy based in the use of complementary data collection techniques was aimed at making the best use of available resources and therefore build on available secondary data, but also at preserving the opportunity to add a layer of information where gaps exist. This has not always been easy; particular difficulties were encountered in gathering data on private sector activities.

During the project, meetings with the client have been held in Brussels and Vilnius, and liaison has been on-going with members of the Experts' Group on validation through attendance to Experts' group meetings in Brussels and telephone and e-mail contact. Liaison has also been made with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF), who contributed to the development of the project's methodological tools.

Dissemination for the project has been ongoing through a dedicated project web-site, notes on the Virtual Community on Validation of non-formal and informal learning, attendance and presentation in international conferences<sup>3</sup>, distribution of over 200 project bookmarks, contact with national and international organisations and other dissemination mechanisms.

This final report presents the findings of the research project and provides ideas about how the Inventory may be used and developed in the future to best satisfy its original mandate and support the work of relevant stakeholders across Europe.

### ***1.3 Key issues affecting the study***

Several issues affected the European Inventory project and shaped its result, by providing both constraints and opportunities during the course of the research. These are reviewed in a summative way below.

#### ***1.3.1 General issues***

##### ***The comparative nature of the project and availability of information***

The European Inventory aimed to collect information on practices on validation of non-formal and informal learning on a series of pre-defined areas. However, it is necessary to recognise that measures to validate non-formal and informal learning operate in a strongly decentralised manner which includes actions from private companies and the voluntary sector. In a few countries and for some sectors, information on validation initiatives is already collated at national or sectoral level. For most others, this is not the case. Finally, the degree of

---

<sup>3</sup> Presentation at the European Training Foundation conference on "The Common Principles on validation of non-formal and informal learning" in Vilnius, Lithuania, February 2004 and SALTO Youth "Bridges for Recognition" conference in Leuven, Belgium, January 2005. Dissemination of the project's web-site was also undertaken during the 49<sup>th</sup> Comparative and International Education Society Conference, "Beyond Dichotomies", Stanford University, Palo Alto, USA, March 2005.

development of validation initiatives also varies hugely depending on the country analysed. Since the project team has had to rely to some extent on the amount of information available – as already highlighted in the Terms of Reference – this has had an effect on the content of national chapters. The depth of the description and the substantive findings presented in the Inventory varies from Member State to Member State. In a number of cases, this has also affected the structure of particular Inventory chapters, where one or more sections have had to be suppressed or amalgamated in the presentation of validation initiatives.

Indeed, the decentralised character of validation initiatives creates additional problems as regards the role of validation in a lifelong learning strategy. If decentralisation means fragmentation and lack of linkages (for example barriers to transfer between sectors and systems) the fundamental rationale for validation is threatened. This is the reason why Common European Principles for Validation of non-formal and informal learning have been developed: to strengthen coherence and avoid this fragmentation.

In summary, it can be argued that this expectable decentralisation and diversity of initiative is inherent to the project and does not preclude the Inventory from providing useful information for the exchange of experiences, mutual learning and for building bridges between different learning settings, experiences and geographical areas. Absence of information on practices in some areas in some countries does highlight areas where some countries may want to look in more detail to the experiences of their neighbours, either to improve their mechanisms for collation and dissemination of information about existing validation practices – when they are in place – so that national and international decision-makers at public, private or voluntary sector level can benefit from the lessons learnt through their lives, or to gather ideas for the setting up of validation practices in the future where ever these are not already in place.

#### *The timing and resources*

The European Inventory project, the results of which are presented in this report, has extended its activity for 14 months. During this period, at several points strict cut-offs have had to be agreed for the presentation of outputs from national experts, for the production of case studies, for interviews with different stakeholders, for receiving feedback from readers of national chapters, for text editing, and for a variety of other tasks. Yet validation initiatives are continuously evolving, and their evolution does not necessary conform to the time-scales of the research projects which have them as object of analysis. Therefore, although the Inventory is as up to date as it has been possible, it is necessary to acknowledge that the situation in many countries is still changing, and may in the near future be different to that outlined in the Inventory reports. Moreover, various practical factors have made it so that national chapters were received and processed at different times during the project lifespan. This means that some of the chapters presented have been produced more recently than others and are therefore more up to date. In any case, we hope the reader finds useful information in all of them.

The production of the European Inventory is an extremely complex methodological and practical undertaking. This is, amongst other factors, because of the difficulty in making validation initiatives visible, and because of the spread of validation initiatives in particular in

the private and voluntary sector. In several respects, the Inventory is a task that could occupy a not so small legion of researchers. Yet, as with any other research project, boundaries had to be marked for the activity of those who wrote the bones of the Inventory – the national chapters. ECOTEC can only be grateful that many of the people who worked in this project have gone beyond the boundaries established for their work and have produced incredibly comprehensive and high-quality descriptions of validation initiatives in the countries they have covered, and we hope readers do also appreciate their “dedication beyond the call of duty”.

*1.3.2 Key issues on the production of a methodology for the collection of information in the future about validation of non-formal and informal learning*

As part of their work for the Inventory project authors of national chapters were requested to provide ECOTEC with a methodology for the collection of information in the future about validation of non-formal and informal learning. Although the elements of most methodologies are common, it is also necessary to point out that for gathering relevant information about non-formal and informal learning practices a high level of context-specific knowledge is required, therefore a single methodology cannot be provided for all countries. Moreover, it is easier to present a methodology for the collection of information on top-down initiatives which includes, for example, most of the public sector initiatives. However, bottom-up initiatives on validation, usually developed by companies, branches, sectors, or third sector organisations, are equally important. This Inventory presents the sources consulted by national experts, as reported by them, in the Annex Section.

*1.3.3 Key issues on the overview of current systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning*

The key issue regarding the overviews of current situations on validation of non-formal and informal learning in the countries covered by the project is that the overviews have to inform the rationale of current initiatives, identify the key characteristics of these initiatives along with the resources invested and their outputs to draw appropriate policy implications. To respond to these needs the key questions to be addressed during the project regarding national situations were:

*Rationale:*

- What functions are to being fulfilled and should fulfil the methodologies and institutional systems for identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning?
- What competences should they validate?

Processes:

- What initiatives has the public sector put in place?
- Do they apply to “new professions” and those undergoing change where no formal qualifications are yet available for new competences or also to traditional professions?
- Is there any guidance to learners or is it an assessment of acquired competences?
- What initiatives has the private sector put in place?
- What initiatives has the voluntary sector put in place?

Partnerships:

- What partnerships are operating between the three sectors?

Resources:

- How are these initiatives and partnerships funded, managed and monitored?

Outputs:

- Does current activity contribute to progress in all the three sectors?
- What does research tell us about the success of/lessons learnt from different initiatives, especially with regards to the validity and reliability of current methodologies?

Policy implications:

- What are the key factors behind the success or otherwise of different initiatives?
- What can be done at European level to improve the current situation?

It is not possible to cover all these questions in each national chapter presented, however, they have provided the overall framework for the work of national correspondents. With regards to existing data gaps, the strongest message from those involved in the preparation of the Inventory has been the lack of comprehensive information on private sector initiatives. There are three reasons for this, not all of which apply to each country:

- lack of initiatives
- lack of studies on initiatives
- it has been difficult to obtain information as companies are reluctant to reveal their HR strategies.

The Inventory will help to address this deficit.

The other important gap is data on take-up. With the exception of a few countries, data on take up of validation initiative is generally patchy, and available only for some initiatives. One reason for a lack of data is that initiatives may be at an early stage of development (in particular in the third sector), but it is often the case too that data is simply not collected. This

is of course a major information shortcoming for policy-makers when trying to assess the importance and effectiveness of validation initiatives.

#### *1.3.4 Key issues on the electronic format for dissemination*

Finally, regarding the dissemination of the results of the project, a key issue was to agree on the best way to disseminate its results to a wide range of actors to maximise the project's impact. When thinking about the electronic format for dissemination, several aspects should be taken into consideration, including:

##### *Mechanisms and forums for dissemination already in place*

- Is information in this policy area well disseminated?
- Is information currently being properly presented: accessible for all range of interested parties, relevant and accurate?
- What instruments can best serve for dissemination purposes at European level?

##### *How current networks can be used to disseminate the project*

- What networks can be used for further dissemination of the project?

Taking these issues into consideration – in particular the existence of powerful current networks for stakeholders such as CEDEFOP's Virtual Community on validation of non-formal and informal learning, which currently has a very large membership base – ECOTEC has undertaken a number of activities for the dissemination of the project results (see above). The final report is available on Adobe Acrobat 7. Acrobat 7 has an improved search function that will enable stakeholders to retrieve information from the Inventory in an easier way than with previous versions of Acrobat.



## **2.0 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS: NEEDS AND INITIATIVES**

*By Manuel Souto Otero, Andrew McCoshan, Kerstin Junge and James Winter (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

This section presents an overview of the key findings on national methods to validate non-formal and informal learning from a set of telephone interviews with national stakeholders and private and voluntary organisations, which were carried out by ECOTEC.

The overview looks at two main issues: the policy context and validation methodologies developed and used by the public, private and third sector in Europe. For both sections the overview seeks to establish common factors and key differences between the 30 European countries included in this study. In the final concluding section, the main results are again highlighted.

### **2.1 National motivations for endorsing validation of non-formal and informal learning**

Alongside information on the motives for endorsing initiatives for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, information about the actors involved in these programmes are crucial for understanding the national policy context in which validation initiatives are embedded. The discussion below highlights the main issues across European countries in these two areas.

Validating non-formal and informal learning is becoming an increasingly important area of activity for policy-makers and other stakeholders, and not only in the EU Member States but in other European countries, and indeed, non-European countries too<sup>4</sup>. According to the stakeholders interviewed for this project, encompassing representatives from the public, private and voluntary sector, a variety of reasons have put the issue the agenda for on countries, companies and other organisations<sup>5</sup>:

- *The needs of the knowledge economy.* The EU Member States' commitment to making Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010" (the so-called Lisbon Agenda) and growing global competition for jobs and labour is putting pressure on Europe's labour markets to become more flexible. Recognising non-formal and informal learning experiences offers an opportunity for increased labour market and geographic mobility. Indeed, in some countries the necessity to meet the needs of the knowledge economy is seen as the main driver behind the development of validation initiatives for non-formal and informal learning.
- *Meeting business needs for a qualified workforce.* In a knowledge-based and globalised economy, European businesses need a well-trained workforce that is ready to learn

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Chloe Dyson and Jack Keating (2004) "The recognition of prior Learning: Practices in the workplace" Report to the ILO.

<sup>5</sup> Stakeholder interviews, February and March 2005

continuously to meet changing demands. Validation of non-formal and informal learning crucially allows employers to identify employees' training needs as well as their skills and job requirements more accurately.

- *Improving access to the formal education system.* In many European countries access to further and higher education is traditionally only possible if a certain level of qualification, gained in the formal system and certified with officially recognised diplomas, has been achieved. This excludes those people who, for whatever reason, have not been able to acquire these diplomas. With the need for a qualified and mobile workforce growing, validation of non-formal and informal learning is required to provide direct ways to gaining formal qualifications or as door openers to higher education courses.
- *Improving the efficiency of the education and training system.* By validating people's prior experience and competences, focus falls on people's skills and competences. Focusing on competences implies acknowledging that the time required by different people – depending upon other factors such as previous learning – to obtain a formal qualification may be subject to differences. Depending on the non-formal and informal learning acquired by individuals, their period of participation in the formal system until they obtain a given qualification can be accelerated and cost savings achieved. This can benefit education providers as well as those seeking qualifications.
- *Providing opportunities for disadvantaged or excluded people.* Validating non-formal and informal learning also has an important social dimension. The social inclusion of disadvantaged people, such as groups of immigrants, is an important reason for European countries to embrace initiatives to validate non-formal and informal learning. Immigrants often arrive to their country of destination with much experience but a lack of nationally recognised qualifications or proven language skills, thus reducing their opportunities for economic participation and social integration. Validation of acquired competences helps the socially excluded to re-integrate into the labour market and society as a whole.

These reasons can, to a large extent, be integrated into one 'meta-reason'; the need to facilitate lifelong learning, as confirmed by the inventory national chapters where validation frequently is seen as an intrinsic part of such strategies. These needs are linked to specific validation approaches and aims in the next section.

## **2.2 *Addressing existing needs: Key messages on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe***

The overview of key stakeholders presented above shows that a large number of organisations are involved in the discussion, development and application of methods for validating non-formal and informal learning. Indeed, this area is characterised by a certain "methodological crowding": both within individual countries and across the continent a large number of different methods are being developed and are already applied by organisations in the public, private and third sector. However, while a variety of organisations are active in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning, not all are equally involved. The public sector

and organisations of the third sector are particularly prominent in leading the debate. Private firms *appear* to be the least active, even though they are also starting to use methods to validate their employees' knowledge gained in a non-formal and informal way, usually in the workplace. It is, however, the case that information on initiatives in the private sector is very difficult to obtain. It could well be that the scarcity of information about private sector initiatives is a sign of lack of information / openness rather than lack of initiative. As will become clear from the overview below, methods used or developed in European countries are a mix of top-down (i.e. state-led) and bottom-up (i.e. driven by local or sectoral interest groups) approaches.

The remainder of this section summarises the key messages on methodologies emanating from the national chapters and stakeholder interviews undertaken for the Inventory. To this end we will present the main methodologies developed and applied across Europe in order to address the needs of the European economy and society.

### *2.2.1 Improving access to the formal education system and the efficiency of education and training systems*

Opening up paths into further or higher education, or issuing national certificates for prior or non-formal and informal learning, is seen in many European countries as important for realising the knowledge economy and as a key rationale for endorsing the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Indeed, many European countries have, through legal acts, made this possible. Because FE and HE systems are state-regulated, government ministries dominate as stakeholders in this set of methods. These are therefore top-down approaches.

There are, essentially, four approaches with which European governments are looking to increase the transparency of their FE or HE systems:

- *Validation of non-formal and informal learning through access to formal examinations.* Some European countries give access to final examinations in the FE or vocational training system to students who have not passed through the preceding training period in the formal system. For instance, this is the case in Germany, Austria, Norway, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Finland. While the exact procedures inevitably vary, access to the examinations is always dependent on a prior assessment of experience and knowledge through a formal education body. For example, in Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein the assessment necessary for access to final exams of vocational training courses can be done by the relevant crafts' chambers on the basis of employer-issued descriptions of work experience.
- *Access to the formal education system if entry criteria are met through prior learning.* Some countries (most notably Finland, Norway and the Czech Republic) give access to further and higher education courses to prospective students who lack the necessary formal certificates but can demonstrate that they have gained equivalent competences to those acquired in the formal education system, through prior learning. In Finland, for instance, a student can be admitted to polytechnic universities by demonstrating they have gained the relevant knowledge through work experience. Another example is the

University of Tartu in Estonia that has set up an accreditation method for prior learning with the aim of giving access to individuals that do not have the formal qualifications for entering higher education.

- *Individual competence assessment to shorten vocational training.* In Denmark, prospective students can undergo a competence assessment before taking up vocational training. Relevant competences acquired through prior, non-formal and informal learning are then counted towards the training course the duration of which is shortened accordingly.
- *Making non-formal and informal learning an integral part of formal training.* In some countries, like Sweden and Malta, methods have been developed that make non-formal and informal learning an integral part of a formal training programme. In Sweden, practical training at the workplace can earn a pupil the necessary credits for gaining a high school diploma. The University of Malta has set up a system that allows students to gain credit points for volunteering and have these counted towards the final degree.

### 2.2.2 *Meeting needs of the knowledge economy and business needs for a qualified workforce*

The knowledge economy and growing international competition means that businesses require an increasingly well qualified workforce and employees that keep on learning in order to be able to stay in business. Historically, these objectives have been achieved through continuing training. Increasingly, businesses are supplementing this by employing methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, based on the evidence of the national chapters, it appears that the development of private-sector methods is uneven across European countries. While private sector organisations in Scandinavian countries as well as the Netherlands, Germany, France and Belgium have developed and are applying a good set of validation methodologies, it is more difficult to find extensive usage of validation methodologies across other European countries.

Methods developed and employed by businesses serve three main purposes:

- *Validating employees' competencies gained at the workplace.* Across Europe, individual businesses and business representatives are developing and employing methods to identify and assess and recognise the skills that their employees have gained at the workplace. In some countries, this activity may lead to the issuing of certificates as “proof of competence”. In France, for instance, the Association for the Certification of Vocational Skills (*L'Association pour la certification de compétences professionnelles*), created by the national network of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, has established a system of certifying work-based skills for nine occupations.<sup>6</sup> The certification is available to all employees based on a portfolio submitted to an assessment panel. In the Netherlands, a number of industry sectors (house painting, meat, construction, process industries as well

---

<sup>6</sup> Secretarial and personal assistant skills, sales, remote sales, customer service, management, office IT skills, maintenance, hotel reception, communication.

as the care sector) have developed methods to validate the work-based skills of employees with 3-5 years' of experience. Collective agreements in certain sectors (for instance the metal industry) give employees the right to participate in validation initiatives obliging the employer to support this endeavour.

- *Identifying employee skills in order to identify skills gaps in the company.* While the end-purpose of the above methodologies is the validation, and often certification, of competences, thus showing both employer and employee the skills that have been acquired at the work-place, a second set of private sector methodologies aims specifically at identifying skills gaps in order to tailor company training around this information. A telecommunications company in Denmark, for instance, has introduced validation of non-formal and informal learning into its 11-day basic training courses. In the first two days of the course reading and writing tests as well as individual interviews determine the learning needs and preferences of individual employees. Training in the following 9 days is tailored to the employees' needs as determined with the help of validation methods of non-formal and informal learning. Similar types of methodologies can be identified for the private sectors in Norway and Belgium.
- *Awarding professional qualifications on the basis of skills gained through non-formal and informal learning.* A final set of private sector methodologies aims at issuing professional qualifications based on competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning. Methodologies to achieve this aim are used in several countries. In order to widen its employees' skills base, a wood processing company in Finland developed a system of practical and written tests taken by an external assessor, employer and employee representatives for employees with 1-2 years' experience. This together with the in-company training can result in obtaining nationally recognised qualifications. In Slovenia, individual companies and the Chamber of Craft are drawing up and implementing National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) as a way to certify non-formal and informal learning at the national level.

### *2.2.3 The need to certify and recognise people's skills, including those at greater disadvantage in the labour market*

Recognising and certifying individuals' skills is an important element of lifelong learning and the continuing upskilling of the European workforce. It identifies the skills an individual has gained outside the formal education system and thus demonstrates an individual's continuous professional and skills development.

Arguably, recognising and certifying an individual's skills is particularly beneficial in the case of disadvantaged people (for instance immigrants, hard-to-reach young people, women outside of the labour market) who, for a variety of reasons, may lack formal proof of their competencies. In this area both public and third sector organisations (in particular training and voluntary organisations) are developing and applying relevant methodologies. These fall roughly into the following two categories:

- *Using national competence standards as a framework for identifying and evaluating skills gained through non-formal and informal learning.* A number of organisations are using national competence standards as a framework for their methodologies to validate non-formal and informal learning. This is most notably the case for eastern European countries, where in several cases national education and training systems are currently being comprehensively re-organised. In Romania, for instance, the development of around 300 occupational standards goes hand in hand with building a national system for validating non-formal and informal learning. A similar process can be observed in Estonia, where the development of professional standards has been linked to a method to attest an individual's professional qualifications (through either written / oral exams, test assignment, attestation on the basis of documents or a combination of these).
- *Capturing soft skills.* The chapters provided in this report show that great methodological variety exists for validating soft skills. The motivations for validating these skills vary, but also include the need to recognise the skills that people at disadvantage in the labour market have. Often, these methodologies tend to involve a mix of approaches (usually a combination of self-assessment, external assessment and written work), brought together in competence portfolios. These methods are able to capture both soft skills, for instance social skills or management competencies, as well as technical knowledge. Examples for such methods include the recreational activity study book developed by the Finnish Youth Organisation or the Volunteers' Book, developed by a voluntary sector organisation in Hamburg.

### **2.3 Key features of the validation methodologies**

Methods to validate non-formal and informal learning thus have a variety of purposes and are designed in different ways to accommodate these purposes. Nevertheless, certain common traits can be identified regarding a number of key areas relevant for validation. These are areas of use; transferability between sectors; reliability; validity; and authenticity. This section of the chapter examines each of these areas in greater detail.

#### **2.3.1 Areas of use**

The summary of validation approaches given in the section above indicates that the use of validation methods is concentrated on a small number of areas. This is confirmed by information given by stakeholders in interviews given as part of this project. Across European countries, key areas of use for validation of non-formal and informal learning are:

- *Traditional professions.* In some countries, traditional professions (for instance wood processing) are an important area for the application of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning. In these industries, employees tend to be less well qualified and businesses also find it difficult to release employees for training. This makes validation of non-formal and informal learning the most cost-effective way of upskilling the workforce. Thus, traditional professions dominate validation practices in Norway, Lithuania and Finland. Indeed, the initiative by a Finnish wood processing company highlighted above is

a prime example of the use of validation in the sector and the benefits to both employer and employee thereof obtained.

- *New professions where formal qualifications have not yet been established.* New professions are a prime area for applying methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. In Iceland, for instance, new professions by far dominate the use of validation methods according to the opinion of stakeholders interviewed for this project. ‘New’ in this context can mean two things. New might refer to professions that, compared to the traditional occupations in a country, have emerged relatively recently (for instance ones related to IT) so that frameworks for examining skills similar to those of established occupations do not (yet) exist. New professions may also be occupations that are not in themselves new (for instance caring for the elderly at home) but for which a set “learning path” had not previously existed. Professions that fall into this category are non-medical home based care for the elderly, the infirm, children and others; the real estate sector; trainers; project managers; and the fields of IT and leisure.
- *Social recognition in civil society.* This is a wide area capturing both civil society engagement (i.e. volunteering) and the recognition by society of an individual’s achievements through validation. Both fields are an important area of application for validation methods in Europe. In some countries, such as Cyprus, it is the main field of application. Validation of non-formal and informal learning in this area can provide for the social and economic integration of disadvantaged groups (such as immigrants, older workers or disengaged young people) by demonstrating to them and to the outside world their abilities and achievements. The methods referred to under “the need to recognise people’s skills” in the section above are good examples for this kind of use.

### 2.3.2 *Transferability*

Methods to validate non-formal and informal learning are applied in different sectors - public, private and the third sector. The question of whether validation in one sector is recognised in another sector is important because it creates the preconditions for people to move between education systems and jobs more easily.

Where validation of non-formal and informal learning is embedded into a national qualification framework and / or occupational standards, the general recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning can be ensured. This is, for instance, the case in France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Romania and Estonia. In Austria, transferability is possible where validation is integrated in national legislation and is embedded in exams that are part of the formal system as this awards officially recognised certificates and qualifications.

In a number of countries, new legislation envisages the recognition of validation across sectors. For instance, in Spain a new Law on Qualifications and VET will establish a validation system that has a national reach and will be implemented in all sectors. Similarly, new legislation in the UK, Luxembourg and Italy is likely to improve the transferability of validation methods in use and under development.

### 2.3.3 *Reliability, validity and authenticity*

Because non-formal and informal learning is, by definition, not subject to explicitly defined learning steps and is thus more individualised than formal learning, it is important that the methodologies applied are valid, reliable and authentic.

Even though the development of most methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning precedes proposals for the recently adopted Common European Principles on validation of non-formal and informal learning, which emphasise the importance of validity and reliability, it is noteworthy that on balance much care has been taken to ensure the methods are reliable, valid and authentic:

- In several countries formal exams are used to validate non-formal and informal learning (notably in the case of Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg). This ensures that all three criteria – validity, reliability and authenticity – are met through a procedure that is both tailored to the subject and objective.
- Portfolio approaches are often frequently applied. This involves assessment with the help of a combination of methodologies, usually a mix of self-assessment, external assessment (either in a group or individually) and written tests. The competence portfolios used in France, Luxembourg and the UK are good examples for such an approach. This approach reduces the probability that tests results are subjective while at the same time improving reliability, authenticity and validity.
- Where competences gained through non-formal and informal learning are validated neither through formal exams nor through the portfolio method, an external assessor is often involved, who takes a leading role in certifying an individual's competences. This is, for instance, the case in the Finnish Recreational Activity Studies book where a young person's volunteering experience is assessed by one adult. One of the methods practiced in the Czech Republic – the recognition of an individual's prior learning for the enrolment in initial vocational training courses – gives the decision-making power to one individual: the school headmaster. The same method does not have, however, a fully standardised final examination system so results vary from school to school.

Despite these encouraging signs and existing examples of good practice, lack of reliability and validity in validation methodologies is seen by European stakeholders as a barrier to the take-up of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning. High-quality tutors and assessors are as paramount for the successful take-up of validation methods as reliable, valid and authentic methods. The section below explores the issue of take-up in more detail, whereas the following section outlines in more detail the range of stakeholders involved in validation of non-formal and informal learning initiatives.



## **2.4 Take-up and acceptance of validation of non-formal and informal learning**

The take-up and acceptance of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning varies greatly across European countries and methodologies. Information on take-up relies on the existence of a monitoring system. Many of the initiatives examined, however, are at an early stage of implementation and thus have not yet developed to the point whereby the collection of statistics is relevant or feasible.

Moreover, the general acceptance of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning varies greatly across European countries. Indeed, it would appear that with regard to the status of implementation of validation of non-formal and informal learning, European countries can be divided into three broad clusters: high, medium or low degree of development. This assessment can be made by looking at individual countries in response to three criteria, which are: existence of a national legal framework of strategy on validation of lifelong learning; high quality methods (ie those that are valid and reliable); and participation of all three sectors (public, private and voluntary) in the development of methodologies.

Countries with a *high degree of acceptance* of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning have either a national strategy on the use of validation of non-formal and informal learning or a strong legal framework. They will have a good set of established high quality methods in place. All sectors – public, private and voluntary – have developed and applied these methods. According to the information collected for the national chapters, these criteria currently apply to the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Sweden and Finland as well as the Netherlands and France. In Sweden and Finland, for instance, validation is part of comprehensive national (lifelong learning) policies which means that a national framework and coherent strategies are in place.

Countries with a *medium degree of acceptance* of methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning have some form of national policy in place, an uneven set of methods across the sectors (for instance, public sector or voluntary sector initiatives may dominate). Existing methods are at an early stage of development. Countries that fall in this category are the UK, Italy, Ireland and Norway. In Italy, for instance, legislation exists, but remains at an early (framework) stage. Germany and Austria are also part of this group. While a variety of methods, some of them well-established, exists take up and transferability tend to be low.

Countries with a *low degree of acceptance* of methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning have no national legal framework or strategy in place, or have developed this only recently, and have few methods across the sectors with gaps in one or several of them. Existing methods may also be at an early stage of development. In the education and employment systems of these countries as a whole, validation of non-formal and informal learning plays a low role as benefits are regarded as uncertain. Countries that fall into this category are, for instance, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein and Hungary. Equally, other eastern European countries with a (legal) framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in place but methods predominantly still in development (such as Romania, Lithuania, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria) also belong to this category.

The reasons for embracing, developing and taking up validation of non-formal and informal learning initiatives outlined above in this report are to a large extent new; that is they have become important economic or societal issues in the last 10-15 years. With very few exceptions, it is therefore only recently that education stakeholders in Europe have been endorsing and contributing to the development of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning in their respective countries in order to help address these needs. The next section explores in greater detail the main stakeholders that are involved in developing and applying validation methods.

## **2.5 Key stakeholders in the area of validation of non-formal and informal learning**

In most European countries, several types of organisations are active in the area of validating non-formal and informal learning. Key stakeholders can be grouped together into the following categories.

First and foremost, *public sector organisations* are paramount in developing validation methodologies and setting the framework for their use. In all European countries, Ministries of Education are key stakeholders in ongoing debates about non-formal and informal learning. They often set the legal framework for the development and use of methods to validate non-formal learning or commission the development of methodologies by other organisations. In addition, in several countries other ministries are also involved in policy debates because they have some responsibility for education and training relating to their specific area of competence. These include most notably Ministries for Labour, Ministries for Health and occasionally Ministries for Agriculture. In some countries, other Ministries may be involved such as the Romanian Ministry of Culture and Cults. Where countries have strong regional administrations - such as Belgium, Italy or Germany - the equivalent regional ministries are also stakeholders in the process of validating non-formal and informal learning.

Various European countries have also *quasi-governmental bodies* with a key role in the delivery and / or monitoring of education policies. These organisations are often also involved in developing methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Examples include the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania, Ireland, the Netherlands, the UK, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Romania and Spain.

Finally, other public bodies that are stakeholders in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning are, for instance, national learning / training centres (e.g. Sweden, Malta and Romania), employment services (e.g. in the Netherlands) or Higher Education providers.

In many European countries, *social partners* (trade unions and employer representatives) are also involved to some degree in the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This is not only the case in corporatist countries such as Germany and Austria where the social partners play an integral role in the development of the dual system of vocational training. Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Lithuania are also among the countries where the social partners are key stakeholders.

*Private sector and voluntary sector organisations* are the last set of stakeholders present in most countries, although their involvement at national level is normally small – there are more “users and developers” of validation methodologies rather than those involved in the regulation of this area. Occasionally, there are also private sector organisations with expertise in validation involved in regulation process or standards’ setting within one or more industry sectors. In the UK and Ireland, for instance, some private organisations that have developed expertise in the area of validation offer services in this area to other private sector organisations.

In all European countries, public sector organisations thus play an important role in the development of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning. Indeed, even in countries with a little developed set of methodologies, government departments are heavily involved in driving the agenda in this area forward.

## **2.6 Summary**

Stakeholders in all European countries are developing and applying a variety of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning. The motivations for doing so are significantly based on the needs of the knowledge economy for a qualified workforce and the opportunities for social and economic inclusion.

To this end, European stakeholders of have developed a large number of methodologies in order to address these needs. These employ a mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches as well as both summative and formative methods.

European countries are at different stages of development when it comes to implementing methods to validate non-formal and informal learning. In general, those countries whose education system is competence based and / or have a national qualifications framework find it easier to implement validation methods comprehensively than in countries where these preconditions are not met. Indeed, several countries in eastern Europe, where education systems are currently being comprehensively re-organised, tend to introduce competence-based systems within which they fit any approaches to validate non-formal and informal learning.

While European countries are at different stages when it comes to developing and applying methods to validate non-formal and informal learning, there is broad consensus on the growing importance of the subject matter nationally and internationally. The coming years are therefore likely to see major developments in this field, relating not only to the application of methods but also to the application of the common European principles and improved information on take-up.

### **3.0 AUSTRIA**

*By Kersting Junge (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Work and discussion on methodologies for validating non-formal and informal learning in Austria is still at an early stage of development. Relatively few methodologies have been developed and are applied; the responsible central government department (the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture - BMBWK), while recognising the importance afforded to the issue by debates on lifelong learning at EU level, currently has no personnel dedicated to advancing work on validating non-formal and informal learning.

There are several reasons for the relative scarcity of validation methods. The BMBWK does not have competence over matters of continuous training and has therefore not been very active in promoting the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Austrian dual system of vocational training, which provides a mix of in-company and school-based training, is sometimes seen as reducing the need for alternative recognition methods (Mayer 2001, Wallner 2003) as it reaches most young people and provides a sound educational basis.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, the social partners – as well as trade bodies – are closely involved in setting training standards in the dual system. This makes them reluctant to accept methods for validating non-formal and informal learning as these could infringe on their competencies and potentially make the dual system of vocational training redundant. Finally, Austrian business culture places great emphasis on degree certificates and diplomas issued by recognised providers as proof of professional competence and skills. This means that other certificates, including those identifying or recognising skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, tend to be regarded with scepticism. However, it could be argued that non-formal and informal learning is inherent to the Austrian apprenticeship system where workplace learning is an integral part of formal learning.

Nevertheless, examples of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning do exist. Work in this area is being driven forward mostly by project work funded through EU programmes. For this work initiatives from Switzerland (in particular the so-called “Qualification Book” and the “Re-organisation of vocational training in the health sector” by the Canton Zurich) have often been used as guiding examples. This project-based approach to advancing work on validation of non-formal and informal learning is set to continue:

---

<sup>7</sup> This must be seen in the context of a labour market which is characterised by regulated occupations. Occupations are usually based on occupational profiles which include information on where and how the required competences should be acquired. Usually they are also linked to entitlements, responsibilities and wages. Although in private industry wages and salaries are increasingly linked to task descriptions, salary systems are still often based on formal qualifications, in particular within the public sector. The occupations listed in the *Gewerbeordnung*, as well as others defined in the *Berufsausbildungsgesetz* (Vocational Training Act), form the basis for the areas of apprenticeship training (currently more than 250 occupations). These also provide the framework for fully school-based VET and thus ensure recognition of the qualifications acquired.

development partnerships for the validation of non-formal learning are to be set up under the current EQUAL 2 funding round.

In the following section we will introduce the four main methodologies developed in Austria to validate non-formal and informal learning. In doing so, the common structure proposed for all of the national chapters is followed, by discussing public sector, industry and third sector initiatives in this order. The last two sections of the chapter present a review of stakeholders working in this area and our conclusions.

### ***3.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public sector***

There has so far been little concrete impetus from the federal level to drive forward the development of methodologies in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning. While the BMBWK became involved in discussions on the topic in relation to the EU Memorandum of Lifelong Learning in 2001, no policy documents have so far come out of the Ministry. This is sometimes attributed to the fact that the BMBWK does not have competence over continuous training which is the context in which the issue tends to be seen. Currently the Ministry does not have an individual with responsibility for taking the issue of validation of lifelong learning forward. Nevertheless, an awareness of the importance of the subject exists and this is also expressed at the European level. Currently a task force on lifelong learning is being set up in the BMBWK that will also address the issue of validation.

While no new instruments to validate non-formal and informal learning are currently promoted at the federal level, a number of federal acts give access to the regular vocational and higher education examinations to people who have gained relevant knowledge through practical (work) experience. These measures are formative and aim at accreditation of knowledge gained in an informal and non-formal way through participation in examinations in the formal system.

#### *3.2.1 Access to vocational training*

The Berufsausbildungsgesetz (Vocational Training Act) and the 2002 amendments to the Gewerbeordnung (Trade Regulation Act) provide for access to final examinations on vocational training courses.

According to the Berufsausbildungsgesetz, individuals who have not been enrolled in the dual system of vocational training may still take the Lehrabschlussprüfung (apprenticeship completion examination). In order to be able to sit the examination, the candidate must:

- Be aged 18 or over
- Have proof that the skills required in order to achieve the apprenticeship have been acquired, for instance through practical experience, a comprehensive relevant learning process or participation in a relevant training programme (CEDEFOP 2003).

If the experience acquired does not cover all competences required for the apprenticeship exam, individuals have to undergo additional training. However, they get credit for their experience, thus reducing by up to two thirds the regular duration of an apprenticeship.

Successful completion of the examination means the relevant professional qualification is awarded. It also gives the same rights in terms of industrial/labour law and social law as those people who have acquired the qualifications within the formal education and training system. In 2003 approximately 5300 people were admitted to apprenticeship exams on the basis of APL. This method of recognising informally gained skills therefore adheres to the standard national system of vocational qualification and does not establish a separate set of requirements.

More and more people are gaining a vocational qualification facilitated by this Act. In 1990, 8.6% of apprenticeship examinations were taken in this non-conventional way, in 2001 this had risen to 14.3% (7,277 of the total 50,770 examinations passed).

The 2002 *amendments to the Gewerbeordnung (Trade Regulation Act)* also make provision for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The new regulations accept certificates demonstrating work or management experience as the *Befähigungsnachweis* (certificate of competence) required to set up business in certain sectors where formal qualifications were previously required. An 'individual qualification verification' can also be issued if certificates cannot be submitted. This means a person can submit to the relevant local authority proof other than formal certificates that they have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to run their business (WKO 2003). It must be noted, however, that the local authority can request a training course or restrict the individual *Befähigungsnachweis* to certain aspects of the business. Moreover, for certain activities (planning, managing construction and underground work) a certificate of competence is not accepted (WKO 2003).

There are also no entry requirements other than being an adult (18 years and over) to enter the Master Craftsman examination which is traditionally required of people in the trades and crafts intending to set up their own business.

Finally, knowledge acquired in a non-formal and informal manner can also be recognised formally by participation in the Matura (school leaving certificate granting access to higher education) examination without the need to have taken the preparatory classes. Upon successful completion of the examination, the graduate is entitled to the same rights to enter higher education as a person having gained the qualification through conventional means (CEDEFOP 2003).

### 3.2.2 Access to further and higher education

There are a number of ways in which non-formal and informal learning is accredited to allow an individual access further and higher education.

The *Externistenprüfung (school examination for external candidates)*: individuals who do not participate in formal school programmes may, in principle, participate in the final school exams. Preparatory courses are available but not compulsory. Upon successful completion, the graduate is entitled to the same rights as an individual who has acquired the qualification within the framework of a formal programme.

The *Berufsreifeprüfung* was introduced in autumn 1997. It provides **higher education entrance qualifications** for graduates of 3-4 year school-based VET programmes (including those in the health sector) and apprenticeships. This qualification allows access to any area of study at universities and non-university tertiary and post-secondary educational establishments without any restrictions in terms of institution or subject area.

The *Berufsreifeprüfung* increases the vertical mobility in the education system and acknowledges workplace learning. Contrary to the *Reifeprüfung* (upper secondary leaving exam which provides access to higher education) acquired within the regular programmes, the exam can be taken step by step in the form of individual exam modules. The elements comprise German, mathematics, a foreign language and a subject area related to occupational practice. Recognition of prior learning is an important element. This includes exemption from individual elements (e.g. languages, or relevant technical area) upon proof of relevant competences. An ordinance of 1 Sept. 2000 to the *Berufsreifeprüfung Act* (Federal Legal Gazette I no. 68/1997 in its amended version 52/2000) includes a list of programmes and qualifications/exams that are recognised as proof: foremen and master craftsperson courses, other specific programmes offered within the framework of CVT, nursing diplomas, apprenticeship leaving exams of 4-year programmes if passed with distinction. Skills and knowledge acquired at work are thus recognised as equivalent to knowledge and competences acquired at (VET) schools and colleges.

The *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (higher education access examination) grants access to specific study areas of higher education. It only provides access to study areas that are related to the (work)experience the person has already acquired. A later change of study area would require additional exams. For those who can prove they have completed a minimum of four years of initial vocational training and continuing vocational training the minimum age for entry is 20. Exams are required in German and 1 – 3 other pre-determined subjects plus 1 – 3 electives related to the intended study area and the individual's previous experience (which the candidates can suggest themselves). To prepare, the options are self-study and courses at adult education establishments or higher education institutions in the areas that are frequently required.

Access to programmes at *Fachhochschulen* (University of applied sciences) is also possible via accreditation of prior learning (initial vocational training, relevant work-experience and

additional exams). Candidates may have to pass additional exams (e.g. in German, Maths, English and other areas related to the intended studies). Providers set the requirements upon agreement with the *Fachhochschulrat* (Council of a University of applied sciences). Requirements vary depending on the technical focus of an FH degree programme.

Finally, people enrolling on VET programmes for adults in order to acquire, for example, a *Reife- und Diplomprüfung* can be given credit for parts of their initial education and training in the same or a similar field.

### *3.2.3 Other instruments*

In connection with the European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning a number of additional methods for validating non-formal and informal learning were discussed. In addition to the competence portfolios discussed below, the introduction of “certification commissions” was proposed that would identify and assess qualifications gained in various ways (Schneeberger and Schlögl 2001).

### **3.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector**

Austrian trade unions, Arbeiterkammer (Chamber of Labour)<sup>8</sup> and employers’ associations, as well as the trade and craft chambers as representatives of the professions, tend to be sceptical about methods to validate non-formal and informal learning. These stakeholders are closely involved in setting training standards under the dual system of vocational training. They are thus concerned that validating non-formal and informal learning might infringe on these competencies or even undermine the dual system of vocational training.

The only fully-fledged methodology was developed by the Arbeiterkammer Tirol (Chamber of Labour Tyrol) which represents the interests of employees in the region. The organisation’s think tank, the Zukunftszentrum (“Centre for the Future”), has, with the support of the regional government, developed a ‘competence statement’. This methodology, which was developed in conjunction with business and organisational behaviour psychologists, is a six-step process completed over three weeks to identify the skills and knowledge a person has gained through non-formal and informal learning. A personal coach supports and guides the individual throughout this process.

As a **first step**, the coach provides information about content, aims and usefulness of the competence statement and the individual begins to reflect on the important experiences in their life. The **second stage** is the creation, by the participant, of an all-encompassing profile of their life including family, schooling, vocational training, work and leisure. A discussion with the personal coach helps the individual, **thirdly**, to become aware of important learning experiences, recognition of abilities and of the importance of different stages in their life. **Fourthly**, the individual writes their CV at home referring to certificates as well as competencies. The **fifth stage** is a self-assessment: how does the individual see themselves,

---

<sup>8</sup> Both Trade Unions and the Arbeiterkammer represent workers and employees in Austria. Trade Union membership is voluntary, whereas membership in the Arbeiterkammer is mandatory.



how do others see them? What is important to them for their future? Both questions and answers are discussed with the personal coach. In the final and **sixth stage**, further steps and objectives for the future are defined. The end product of this process is a written 'competence statement' showing a person's main skills and abilities.

The Centre's competence statement is widely applied. Participation is open to all members of the Chamber of Labour (that is, all employees including apprentices). It is heavily subsidised; in general, the individual is expected to make a contribution of EUR 100 to the costs of developing the competence statement - the Workers' Chamber and the Tyrol regional government contribute the bulk of the costs (EUR 700). In 2004 alone, the budget allowed for 1000 competence statements to be completed. The courses are so popular that waiting times of several weeks can occur.

Austrian businesses, too, have in recent years become more interested in assessing the competencies of their employees in order to be able to react to market requirements for a flexible work force (Schmid 2003). They are beginning to attribute greater importance to the development of staff competencies in order to respond to the need for expanding employees' skills and the information gathered about these. In this context, non-formal and informal learning is gaining in importance. To date this has had an impact primarily on the delivery of continuous training rather than on the elaboration of methodologies to identify, validate or recognise non-formal and informal learning (Schmid 2003). Thus, businesses are beginning to use non-formal learning arrangements (such as learning from colleagues through job rotation or e-learning) for workforce development. On occasion, simple tools to assess employees' skills are used. For instance, the steel company Voest in Linz uses questionnaires (in the manner of a checklist) to identify staff competencies.

These initiatives do not yet translate into fully-fledged methodologies to validate non-formal and informal learning (Schmid 2003). In fact, a survey of human resource experts has revealed that there is little awareness among organisations that certification may be used to validate non-formal and informal learning in addition to the market-based and organisational certification for which it is conventionally used (Wallner 2003).

### **3.4 Review of existing initiatives: The third sector**

Austrian public Adult Education Centres are particularly active when it comes to developing methods to validate non-formal and informal learning. Funded by EU education programmes, two institutions in particular are at the vanguard of validation methodologies in Austria: the Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke (Circle of Austrian Adult Education Institutes) and the Linz Adult Education Centre. They have developed two of the three major Austrian validation methodologies outside federal law. Both approaches are tailored to specific sectors or competencies. In developing the approaches, both organisations were strongly influenced by Swiss work on validation, in particular the Swiss qualification book.

The Circle of Austrian Adult Education Institutes, which represents adult education institutions in Austria, has developed a formative assessment method for validating competencies gained through voluntary work, called the 'competence portfolio'.

The competence portfolio is a folder that documents an individual's skills gained through voluntary work. The assessment process involves a 2-hour discussion with a certified portfolio tutor (Portfolio Begleiter) which is then jointly evaluated. Portfolio Tutors are adult education trainers, working on a voluntary or professional basis, who have gained a certificate in "Development of competence and portfolio tutoring". To gain the certificate, the would-be tutor needs to have participated successfully in 4 training modules, have developed an extensive competence portfolio for themselves and have created an additional 5 practice portfolios. Portfolio tutors have both methodological knowledge (of how to create a competence portfolio and the ability to pass on information about it) and contextual knowledge (knowledge about volunteering and associated human resources policy). The competence portfolios are currently offered by Austrian adult education providers and volunteering organisations. In future, group portfolios are to be provided.

The competence portfolio is designed to identify skills gained in all areas of volunteering. As such, it has pioneered the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Austria (Kellner 2004). Since 2003, work on the competence portfolio has been developed further through the ESF project "Development of competencies through volunteering". In this project the regional members of the Circle of Austrian Adult Education Institutes get involved in the validation work by providing competence portfolios, competence workshops and information events.

A second adult education provider with a strong involvement in work on validation of non-formal and informal learning is the *Volkshochschule Linz* (Linz Adult Education Centre).<sup>9</sup> The organisation has co-ordinated two consecutive Socrates / Grundtvig projects entitled "From competence to qualification" in which the partner organisations developed and piloted methods of validating non-formal and informal learning. As part of these Grundtvig projects, the Volkshochschule Linz developed a methodology tailored to the Austrian "market" which aimed to identify social and communication skills.<sup>10</sup> This methodology is also called the competence portfolio. In developing the competence portfolio, the Volkshochschule Linz involved several local stakeholders from the city administration, two universities and the workers' chamber. The consultation revolved in particular around the usability of the competence portfolio in the labour market, and the input of these stakeholders fed into the validation methodology.

The competence portfolio of the Volkshochschule Linz contains information about an individual's core competencies. This is achieved by means of three workshops guided by two trained coaches, an individual's work at home in between these workshops and a concluding discussion to address any unresolved issues and open questions. In these three steps a portfolio is created that contains information on the following issues [Wenidoppler 2003]:

---

<sup>9</sup> The Adult education centres are a national "chain" of state-funded adult education centres providing affordable courses on a wide range of subjects.

<sup>10</sup> For the development of the competence portfolio, the Volkshochschule Linz based its work partly on the Swiss Qualification Book.

- *Career progression*: this shows all of the steps taken in the formal education and training system as well as the steps that have led to the acquisition of skills and competencies through non-formal and informal learning.
- *Analysis of potential*: this is an analysis of individual tasks and activities that an individual has carried out in different roles and stages of their life in view of the skills and competencies used, or gained, to complete them. Individuals also carry out a self-assessment of their competencies.
- *Personal profile*: the abilities highlighted in the stages above are reduced to core competencies. The individual has the choice of which competencies are selected.

Once the portfolio is complete, the coaches are responsible for highlighting the individual's core competencies and for assessing the extent to which the indicators that have been set to define social and communication competencies can be found in an individual's competence portfolio.

The portfolio method is complemented with an assessment centre where a group of people who have completed the work on the competence portfolio undergo a number of tests including: psychometric tests, mock job interviews, group discussions, role plays, case studies and other tasks. Several observers are assessing the behaviour of the participants in view of six dimensions of social competence:

- Ability to work with others
- Team work
- Ability to reflect
- Ability to resolve conflicts
- Self-awareness
- Communication skills.

The method was piloted with 24 employees and trainees from Austrian businesses. A certificate is issued at the end of the portfolio process.

### **3.5 Stakeholders**

In Austria, the discussion on validation of lifelong learning is currently played out mostly in conferences organised around relevant EU programmes (for example Leonardo and EQUAL). In developing their methodologies, some projects have already sought dialogue with representatives of business and labour. Interest in the issue is still growing and in future the following stakeholders are likely to be more systematically involved in the debate.

#### **3.5.1 The Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK)**

The Federal Ministry has overall responsibility for the Austrian education system. Any efforts to provide a more systematic approach to validating non-formal and informal learning will therefore need to involve BMBWK representatives.

3.5.2 *The Federal Ministry for the Economy and Labour (BMWA)*

As validation of non-formal and informal learning is to contribute to an individual's employability, the Austrian Ministry for the Economy and Labour has a stake in the development of any methodologies. Vocational training as well as continuous vocational training including the issues of final examinations and quality assurance are all part of the remit of this Ministry. In addition it is brokering consensus between employer and employee organisations and aims to promote social justice. As the validation of non-formal and informal learning raises concerns about its impact on the dual system of vocational training, a widening of the debate will therefore need involve the BMWA.

3.5.3 *Federal Ministry for Health and the Federal Ministry for Agriculture*

These two Ministries hold responsibility for training in their relevant sectors and thus have an interest in the development of validation methodologies.

3.5.4 *Business Chambers, trade bodies and the social partners*

In the Austrian vocational training system, these organisations are responsible for setting training standards and taking the final examinations of apprentices studying under the dual system of vocational training. If informal learning is to be validated and to contribute to vocational education, these organisations will be key actors as they will have to consent to building the informally acquired knowledge into training plans. Indeed, the Volkshochschule Linz has already consulted businesses and employer organisations in the process of developing the competence portfolio. However, as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning infringes on the competencies of these two organisations, winning their consent is anticipated to be a difficult process.

3.5.5 *Training providers*

Training providers are currently pioneering methods for validating non-formal and informal learning and might also be the organisations involved in delivering any institutionalised validation approach.

### **3.6 Conclusions**

The discussion above shows that in Austria the development of methodologies for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is still in its infancy. The European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning in particular meant that at the level of the responsible ministry (the BMBWK) interest in the issue was raised. Nevertheless, the development of methodologies to validate non-formal and informal learning is not nearly as advanced in Austria as it is in other European countries, most notably the Netherlands and Switzerland that tend to be reference points for any new developments in Austria. An important reason for this is a certain scepticism of key actors regarding the effect of the instrument on vocational training in the dual system. This scepticism encompasses both concerns about a narrowing down of vocational training as a result of validation and loss of

stakeholder influence over training standards. As a result, the three main initiatives to validate non-formal and informal learning have come out of EU-funded projects and have entailed minimum stakeholder involvement.

Indeed, there are essentially two sets of validation approaches. On the one hand, a number of federal laws recognise knowledge gained outside formal teaching structures as qualification for enrolment into the formal education system. On the other hand, validation methodologies are being developed by labour and education organisations in the framework of EU-funded projects. It is interesting to note that two of these methodologies offer tailored approaches, aiming either to validate skills gained from a particular activity (such as volunteering) or at identifying particular skills (such as communication and social competence). While there are thus few fully-fledged methodologies, the examples shown are all available to the public and appear to be received with increasing interest.

While events in Austria have to date perhaps lagged behind developments in other European countries, the question of validating non-formal and informal learning is set to gain in importance in the next years. Actors currently involved in the debate note increasing interest in the issue from key stakeholders, the BMBWK is setting up a new task force on lifelong learning and a number of conferences on the topic are to be held in 2004 and 2005. A lively debate can thus be expected in the near future.

## 4.0 BELGIUM

By Simon Roy (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)

### 4.1 Introduction

The issue of validation of non-formal and informal learning is now well-established on the public policy agenda in Belgium, where initiatives have been developed in recent years in the context of a wider drive to improve access to Lifelong Learning. As with mainstream education, non-formal and informal learning falls under the responsibility of the French, Flemish and German-speaking Communities in Belgium. As such, the Belgian Federal government plays little role in the detailed development and implementation of policies in the field. The overview of developments set out in this report reflects this division of responsibility.

### 4.2 Existing Initiatives: Public sector

#### 4.2.1 Public Sector Initiatives at Federal Level

As noted in the introduction, responsibility for education and training policy in Belgium lies with the Communities (based on language) at sub-national level. However, as responsibility for social security and, to a large extent, taxation policy remains at national level, the federal government has a significant role in setting the framework for and financing certain initiatives in the field of lifelong learning.

Since 1985, provided certain basic conditions are met, private-sector employees have had a right to paid training leave (*Congé-Education Payé/ Betaald Educatief Verlof*) of up to 180 hours per academic year to undertake work-related training. The upper limit for remuneration for such training leave is currently fixed at €1 960 in a given year<sup>11</sup>. The training must be related to the individual's job and fulfill a number of other criteria set down by the relevant legislation. Public sector employees have a similar right to training leave, although subject to different rules and in their case referred to as *Congé Formation / Opleidingsverlof*.

#### 4.2.2 Public Sector Initiatives in the Flemish Community

The question of validation of non-formal and informal learning has become a significant policy issue in Flanders, where, as in the Netherlands, the concept is generally referred to under the heading of *Erkenning van Verworven Competenties* (Recognition of Acquired Competencies) or EVC. Policy in this field has been closely linked to the Flemish government's drive to develop an integrated approach to provision of lifelong learning, as set out in July 2000 in the Action Plan: *Een Leven Lang Leren in Goede Banen* (Lifelong Learning on the Right Track).

---

<sup>11</sup> For year 2003-04 – See <http://www.meta.fgov.be/ph/phb/frhb00.htm>

On the basis of the Action Plan, a working group was established to investigate the best means to implement EVC. This group included a team of academics<sup>12</sup>, representatives of the Flemish Departments for Education, Employment, Culture and Economics, along with the Flemish Employment and Training Service (VDAB)<sup>13</sup>, the SME support service (VIZO)<sup>14</sup>, the Flemish social partners and the “Economic and Social” and “Education” Councils<sup>15</sup>. The outcome was an advisory paper<sup>16</sup> containing a range of recommendations for operationalising the hitherto relatively vague concept of EVC. One of the recommendations that was immediately implemented, was to start with pilot projects that would build on prior experience with EVC.

In January 2003, the first five pilot projects were launched to test the principles set out in the advisory note. These pilot projects, addressing a range of different target groups, have been co-ordinated by the “EVC project group” within a newly established training organisation (DIVA<sup>17</sup>). This organisation and more recent developments are examined below, after a brief overview of the general approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning adopted in Dutch-speaking Belgium.

### *The Flemish Concept of Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning*

The stated aim of EVC in the Flemish Community is to help individuals to achieve personal development and increased integration into the labour market and society in general. Moreover, the Flemish model of EVC is designed to be of equal relevance to a wide range of target groups, including not only those in mainstream employment and job seekers, but also the self employed, unqualified school leavers, immigrants and others. The guiding principles of the approach are non-discrimination, equal opportunities and societal integration<sup>18</sup>.

The Flemish model of EVC has two aspects, as set out in the EVC advisory note<sup>19</sup>:

- 1. Recognition and transfer of competencies** (summative function): the formal recognition of an individual’s existing competencies, including those gained outside of formal education and training settings, is seen to have a significant “economic and social effect”,
- 

<sup>12</sup> Teams from the University of Antwerp and the HIVA as part of the VIONA Labour Market Research Partnership

<sup>13</sup> *Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding* <http://www.vdab.be/vdab/>

<sup>14</sup> *Vlaams Instituut voor het Zelfstandig Ondernemen*.

<sup>15</sup> Respectively the *Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen* (SERV) and the *Vlaamse Onderwijsraad* (VLOR)

<sup>16</sup> *Ruim Baan voor Competenties, Advies voor een Model van (H)erkenning van Verworven Competenties in Vlaanderen: Beleidsconcept en aanzetten tot Operationalisering*

<sup>17</sup> Dienst Informatie Vorming en Afstemming

<sup>18</sup> [http://edufora.vlaanderen.be/Projecten/EVC\\_Wat.html](http://edufora.vlaanderen.be/Projecten/EVC_Wat.html)

<sup>19</sup> *Ruim Baan voor Competenties 2002*

in that it facilitates access to education and training and mobility within the labour market. This summative function would also allow competence gained in a formal setting, but outside the formal Belgian education system (abroad, for example), to be more easily “converted” into recognised Belgian qualifications.<sup>20</sup>

2. **Career and Personal Guidance** (formative function): the ultimate aim of this formative aspect of EVC is a system of lifelong career path guidance<sup>21</sup>, which is accessible for all citizens. This is distinct from firm-based Human Resources Management or training plans (which may have a direct link with an individual’s terms and conditions of employment) and can be viewed as a personal “lifelong learning strategy”. Currently, any person can go to an officially accredited organisation for career and personal guidance. The challenge policy makers now face is to streamline these organisations and the organisations that will be accredited to assess people to certify their non-formal and informal learning.

In practical terms, EVC in Flanders comprises three main elements or stages<sup>22</sup>:

1. **Identification** (Herkenning): the recognition of non-formal and informal learning will often start through career advice, through which an initial “portfolio” of an individual’s competencies may be drawn up. This portfolio forms the basis for further advice and eventual recognition of competencies.
2. **Assessment** (Beoordeling): assessment of competencies can result from referral from the identification phase or from an individual’s own initiative. The assessment is based on professional standards set by the SERV<sup>23</sup> or fixed training standards and may entail written or practical tests, interviews and/or evidence of acquired skills (other certificates or examples of work etc.).
3. **Recognition** (Erkenning): the formal recognition of competencies (potentially in the form of a vocational certificate) can theoretically be undertaken by any organisation that satisfies official regulations.

#### 4.2.3 *Public Sector Initiatives in the French Community*

In French-speaking Belgium, debate about the validation of non-formal and informal learning has centred on the concept *validation des compétences*, within the framework of a *bilan de compétences* or individual record of achievement. A law on the *bilan de compétences* was passed in December 2001 and, following the approval of implementation legislation, officially entered into force in September 2002. This legislation grants every worker a right to

---

<sup>20</sup> There is an official institution in Flanders (as in other European countries) that recognises qualifications people have gained in other countries. EVC could potentially make the procedure easier and shorter.

<sup>21</sup> levensloopbaanbegeleiding

<sup>22</sup> From *Oproep tot het indienen van voorstellen voor Pilotprojecten Erkenning Verworven Competenties 2003*, MinVG

<sup>23</sup> *Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen*



a *bilan de compétences* and to be assessed to identify and validate skills gained outside the formal education system<sup>24</sup>.

Since this time, the policy has been developed by a “consortium” of the four most important public sector training providers in French-speaking Belgium:

- *Enseignement de Promotion Sociale* (Adult Education Provider in the ‘communauté française’ – i.e. Wallonia and Brussels-Capital Regions);
- The *Institut de Formation des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises* (Training Agency for the Self Employed and SMEs in the Communauté Française);
- FOREM (the Walloon Employment and Professional Training Service, equivalent to the Flemish VDAB) and;
- *Bruxelles Formation* (Public sector training agency in the Brussels-Capital region).

This consortium is responsible for the definition of common standards (*référentiels*) for use in the French-speaking part of the country and the establishment a network of validation centres that will carry out certification by provided *titres de compétences*. These certificates will not, on their own, be equivalent to standard diplomas, but are designed to facilitate access to further training courses and can be accumulated to obtain a qualification, if the sum of the individual *titres* satisfies appropriate criteria. The validation centres will be established training providers run by the consortium partners.

Policy developments on the validation of skills follow on from earlier restructuring in the adult education sector. Since the adoption of a new legal framework in 1991<sup>25</sup>, adult or continuing education (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) in the French Community has been progressively restructured to create a more coherent, modular structure with transferable credit units and more flexible timetables. For each module or “training unit/ *unité de formation*”, teaching and learning outcomes have been established, together with prerequisite levels of knowledge or experience for individuals wishing to undertake the course in question<sup>26</sup>.

#### *Objectives of Validation des Compétences*

The Consortium in charge of implementing the validation of skills policy has defined competency in terms of the set of measurable skills necessary to undertake certain tasks in a workplace situation. In other words, the system envisaged will be geared towards measuring skills of direct relevance to specific job profiles. The system will make use job profiles developed by the French ROME system and by the *Commission Communautaire des Professions et des Qualifications* (CCPQ) (see below).

---

<sup>24</sup> compétences « buissonnières »

<sup>25</sup> The Decree of 16 April 1991

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.enseignement.be/citoyens/annuaires/promsoc/propos.asp>

### *Current Situation*

Although the law on the bilan des compétences was due to enter into force towards the end of 2002, the need to develop appropriate validation and assessment structures meant that the system was not operationalised until the beginning of 2004. Even now, the websites of the main players (such as the Consortium partners) make little explicit reference to the validation of skills and it is not always clear to potential users whether the system is up and running.

## **4.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

### *4.3.1 Professional Profiles*

A number of initiatives in the field of professional skill profiling and accreditation have been undertaken in Belgium. Although these initiatives have been led by public sector organisations, they have involved close co-operation with representatives of the private sector and social partners.

- At the Federal level, accreditation of individuals is overseen by Belcert<sup>27</sup>, the body responsible for accrediting organisations that certify products, quality systems and individuals. Belcert uses ISO/IEC 17024 (former EN 45013) on certifying individuals as a reference and certification organisations have been accredited in a number of sectors, including construction and catering.
- In French-speaking Belgium, the *Commission Communautaire des Professions et des Qualifications* (CCPQ) has developed a set of qualification and training profiles (see: [http://www.enseignement.be/prof/info/documentation/profils\\_menu6.asp](http://www.enseignement.be/prof/info/documentation/profils_menu6.asp)), in close consultation with sector representatives and the unions. These profiles specify the competencies required for each professional profile, together with associated indicators. These profiles, together with the French system ROME, are being used as a basis for validation standards (*référentiels*) in the development of the new validation system<sup>28</sup>.

### *4.3.2 Activities within the Private Sector*

The role of skills or competencies in Human Resources Management has become a significant issue in many private sector organisations in Belgium. Research<sup>29</sup> has shown that many companies have undertaken analysis of the activities, roles and job and person specifications within their businesses, leading to the establishment of standards or *référentiels* related to specific jobs. These developments are generally used within businesses to feed into remuneration decisions (linking pay to skills), mobility within the firm and recruitment policies and requirements.

---

<sup>27</sup> [http://mineco.fgov.be/redir\\_new.asp?loc=/organization\\_market/accreditation/belcert/home\\_en.htm](http://mineco.fgov.be/redir_new.asp?loc=/organization_market/accreditation/belcert/home_en.htm)

<sup>28</sup> Le dispositif de validation des compétences : Aujourd'hui sur papier, en vigueur très bientôt! - [http://www.febisp.be/Menu\\_feBISP/services\\_F.html](http://www.febisp.be/Menu_feBISP/services_F.html)

<sup>29</sup> See for example: *La validation des compétences buissonnières, quels enjeux pour les entreprises?* - CRIFA

However, the range of models and the way they are implemented remains very varied and where validation procedures exist, these are generally not recognised outside the company or sector. In general, standards, which may or may not be validated in a formal manner, tend to be framed on the basis of a particular job description, rather than skills and personal development of the individual. This means that much firm-based validation of skills does not lead to “qualifications” that are recognised in the wider labour market. Indeed, one of the main objectives of the 2001 law on validation of skills was to provide a transparent framework for validation leading to commonly recognised standards and “transferable” skills.

Although, within the scope of this overview, it is not possible to examine individual private sector activities in the field of training and recognition of competencies in great detail, the following case study from one of Belgium’s largest manufacturing companies is included for illustrative purposes.

### ***Training and Skills Management in Cockerill Sambre***

Cockerill Sambre is a Wallonia-based steel making business, which, since 2002, has been part of the Arcelor Group, the world’s biggest steel maker. Group-wide restructuring means that Cockerill’s blast-furnace activities will end in 2009 and the workforce will be cut by 25%. As part of the restructuring plan, the company’s training department teamed up with researchers from the University of Liège (CRIFA<sup>30</sup>) to develop a methodology for transferring the knowledge and skills of workers leaving on early retirement to other workers within the firm. This project involved:

- identification of skills profiles and key individuals to act as “trainers”
- development of training techniques and tools
- validation of these tools and desired outcomes within the firm (training centre and Human Resources department)
- implementation of training plan

This is an interesting example of internal validation.

#### ***4.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector***

In Flanders, SoCiuS, the support service for social and cultural adult education, is an autonomous body with the objective of strengthening the social and cultural sector. One of its stated aims is to ensure that social and cultural organisations play an important role in lifelong learning and, to this end, it is a partner in the adult learning co-ordination organisation DIVA (*Dienst Informatie Vorming en Afstemming* – see above).

Together with a wide range of social and cultural groups, SoCiuS is developing a strategy and “reference framework” for lifelong and “life wide” learning from the perspective of the social-cultural adult education sector. As part of its role within DIVA, the organisation is in the process of producing a handbook and a basic training programme for the sector. For more information, see: <http://www.socius.be/modules/indexabout.php?id=111>

---

<sup>30</sup> Centre de Recherche sur l'Instrumentation, la Formation et l'Apprentissage

## **4.5 Stakeholders**

### **4.5.1 DIVA**

In response to the 2000 Lifelong Learning Action Plan and the Advisory Note on EVC, the Flemish government created a new body to bring together the main actors in the field of training and lifelong learning in Flanders. DIVA, the Training and Alignment Information Service, were responsible for overseeing the first round of five pilot projects in the field of EVC from January to December 2003 and is currently supervising a second round of four projects, which started in December 2003 and will finish in December 2004.

The projects were:

#### ***First Round***

- EVC in out of school childcare
- EVC in Teacher Training
- EVC for newcomers (immigrants). Measuring Competencies for Electronic Technicians and Maintenance Electricians
- Development, Testing and Evaluation of an EVC procedure for Tour Guides
- Skills for people with low qualification levels

#### ***Second Round***

- Language skills in French and English (see below)
- EVC for Nursing Staff (4<sup>th</sup> Grade)
- EVC for “volunteers”
- EVC for the hospitality sector

At the time of writing this report the remit of DIVA is under scrutiny and being revised. DIVA will have to concentrate on establishing closer cooperation between education and training providers. EVC activities will be stopped and transferred to a new organisation. It is, however, already clear that DIVA will not be the reference institution in Flanders for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The main actors will be the social partners especially when it comes to priorities and standard setting for the vocational certificates. From a lifelong learning perspective, other actors, from, for example, the fields of social or voluntary work will also have a vital role to play. However, at this point in time there is not yet a clear view as to what form this role will take.

***Case Study Project: assessing the competencies of childcare workers***

The VIVO project aims to identify and validate the competencies of childcare workers. Currently the majority of childcare workers who provide care for school children needing a place to stay before and after school hours have no qualification in childcare. This is because some 15 years ago an employment initiative was brought in allowing unqualified individuals into these services. The VIVO project aims both to assess the competencies of these workers to determine whether they need to enroll on a short training module, and, if appropriate, to certify their existing experience. This is important because a new quality act states that at least 50% of people working in these services have to possess a diploma of secondary schooling. Gaining the diploma or alternatively a vocational certificate after being assessed and referred under the VIVO project would mean that previously unqualified childcare workers are able to keep working in childcare (the vocational certificate could be recognized by the funding department as equal to the diploma).

In addition to the pilot projects listed above, DIVA has asked a research group from Gent University to conduct a study on the possibility of using a uniform portfolio format and methodology in order to align education and training providers: career guidance and counseling services; and assessment centres for vocational certificates. This should be to the benefit of the individual who is then able to use the same portfolio in all these organizations and routings. The research group has also produced recommendations on a common “platform” for learning portfolios and learning certificates (*Leerbewijzen*) and accompanying quality standards. The final report was submitted at the end of 2003 to DIVA which has made its own recommendations on the basis of the report to the Flemish government.

*4.5.2 The Flemish Ministry of Education, Training and Employment and Vocational certificates as a Public Authority Initiative in the Flemish Community*

The Flemish Minister of Education, Training and Employment has made it one of his priorities for 2005 to start implementing EVC by means of ‘vocational certificates’. The idea is to assess people according to the EVC principles. The standard for assessment and validation will be set by SERV (the Social and Economic Council) (see below) in cooperation with the social partners. After filling in a portfolio, candidates and their portfolio will be assessed using the SERV standard. The assessor will then advise the candidate on whether to return to guidance or to undergo training towards the vocational certificate. The Department of Employment will award the vocational certificate upon successful completion of the training.

*4.5.3 The Social and Economic Council: Occupational profiles*

In Flanders, SERV (Social and Economic Council) started to develop occupational profiles (or competence profiles) and occupational structures (i.e. classifications of core jobs and functions in industry and social services) some eight years ago. SERV works in close partnership with the social partners to validate the profiles and occupational structures. These profiles and occupational structures are used by the Department of Education to describe learning outcomes for initial technical and vocational education, by VDAB (the Flemish

Employment and Training Service) to update and validate the CO.BR.A-system (see below) (the CO.BR.A-files are actually based on a shorter version of the SERV-profiles), and VIZO to update their system of dual learning and their courses for young entrepreneurs. SERV's publications can be found on the website: [www.serv.be](http://www.serv.be), follow 'beroepsprofielen'.

#### 4.5.4 CO.BR.A

In Flanders, a professional profile classification system - CO.BR.A<sup>31</sup> - has been developed on the basis of the French system ROME<sup>32</sup>. COBRA contains 550 "professional cluster" profiles, where the basic requirements for each "cluster" or profile are the same. The professional profiles are structured on a sectoral basis and each profile is linked to a specific set of competencies (including knowledge, skills and attitudes). The system is used by the Flemish Employment and Training Service (VDAB), where it is used as an information resource alongside the service's vacancy and CV (Jobseekers) databases. See <http://www.vdab.be/cobra/default2.shtml> for more information.

#### 4.6 Conclusions

The importance of recognizing skills gained through non-formal and informal learning is very well established in Belgium and formal legal frameworks have been put in place in both the French and Dutch speaking parts of the country. The concept of validation adopted in both communities relates mainly to vocational skills (gained through informal learning) although it does allow for the recognition of skills gained outside work in, for example, voluntary activities. The scope of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal skills is not currently as broad as that set in place by the most recent French legislation on the *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*, in so far as it will not cover such a wide range of qualifications or form the basis for the award of full diplomas of qualifications.

As noted, the systems in both the French and Flemish Community are still being developed and implemented. As such, it will be important to monitor progress.

---

<sup>31</sup> Competenties en Beroepen Repertorium voor de Arbeidsmarkt

<sup>32</sup> Répertoire Opérationnel des Métiers et des Emplois

## **5.0 BULGARIA**

*By Dr. Anca Dumitrescu (University of Bucharest)*

### **5.1 Introduction**

Bulgaria has developed a national policy for lifelong learning which is now in the process of being implemented. This chapter intends to present issues surrounding Bulgaria's approach to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which is linked to those further developments on lifelong learning policies.

Bulgaria's long tradition of adult education mirrors that of its neighbours (such as Romania) and of other countries in the Balkan region and Western Europe. The 126-year history of the development of vocational education represents proof of the enduring and ever increasing demand for lifelong learning. In 1878 the first written legislative articles were in place to regulate education in the Principality of Bulgaria. Marin Drinov contributed much to the enlightenment of the Bulgarian population. Evening and Sunday schools for education and further education were opened for many Bulgarians who had only continued in formal education up to the end of primary school and for older adults without any formal education. The education law for trade and industry, which was enacted in 1924, divided all the country's vocational schools into secondary, practical and additional schools. The purpose of the latter group was to raise the education and qualification levels amongst employees in specific vocational sectors, who had not finished vocational or grammar schools.

The vocational education offered was linked to evening and Sunday courses run for a wide variety of learners, where lectures in the fields of agriculture, trade, craft and so on were held in order to improve general and specialised knowledge. "*Tschitalischta*" (meaning "*reading rooms*"), represent the traditional form of educational establishment in Bulgaria, which provide libraries and offer adult education in local settings across the country.

Education during the period 1944-1989 was characterised by its highly ideological orientation, central administration and weakness of education structures brought about by many reforms. This had an impact on the system for adult education, which was part of the mainstream educational system, as well as different education and qualification courses, which were not part of the educational system. In addition, there was a multiplicity of informal institutions that offered education in the form of courses, rounds and correspondence. The subject matter mainly centred on the improvement of the knowledge and proficiencies of workers in specific fields of work. Further education, as well as re-education was usually organised by factories according to changes in their workforce requirements necessitated by the economy. The Ministry of Education was responsible for overseeing further education and re-education. The Ministry of Labour, its branch ministries, and authorities were responsible for their organisation.

Since 1989 the education system in Bulgaria has undergone a process of reform aimed at achieving coherence with other educational systems, especially those in the EU countries. The Bulgarian authorities have made, and must continue to make, considerable efforts to

guarantee sustainable development of the education system with a view to providing valuable and competitive knowledge and skills to its population.

Within the context of post-1989 Bulgaria, numerous transformations and the new challenges posed by the EU accession criteria, the lifelong learning agenda (LLL) has developed slowly. The new legislative framework for adult training progressively emerged, dealing with: (1) labour market training for the unemployed; (2) continuing adult education as part of the formal education system, mainly in the form of involving schools in providing training for the unemployed; (3) promoting a more comprehensive approach to non-formal learning and tackling the quality issues and recognition of prior learning. This includes steps towards setting up national qualification frameworks.

## **5.2 Existing Initiatives**

The national policy on continuing education and training for adults aims at facilitating access to science and culture for all citizens, regardless of age, in order to enable them to adapt to the major changes occurring in the democratic society. Within the education system, lifelong learning (LLL) is regulated by the 1991 Law on National Education, in Article 4.1.: “Citizens shall be given the right to education. They can enhance continuously their education and qualification”.

The Employment Promotion Act of 2002 addressed explicitly “lifelong education programs and measures” providing for vocational education and training of the employed and the unemployed.

In Bulgaria lifelong learning is not dealt with by specific legislation, but by a range of general laws, as follows:

- Decree no.57 of the Council of Ministers on vocational training for the unemployed (1989 and amendments on the Relocation and Efficient Utilisation of Redundant Manpower);
- The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (1991);
- The National Education Act (1991; last amendment in 1998);
- The Labour Code (as amended in 1992);
- Rules of Procedure of the National System for Tripartite Cooperation Decree no.51 (1993);
- The Law on Higher Education (1995; 1999 amendment);
- The Law on Unemployed Protection and Employment Promotion (1997);
- The New Law on Vocational Education and Training (1999 and amendments);
- The Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus (1999; 2002 amendment)
- The Rules governing the Implementation of the Law on National Education;
- Government Ordinance no.3 on the System of Evaluation;
- Government Ordinance no.4 on the School Documentation;
- The National Report on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2001);
- The Employment Promotion Act (2002)
- The Bulgarian Lifelong Learning Progress Report (2003);



- The General Strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science on the Development within the next 5 years (2004).

The National Economic Development Plan (2002-2006) is a key strategic document for Bulgaria's commitment to changes in education and training, including lifelong learning. Among its six long-term priorities, priority 4 - "raising the quality of life adapting human resources to the economic conditions" is of strategic importance for the development of lifelong learning. This National Plan includes a special "Human Resources Development Operative Program" which has three main objectives: increasing employment rate by offering more flexible job opportunities; encouraging entrepreneurship; providing social and economic integration for groups who occupy an unequal position in the labour market (those with poor levels education, the Roma population, long-term unemployed, for example). At public authority level, a range of decisions and measures were taken especially by the Council of Ministers and the Branch Ministries to create specialized institutes or departments dealing with lifelong learning issues, including its validation.

The Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has been involved in discussions concerning the amendment of the Law of Higher Education (1995), so that it can ensure further coherence between the higher education system of Bulgaria and European trends in the field of access to quality training, possibilities for mobility (introduction of the ECTS) and transparency of acquired qualifications (introduction of the European Diploma Supplement) – key requirements for facilitating the process of mutual recognition of qualifications. In 2003-2004 an "Ordinance Adopting State Requirements for Acquiring Education through Distance Learning in the System of Higher Education" was prepared.

***Example of good practice:***

Some 50% of the study programs in LLL centres within universities are orientated towards increasing the ICT knowledge and skills of specialists within higher education, as well as for all participants attracted by the relevancy of the university lectures and the equipment available for use. The above mentioned Ordinance encourages active and purposeful provision for the acquisition of ICT skills as a means of educational communication.

Thus, *The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)*, a specialised body of the Council of Ministers, supports the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in specific aspects of VET implementation. The NAVET has a Managing Board, with a chairperson appointed by the Prime Minister and with representatives from MES, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), the Ministry of Health and social partners. The work of NAVET is supported by, at present, 13 expert commissions working in various occupational areas following the tri-partite principle.

The main functions of the NAVET are:

- To detail criteria and procedures for licensing and accreditation for approval by MES;
- To issue and remove licenses for vocational training centres and vocational guidance centres;

- To elaborate and propose the MES the list of vocations for vocational education;
- To develop standards for each vocation;
- To participate in the development of the state educational requirements for the documents of the Public Education System and the System for Certification of Vocational Education and Training;
- To assign, coordinate and implement scientific surveys in the field of VET and vocational counselling;
- To support the international recognition of the documents for VET and vocational counselling;
- To develop and update registers of the VET centres and centres for vocational guidance and counselling.

***Examples of good practice:***

- In May 2001 a general framework for the development of standards was prepared by the NAVET and approved by the MES, as was a list of 172 vocations for vocational education and training, based on ISCED 97 classifications. In addition there is the National Qualification System of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) for professional standards. The system was approved in 1996 and prepared in line with the International Standard Classification ISCO 88. Although ISCED and ISCO classifications have been interlinked through codes established by the NAVET, in practice there are difficulties with implementation. To improve this situation a working group has been established (MLOSP, NSI, MES, Employment Agency) charged with investigating how this implementation period could be shortened in order to provide adequate VET for the labour market.
- The PHARE project “BG 9506: “Vocational Education and Training - Research, Science and Technology” which started in 1996, had the main objective of improving quality in the national VET system. To this end, 18 standards were developed on a pilot basis and a modular approach was introduced in the VET system. A total of 33 pilot schools from 18 towns were involved in the project to implement the modular curriculum approach for vocational training in 18 vocations. After completion of the project, during the period 1999-2004 a total of 31 VET schools introduced the modular approach. In the school year, 2003-2004, 64 VET schools (288 classes and 7000 students) implemented the modular approach in Bulgaria. The number of teachers trained in the modular approach was 594 in 2004 (compared to 217 in 1999).
- The Ministry of Education and Science, jointly with the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Matters under the Council of Ministers, is implementing the PHARE project 2001 related to the educational integration of children from minority groups. This involves the training of teacher assistants (introduced in the 1st grade for helping children from minority groups) and the introduction of a teachers’ qualification for those working in a multiethnic environment.

*The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLOSP)* is responsible for training the employed and unemployed. The MLOSP develops the National Employment Plan (NEP) for

consultation with the MES, the Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health, and social partners, and for approval of the Council of Ministers. The NEP is the major financial instrument for the implementation of training initiatives.

*The National Employment Service (NES)* was the public institution responsible for employment of the labour force, with responsibility for providing vocational training for the unemployed.

***Example of good practice:***

- Under the “*Back to Work*” project, one of the priority target groups to be included in motivational and vocational training courses are unemployed women over 50 years of age. Under the “*Social Services in Return for New Work Places*” project, unemployed people over 50 are given the opportunity to attend courses on providing social services to disadvantaged people.

Since 2002, *The Employment Agency (EA)* has been the Executive Agency of Labour and Social Policy and replaced the National Employment Service (NES). From 2003 onwards, the EA has been responsible only for active labour market measures (including training), together with its nine regional – and 122 local - labour offices. According to the new law, the National Insurance Agency administrates and pays unemployment benefits.

*The National Council for Tri-partite Partnership* includes permanent committees on such issues as: labour legislation, social insurance regulations, incomes, living standards and training.

*The National Council for Employment Promotion*, established in 2002, advises on the implementation of employment policy and the National Employment Plan.

*The National Council for Vocational Qualification of the Work Force* coordinated the national policy and strategies for training and acquisition of vocational qualifications for employed and unemployed persons.

The *Pre-accession Funds, International Programs and Projects Department (PFIPP)* within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is an executive agency under the “Human Resources Development” priority of the NEDP. The main role of this Department is to organise, coordinate and manage the planning, programming, execution, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programs in the field of employment, social protection and equal opportunities, funded by EU pre-accession funds, as well as by other international and bilateral donors.

An example of good practice is the Research Project:

“*Evaluation of the Net Impact of the Active Labour Market Measures Programs, Active in the Labour Market in Bulgaria*” (2001). It points out that training is essential for obtaining and retaining a given job. This type of analysis can support the arguments for expansion of training under active labour market measures.

Through tripartite bodies at the national, regional and local level, the social partners take part in consultations on the development and implementation of the policy on VET and employment. A number of projects have been carried out in the labour market with the participation of social partners. Their effective involvement in validation initiatives is still rather low. Better activities have been organized in the ICT field during literacy campaigns for the adult population, and in the development of local and regional learning centres that bring learning closer to home, using schools or other institutions, linked to local partnerships involving key local actors. ICT developments are also the main reason for public-private partnerships.

***Examples of good practices:***

- Subject: *Development of vocational education and training standards.*
- Lead-up to the establishment of National Requirements for Vocational Training.
- The National Employment Service, with the MLSP, designed and proposed a methodology for the establishment of national requirements for vocational training. Experts representing various ministries, departments and employers' organisations were assigned to work out drafts for three occupations. The work followed a plan of action, prepared and approved by the participants. The products generated at the separate stages of the work were discussed and approved at specialist meetings. One of the participants on the employers' side at the national level is the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA).

When the draft national requirements were agreed, training was organised on an experimental basis by established training organisations with a view to check their practicability. The results were as follows:

- All three experiments were successfully completed and the first set of requirements is due to be applied on a broader basis.
  - Similar requirements will be worked out shortly for other occupations and specialities, with appropriate conditions for sector and branch being created gradually.
  - It is hoped that these actions will standardise content and conditions as well as assessment, recognition and documenting of job skills acquired. At the same time, the intention is to improve the quality of the vocational education and training process, the skill level of the labour force and the country's competitiveness within the labour market.
- Subject: Linking training institutions with enterprises.  
The Establishment of a Vocational Training Centre in Devnya background:

As a response to the need to upgrade the skills of workers at the Solvay Sodi Combined Works in Devnya, it was decided that a vocational training centre should be set up within the plant. The decision was related to the need to improve the organisation of training, to develop better and more efficient methods of financing and to achieve a higher quality of training in line with specific requirements.

Description:

A self-contained Centre for Vocational Training for the personnel of the Combined Works will be established. There are plans to provide opportunities for training geared to specific needs, which will be identified annually, through validation methods like observation. The occupations for which manpower will be trained are included in the official classification of occupations in the manufacturing sector. The types of training available are to include initial training, additional training and retraining. Training will be linked to production needs in terms of use of specialist equipment, product mix and structural, technical and organisational change. Representatives of all the 23 social partners – government institutions, employers, and trade unions – are involved in the work for this Centre's establishment.

Examples of good practice in European Projects in Bulgaria:

- *“The Role of Enterprises and Social Partners in Teachers’ and Trainers’ Professional Development”* (ETF Project D 37, 2004), represented a challenging opportunity for Bulgarian participants to learn theoretical and practical aspects of the teaching profession in the ongoing VET reform. The objective for the 3-year period of this project is to complete the “triangle approach” with the corners representing the three distinct institutions (university/TTT institution, VET school, enterprise) that together have the potential to develop the skills of the teaching profession.
- Bulgaria (together with Romania and 3 other countries in the Balkans) was one of the participants in ETF Project C 17+C32: “Peer Reviews of implementation of VET Policy” (2003-2004). The Foundation’s target was to improve local capacity to assess vocational training systems (including institution-based training, in-companies training, and retraining). ETF arranged learning opportunities for national stakeholders. Bulgarian learning opportunities included guidance on outlining national vocational training policy and regional cooperation.

Other projects involving social partners are:

- The nationally representative trade unions and employers have established vocational training centres to provide continuing training for unemployed and employed people. The Centre for Vocational Training at the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) has been licensed by the NAVET to provide vocational training.
- The Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA), which is another nationally representative employers’ organisation, also operates a Centre for Vocational Training. The “Podkrepa” Confederation has established a special unit for syndicate training – a Syndicate Development Confederation Department.

As pointed out in the article *“Social Partner Involvement in Lifelong Learning Examined”* (2005) published by the European Industrial Relations Observatory, in Bulgaria, social partners have got more involved in a range of activities and bodies for increasing the adaptability, employability and career development of workers, and in supporting the delivery of appropriate education and training.

***Example of good practice:***

Another successful project dealt with vocational qualification and focused on employment, social policy, and education. (BG 2003/004-937.05.03). Its overall objectives were: improving labour force mobility and competitiveness with a view to European labour market integration; strengthening the institutional capacity for management and further development of the quality of vocational education and training in Bulgaria.

The project target was to improve the conditions for the provision of quality training for acquiring vocational qualifications.

The project will contribute to the achievement of the following objectives:

“Free Movement of Persons”

- Continue to pursue alignment of mutual recognition of professional qualifications and diplomas and introduce required administrative structures, education and training programs

“Employment and Social Policy”

- Continue to support partners’ capacity-building efforts for their future role in elaborating and implementing EU employment and social policy, including the European Social Fund, and foster structured involvement of social partners, through autonomous bipartite social dialogue.
- Prepare a national strategy, including data collection, with a view to future participation in the European strategy on social inclusion.

Within individual companies there are stakeholders interested in developing validation methodologies. The importance of various LLL areas of training varies according to sector, company size and property type. Thus, in the public sector an increasing concern is the need for validation of foreign language skills; in the private sector, trade and marketing issues are of increasing importance, whereas in mixed property units the target is personal skills development.

As far as the third sector is concerned, various NGOs have developed promising initiatives for non-formal and informal learning programs. One such NGO is the network of the traditional Bulgarian culture and educational centres. At these centres, a range of activities take place, including language courses, music lessons and theatre schools, as well as some professional skills training. The Society for the Propagation of Knowledge is the largest non-profit-making Bulgarian adult education organisation.

There is additional provision for general, vocational and civil education within:

- **societies** such as “Znanie” (a society for the dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge), structures of the centre “Open Education”;
- **schools** such as “Europa” and “Faros”;

- **foundations** such as “Open Society”, “Potential”, “Development of the Civil Society”, “Incobra” and “Time”;
- **educational centres of trade unions** including Bulgarian Unions for Information Technologies, Bulgarian Chamber of Trade; and
- **private institutions** which mostly offer courses for foreign languages and computers.

The national resource centre for career guidance at the Human Resource Development Centre is investigating various possibilities for the implementation of the single European Transparency Framework (Europass). When the decision of the European Parliament and the EU Council concerning the creation of Europass comes into force on 1 Jan. 2005, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science will have to take a decision on the participation of Bulgaria in the implementation of Europass.

With the support of EU and NGOs, the government has set up ambitious strategies for social and economic inclusion. But these initiatives are very recent and they will need the strong support of the European Social Fund in addition to national funds and adequate institutional building before demonstrating effective results and impact.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

Post-1989 Bulgaria, in common with the other acceding and candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe, has primarily focused on economic and political issues. Its priority targets were the creation of a modern market economy based on the development of an efficient private sector, lower levels of regulation and less state interference in the economy. After decades of existence under totalitarian regimes, the Bulgarian educational system also had to undergo a general reform process to become compatible with the educational systems in the EU states. Bulgaria’s legislation related to LLL reflects a general commitment to universal access to education, training and retraining.

In this context of transitional changes, the lifelong learning concept has been partly embedded in Bulgarian VET / labour market reform (for example, improved access to education as well as to training of adults, and quality of education and training), but an integrated approach to this is needed. Reference can be made in this respect to the development of organised and systematic access to LLL jointly driven by the common support of enterprises and public policies. In Bulgaria (as in Romania and other ACCs), this issue has been lagging behind and is therefore still acknowledged as a key challenge.

But there are many examples of good initiatives for LLL validation that could be put into practice through considerable concerted efforts. This is due in some respects to the fact that the conditions under which Bulgaria has to develop its LLL policy are very different from those in the EU countries and the implementation process is often much harder. Such an example is:

- The Bulgarian vocational schools currently use the list of vocations for educations that applied in 1993. Experience from the EU member states and future ones shows that standards development (vocational and professional standards) takes time. To date in

Bulgaria the standards for 25 professions were completed and approved by the NAVET Management Board and approved by MES. These standards apply to both initial and continuing training. According to MES procedures, piloting of the finalized standards started in 2003 and was followed by the gradual development of new vocational curricula in accordance with the standards. The implementation of the new curricula started in 2004/2005 and the process may continue up to 2010 as implementation difficulties may occur. In Bulgaria implementation is based on laws and the respective documents are worked out by individual ministries (some of which only for internal use). Generally the documents do not include targets for implementation, in terms of people, measures, timing and money. This might reduce the impact of the reform process and hinder implementation under the National Employment Plan and PHARE.

This national chapter has attempted to present various validation initiatives and examples of good practice, which are worth reporting on, as they illustrate the process of reasoning and also the state of progress in this particular field in Bulgaria. Selection has been rather difficult, as some examples tackle the implementation of concrete policies, whereas others refer to projects still to be translated into concrete measures. References are also made to some European Projects run by ETF and CEDEFOP in order to transfer the LLL concept to partner countries and to help them translate it into policy actions. Thus, Bulgaria, in common with the other ACCs had an interesting working experience and gained useful benefits from participation in the ETF Project C 37: “Vocational Training Reforms in the Context of LLL”. ETF Project C 17 + C 32: “Peer Reviews on Implementation of VET Policy” arranged learning processes for national stakeholders, Bulgaria included, on outlining national vocational training policy and regional cooperation.

In 2005 ETF and CEDEFOP cooperation will focus on the 4 remaining candidate countries to EU (including Bulgaria) and the main added value will be to help the more effective preparation of these countries for their future integration in CEDEFOP, as well as their full participation in EU policies and networks. With these aims in mind ETF Project WP05-13-05: “Activities including Implementation of Cooperation Programs with CEDEFOP” addresses Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and Turkey.

The Bulgarian MES has been an active participant in the elaboration of the International Francophone Agency Project on VET development in the Central and Eastern European countries. The standards for acquiring professional qualifications and the pilot promotion of bi-lingual training by profession are under development. The expected results will be related to the recognition of professional qualifications in the European countries.

This positive Bulgarian contribution to LLL validation in Europe, the fact that further vocational education and re-education have been so far the only areas of adult education regulated by law and supported publicly, and of course different changes worked out for the validation of non-formal and in-formal learning are proof of today's modern development of a 126-year tradition of vocational education in Bulgaria.



Bulgaria is expected to join the EU in 2007 and LLL is one of the areas receiving special attention in the run-up. The obvious reason for this is that in the near future Bulgaria has to continue and better focus on important targets, such as:

- To reduce the imbalance between the formal and non-formal/informal components of LLL systems;
- To support non-formal and informal learning by social and managerial recognition, extension and diversification of learning provisions;
- To strengthen the coordination, links and pathways among formal, non-formal and informal learning by improving counselling and promoting cooperation among the different networks;
- To shorten the delay between decision making and practical implementation;
- To strive to achieve by different means better inter-ministerial coordination meant to encourage the shift from sectoral approaches to systemic, integrated reform covering LLL;
- To extend guidance and counselling services beyond the strictly vocational and educational dimension and include more social and citizenship aspects;
- To substantially develop the new funding mechanism and provide more training and education incentives within economic, social and regional programs.

Bulgaria is committed to support the complex development of LLL, which from a national perspective is seen as one of the major factors in improving employment and promoting “active citizenship” to achieve the targets of the Lisbon Economic and Social Strategy and the Copenhagen Declaration on Training and Education.

## **6.0 CYPRUS**

*By Anna Manoudi (ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.)*

### **6.1 Introduction**

The validation of non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus has a relatively high profile on the national policy agenda. Even though there are no national validation initiatives currently being implemented, there is ongoing discussion and research to enable the necessary institutions and systems for validation to be set up in the near future.

### **6.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public authorities**

#### **6.2.1 National**

The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) is the national body responsible for Human Resource development in Cyprus. The HRDA is a semi-governmental organisation governed by a tripartite Board of Directors, including representatives of the government, employers and trade unions. The Authority has been in operation since 1979 and its policies and financial support over the last 30 years stimulated a change in both attitudes towards training and the volume of training. The HRDA places emphasis on continuous assessment of labour market supply and demand; the formulation of strategies to meet the learning needs of individuals in employment and of those seeking employment; and listening to the needs of employers.

In relation to the validation of non-formal and informal learning a new law, which became effective on 1 November 1999, aimed to introduce standards for vocational qualifications and assigned the following responsibilities to the HRDA:

- 1) to define the standards for each professional category
- 2) to oversee examinations and
- 3) to issue certificates.

Implementation of the provisions within this law has not yet started. As a first step, the HRDA has commissioned a feasibility study which is being carried out at the moment and is expected to be completed in August 2004. The feasibility study is intended to establish what systems and structures the HRDA should put in place in order to undertake the validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning.

A pilot scheme for the design of occupational standards has taken place for 5 occupations. This scheme was modelled on the UK system of occupational standards and is competence-based, independently of where the knowledge came from.

Apart from the above, a number of EU-funded projects have enabled Cyprus to be involved in other multi-country pilot actions. For example, Cyprus is participating in a Leonardo project entitled "Diaplus", with the purpose of producing a European tool for life-long career

management, which will enable individuals to monitor their career. The Information and Communications Technology sector has been selected for the pilot implementation of the project. Partners from six countries are working to produce a tool that will give to an individual the opportunity to review his/her qualifications, personal and occupational profile, so as to set new goals and plan his/her development accordingly. The tool will seek to appraise all knowledge and skills the individual has gained and ensure the validity of all types of learning.

Significant ESF funds for the period 2004-2006 are also used to co-fund three projects that are indirectly related to the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The three ESF projects aim to train and improve the employability of persons from the following categories:

- 1) economically inactive women;
- 2) young secondary education graduates; and
- 3) unemployed persons.

The implementation of these projects will start in late 2004 and will be run by the local offices of the public employment service. All three projects will aim to provide an individual pathway to work for each beneficiary. In order to achieve this, the PES will seek to – informally- assess whatever knowledge the beneficiaries hold whether informal, non-formal or otherwise. There will be guidelines developed for the PES staff who will be involved in these projects on how to assess prior learning in order to choose the right level of training for each individual.

### **6.3 *Review of existing initiatives: Private sector***

As mentioned above, there is no national system for validation in Cyprus but this may be developed in the near future. The setting of standards at a sectoral level has started for 5 professions. This follows the basis of the UK system, reviewed below in the Inventory by John Konrad.

Apart from that, certain widely used European-wide methods such as the European Computer Driving Licence, are also available in Cyprus. The ECDL in particular is widely accepted.

### **6.4 *Stakeholders***

In terms of other stakeholders that are involved in the development of a future system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, it should be noted that tripartite co-operation is well developed in Cyprus. The debate on developing a validation system has been underway for the past three years. However, the social partners have also chosen to wait for the results of the feasibility study commissioned by the HRDA before resuming discussions on the issue.

## **6.5 Conclusions**

In conclusion, even though there is currently no national system or methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus, the debate in the area is lively. It concerns outlining national policy in this domain for the years 2005-2013.

Future plans in Cyprus are under development and will include the establishment of a comprehensive series of standards, and of the related procedures and mechanisms for the assessment and validation of competences. These prospects are the subject of a feasibility study to be completed in the coming months.

In general, HRDA, the main institution charged with establishing a framework for validation in Cyprus is in dialogue with other countries either directly or through EU-funded pilot projects. Future possibilities include setting up a new institution for accreditation

## **7.0 CZECH REPUBLIC**

*By Olga Strietska-Ilina (Independent Consultant)*

### **7.1 Introduction**

Validation of informal and non-formal learning is a new issue on the Czech policy agenda. At present there are no systemic provisions for identification, assessment and recognition of skills and competencies acquired through informal and non-formal learning or through work experience. Implementation of the system of validation is constrained at the policy and legislation level. The system of formal initial education and certification is not linked to continuing training and informal learning. There is a general lack of legislation on continuing training of the adult population. The absence of a comprehensive qualifications framework and the so far limited legal provision for modular training create further obstacles in implementation of the validation system.

At the same time many examples of good practice in both summative, and especially, formative validation of informal and non-formal learning exist at the level of individual initiatives supported by social partners, branch organisations, regional authorities and by the European Union on a project basis. The process therefore has so far been supply-driven. The public authorities, however, have started to place the issue of validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning on the policy agenda as a response to numerous private initiatives and projects, and to the policy pressure from the European Union.

Validation of informal and non-formal learning was brought onto the national policy agenda in 2001 in the framework of the consultation process on the *Memorandum of lifelong learning*. The discussion on Key Message 4 - *Valuing learning* came to the conclusion that the non-existence of a comprehensive legal framework in the field of continuing training is the most serious weakness of the system. The report which resulted from the consultation process recommended 'development and implementation of an open, continuously updated system of qualifications' as 'a major tool for the coherent, open and accessible system of lifelong learning'. It further advocated 'mechanisms for certification of the relevant qualification on the basis of recognition of competencies which may have been acquired even outside the formal system (informal learning) and to create a participative mechanism (involvement of social partners) for accreditation and evaluation of output qualifications'<sup>33</sup>.

Although no genuine progress has been achieved in this area since 2001, a number of important activities are under way. The period has been marked by acceptance of a number of important political documents in the field of employment and education.

In the sector of education *The national programme for the development of education in the Czech Republic (White paper, MoEYS 2001)* noted that the lack of mechanisms for

---

<sup>33</sup> Konzultační proces k Memorandu o celoživotním učení, Česká republika. Závěrečná zpráva (Consultation process on Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, Czech Republic. Final report), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports / National Observatory, National Training Fund, Prague 2001, p.5

systematic development of adult education and training hampers recognition of education outcomes, and so reduces access to adult education. Therefore, it suggests improvements to the certification of adult learning outcomes by means of obliging all training providers or certification bodies to add information expressing the scope and level of the completed education and to introduce a transparent comparison between Czech and foreign qualifications and certificates.

*The long-term development plan for education* (MoEYS, 2002) also noted the insufficient motivation to undertake/offer training from both the employer and individual perspective, and among other measures laid down:

- the development of the complex and flexible information and counselling system,
- a unified system of certification which would allow for partial certification and recognition of different forms of prior learning and work experience,
- a complex system of accreditation, certification and quality assurance in cooperation with the regional level,
- the development of modular training programmes in the IVET aimed at granting partial qualifications, improving permeability and integration of the IVET and CVT.

In the field of legislation, acceptance of the new School Act (more details in 2.1), did not introduce a major change with regard to validation of informal and non-formal learning, but has been a big step forward in the creation of a more flexible framework for education and training in the lifelong perspective. In order to progress further it is, however, very important to adopt a law on lifelong learning and continuing training, a law which is currently in preparation under the responsibility of MoEYS and in collaboration with other stakeholders (the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), the Government HRD Council, regions and social partners). It will address, in detail, the issue of recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal ways, and assure conditions for attaining formal qualifications by different forms of learning outside the system of formal education. The adoption of the law is planned for 2005<sup>34</sup>.

In the field of employment there are a number of useful documents and recommendations. *The national employment action plan for 2004-2006* stipulates broadening the offer in the framework of active employment policies of such training programmes which are linked to individual career diagnostics, counselling and guidance for change of occupation and career development (formative assessment). *The joint memorandum on social inclusion* (2003) includes plans for the creation of a system of validation of informal and non-formal learning, so that the adult population has a possibility to attain higher qualification levels. It proposes to develop, in cooperation with social partners, a system of recognition of work experience in certain economic sectors.

A new *Employment Act*<sup>35</sup> introduced on 1 October 2004 enriches methods and activities in the framework of employment services, provides more space for individual action plans which result from diagnostics, counselling and guidance and are linked to (re)training and

---

<sup>34</sup> Učitel'ské noviny, 37/2002, 01/2004

<sup>35</sup> No. [435/2004 Sb.](#)

employment. This should provide conditions for further development of the formative aspects of assessment of individual knowledge and competences within employment services departments and their partner organisations.

On the request of MoLSA the National Training Fund (NTF) elaborated a *National strategy for HRD*. Although the document did not touch upon the issue of validation of non-formal and informal learning, it brought important questions onto the political agenda. It states that the systems, mechanisms and specific incentives and conditions for non-formal and informal learning that are needed to encourage the continuous development of competences of individuals and businesses, are missing.<sup>36</sup> The strategy urges that a clear legal framework in the field of CVT has to be developed, and the responsibilities of various stakeholders need to be clarified<sup>37</sup>.

The strategy was endorsed by the Czech government in 2003<sup>38</sup>. The draft *Programme for the implementation of the strategy of human resources development for the Czech Republic* was first discussed at the meeting of the Government Council for HRD<sup>39</sup> in May 2004. It is to be further developed on the basis of comments and inputs from various stakeholders, and then to be resubmitted for approval. The draft version suggested the following measures and responsibilities with regard to validation of informal and non-formal learning:

To create a system of qualification recognition of informal and non-formal learning, in particular:

- develop a national system of qualifications,
- develop a national system for qualification recognition of competences attained through non-formal and informal learning (transparent with European systems such as APEL and others),
- introduce European tools for validation and recognition of training (ECDL, ECTS, Europass, etc.),
- determine in juridical terms the national system of qualifications and the system of recognition of competences;
- To create the national agency for standardisation of qualifications, evaluations and study programmes for ensuring quality of CVT’.

The draft material suggests that these tasks should be assigned to MoLSA in cooperation with MoEYS, social partners and professional associations<sup>40</sup>. This is the first document, as far as

---

<sup>36</sup> Strategy of human resources development for the Czech Republic, NTF, 2003, p.57. [www.vlada.cz/](http://www.vlada.cz/)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.28

<sup>38</sup> Government resolution No. 210/2003

<sup>39</sup> The Government Council for Human Resources Development (hereinafter “Council”) has been established by the Government Resolution No. 210/2003 as a standing advisory, initiative and co-ordinating body of the Government of the Czech Republic for the strategic management of human resources development. The Council’s main task is to initiate, co-ordinate and secure co-operation between and among central state administration authorities, local government bodies active in the area of human resources development, employers’ organisations, trade unions and other legal entities and natural persons operating in the field of human resources development. Government Council for Human Resources Development became a part of the Human Resources Development Department of the Czech Government by the Czech Government Decision No. 772 from 17th August 2004. <http://wtd.vlada.cz/vrk/vrk.htm>

<sup>40</sup> Programme for the implementation of the strategy of human resources development for the Czech Republic, Draft version of 25.5.2004. Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council 31 May 2004 published at <http://wtd.vlada.cz/vrk/vrk.htm>.

can be established, which attempts, although in a rather vague manner, to bring the question of the national system of validation of non-formal and informal learning to the point of implementation in policy and practice. It is still, however, dependent on the further development of the document and achievement of consensus on its provisions.

## **7.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public sector**

### *7.2.1 Systemic and legal provisions at the national level*

The phenomenon of Czech vocational education and training (VET) is the high degree of systematisation and regularity in the initial system of VET on the one hand and an entirely open, liberal and deregulated system of continuing vocational training (CVT) on the other hand. This characteristic has many important implications for the development of the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

Systematic validation of competences gained through informal and non-formal learning per se and of the competences acquired through work experience so far is non-existent in the Czech Republic. The value of competences and knowledge acquired in a ‘non-traditional’ manner (e.g. on-the-job, self-study, unintentional learning, through work experience, participation in conferences and trade fairs) can only serve as a certain benefit – subject to the judgement by a potential employer. The informal validation of such competences therefore often takes place in the labour market but with no record which can be used for our analysis.

The current system of recognition of qualifications and their certification may provide certain grounds on which validation of non-formal and informal learning can be built in the future, and therefore deserves a closer look.

### *7.2.2 Recognition of learning in the framework of initial vocational education and training*

The Czech system of vocational education and training (VET) and the related system of qualifications and their certification are very well developed for the initial VET (IVET)<sup>41</sup>. Initial VET (upper secondary level) enjoys prestige and high participation in the country. Over 80% of young people undergo a vocational training path as compared to general education (less than 20% correspondingly). IVET is a long-standing system and has recognition among the public and in the labour market.

At the same time the organisation and evaluation of learning give only limited flexibility for recognition of prior learning in IVET. Linear study programmes provide a limited opportunity for changing educational path or transferring to a different course during studies. The modular approach was developed and tested as part of the Phare programme VET Reform at the end of 1990s but its large-scale implementation was hindered by legislation, which defined a number

---

<sup>41</sup> The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) is in charge of IVET at the national level providing general policy, coordination, guidance and regulation. The administration of IVET schools, including their establishment/abolition and overall development of the school network at regional level, is the responsibility of regional governments. The Czech IVET system is school based, and the role of social partners in IVET is weak.



of classes per week and determined subject-focused assessment of students in the interval of one year or a semester. Another drawback was lack of provision for certification of partial completion of study programmes. The new Education Act (approved by the Parliament in June 2004 coming into force in 2005) stipulates that modular and subject-based organisation of studies at schools should be placed on equal footing.

The new school act defines conditions for recognition of the applicant's prior education in case of enrolment during the course of studies (e.g. transferring from one programme or school to another). School headteachers in both upper-secondary and higher vocational schools can recognise, using a relevant document or in an alternative way, completed studies; partial completion of studies can be recognised, if no more than 10 years have passed since the completion or if the relevant knowledge is proved on the basis of an examination specified by the headteacher. If the prior education is acknowledged, the headteacher frees the student from (part of) studies and assessment in the framework of the recognised studies. The new education act does not mention recognition of prior 'learning', 'competences' or 'knowledge' and uses recognition of 'education' as a primary concept. Therefore it can hardly serve as a tool for validation of informal or non-formal learning, although the decision is still at the discretion of the relevant school headteacher.

It is, however, important to note that the new School Act stipulates conditions for passing individual exams in the framework of continuing training of the adult population provided by secondary or higher vocational schools. Everybody who has attained at least compulsory education level (9 years), can pass individual exams of the final examination if the exam reflects the content and the scope of the relevant subject normally taught or corresponds to the exam normally performed in the school. The exam can be passed on the basis of application either to the Centre for Evaluation of Educational Results (CERMAT)<sup>42</sup> – in case of the application for passing an exam as part of Maturita examination managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) – or on the basis of application to the school headteacher – where the application for passing an exam as part of final examination (leading to the certificate of apprenticeship), Maturita examination or absolutorium (a final certificate of higher vocational schools), managed by the school<sup>43</sup>.

In the case of a practical exam from vocational training or vocational aspects of the final examination, it is normally necessary to undergo a certain number of hours of practical training.<sup>44</sup> For continuing training of adults the headteacher may, however, permit omitting part or all of the practical training, if the applicant can prove having the relevant practical

---

<sup>42</sup> CERMAT was set up on 1.1. 2004 as one of the divisions of the Institute for Information on Education by transforming the Centre for the Maturita Examination Reform. CERMAT plays an important role in the development of evaluation methodologies and procedures in the Czech Republic. Its main task is to develop instruments for external evaluation and interpretation of its results.

<sup>43</sup> The reform of Maturita examination (still under way) aims to provide for more objective assessment and for standardisation of requirements concerning general education, regardless of a vocational specialisation of the school. Maturita consists of two parts. The common part of the Maturita examination ensures uniformity of requirements. Its content, form and assessment criteria are set by the CERMAT. The profile part of Maturita tests the knowledge and skills in the subjects the school considers to be the most important in view of its specialisation. Its content and form are determined by the school headteacher.

<sup>44</sup> as determined by the framework curricula

experience (again no precise procedure is stipulated leaving the decision at the discretion of the headteacher).

Passing individual exams does not grant the full qualification but only a certificate of the individual exam. Theoretically the full qualification is possible to obtain avoiding actual studies in the secondary or higher vocational school this can be achieved by successfully passing individual exams in all subjects or other parts of study programmes (e.g. modules) in all school years along with passing the final examination, Maturita examination or absolutorium. Such legislative provision, although rather complex and thus far to be put into operation, creates real preconditions for validation of informal and non-formal learning.

The weak point in the IVET assessment system remains the fact that the decision on the recognition of prior learning mostly remains in hands of the school headteacher, whose choice depends on many factors. Also the final examination is not fully standardised and the outcomes of education often vary from one school type, or even school, to another. This is largely the result of the absence of an independent assessment system by an external examination and certification body. Social partners, although often involved in the final examination, have no rights whatsoever in the final decision when it comes to validation and recognition of prior learning.

### *7.2.3 Recognition of learning in the framework of higher education*

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was established in the majority of higher education institutions, namely public universities, as an instrument for international mobility of students. Although there is no legal provision obliging higher educational establishments to use the ECTS, all of them use this or some kind of ECTS-compatible credit systems<sup>45</sup>. The international transfer of credits was thus relatively widely accepted, even if there are still some problems with recognition. The national transfer of credits is also evident between higher education institutions/faculties/higher education study programmes of similar type. However, problems occur if there is a transfer of credits from different types of institutions/faculties/study programmes. Transfer (i.e. recognition of part of gained credits) is also more than exceptional between a higher vocational school (at least three years post-secondary) and a higher education institution even in the same field.

The number of institutions which have started using ECTS for accumulation of credits has been growing. Universities, especially technical ones, have introduced flexible pathways enabling students to modify their study plans within given limits but closer to their individual interests. The study programmes of non-university type higher education institutions are strict and leave only limited space for their students to adapt the study plans<sup>46</sup>.

Higher education institutions are thus in the forefront of adopting a credit approach to their study provision. But in the lifelong learning programmes (CVT) in this sector application of the credit approach is still at the very beginning.

---

<sup>45</sup> Realising the European Higher Education Area. National Report, Berlin summit 2003, p. 4-5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.5.

The 1998 Higher Education Act allows higher education institutions to provide lifelong learning programmes within the framework of their educational activity. The detailed conditions to which it is subject are stipulated in internal regulations of individual higher education institutions. Higher education institutions issue certificates to all those who graduate from lifelong learning programmes. Those who receive lifelong learning forms of provision are not students under the 1998 Act which means that they cannot be awarded any academic degree. However, Amendment No. 147/2001 to the Act enables lifelong learning programmes to be provided in accredited study programmes. If those who graduate from lifelong learning programmes of this kind become students under the Act, a higher education institution may recognise up to 60 % of the credits they have already obtained as a result of such provision.<sup>47</sup>

#### *7.2.4 Recognition of learning in the framework of continuing vocational education and training of the adult population*

Continuing training (including both formal and informal) has long suffered from a lack of legal provision and clearly defined institutional responsibilities. The only segments of adult learning which are covered by relevant legislation are ones of a formal type, i.e. completion of initial education by adults ('second chance' education), retraining courses organised through labour offices, and training for professions covered by specific acts or regulations. Assessment of competences and knowledge depends on the respective form of CVT.

CVT leading to formal qualification provided by institutions of initial education ('second chance' education) is considered to be equal to initial education and student assessment is identical (see 2.1). If the individual wishes to receive a formally recognised full qualification, normally he/she is expected to complete the full education course required by this level. Such courses are not adjusted to the requirements of the adult population, who are often engaged in other activities (employment, family) and thus lack free time and wish to receive/change/upgrade their qualification in order to immediately apply their acquired competences in their work.

If CVT is required by law for execution of specific professions, the relevant law also lays down specific qualification requirements, courses and the form of assessment for the sectoral state body and its agencies maintaining courses and examinations<sup>48</sup>.

From the point of accreditation of non-formal competences it is important both for businesses and individuals wishing to start up a business in certain trades and technical crafts that are regulated by special legislation<sup>49</sup> to fulfil certain qualification requirements<sup>50</sup>. Such requirements stipulate the level of education in the given – normally rather broadly defined – field of studies, and sometimes certain years of practical experience, where the higher the level of education, the less experience is required. It is however possible to satisfy the

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>48</sup> Kadlec, Miroslav et al. Accreditation of competences in the Czech Republic, 2002, p.8.

<sup>49</sup> e.g. Law No. 455/1991 as last amended Law No. 167/2004, sectoral regulations, etc.

<sup>50</sup> The regulation of businesses (legal entities – both companies and individuals) is under jurisdiction of the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

qualification requirements by providing proof of years of work experience alone (e.g. 6 years of experience in the given trade in case of businesses in the crafts sector requiring vocational competence, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, cosmetic services, photographers etc.<sup>51</sup>). Also the candidates, who do not have specific education in the field, have the possibility of passing a qualification exam for vocational competence in front of the exam commission in one of the educational institutions which are part of the network of education providers of the MoEYS and which normally run education in the relevant vocational field in the daytime courses<sup>52</sup>.

Retraining courses are provided on the basis of agreements between labour offices and job seekers and sometimes between labour offices and employers (and subsequently between employers and their employees) at a county level as one of measures of the State active employment policy<sup>53</sup>. All courses lead to nationally recognised certificates which can be issued only by those providers whose training is accredited by the Ministry of Education. Such accreditation is not required from secondary VET schools and universities in their capacity as State retraining centres, or in cases covered by special norms and regulations. Qualification and other admission requirements from applicants (e.g. length of practice) are defined by the training provider<sup>54</sup>. Here it is important that labour offices can secure an agreement with a job seeker who has started but not completed retraining in the preceding employment about completion of such retraining. The school headteacher can recognise the study courses completed by the applicant before retraining<sup>55</sup>. Retraining provided by vocational schools normally leads to the same qualifications and certificates as offered in initial VET.

Training provided by enterprises and training providers may, but does not have to, provide certificates at the end of the course. Nevertheless, many studies demonstrate that most training providers use some kind of certification and assessment mechanisms but these are not organised and recognised at the national level. Such certificates have no formal validity, although some have international, sectoral or corporate validity, and are often very well received by employers (e.g. ECDL, Microsoft training certificates).

Certification in the school system is not linked to the post-initial learning. The problem of inadequate recognition of certificates attained in CVT issued by enterprises or training providers remains. Such certificates do not have the same weight, and are therefore not seen as equivalent to certificates issued by the schools in the formal system of education.

---

<sup>51</sup> Law No. 455/1991

<sup>52</sup> Government notice 154/1996 as amended 235/2000.

<sup>53</sup> Government notice No. 21/1991 as amended 324/1992 Coll., MoLSA

<sup>54</sup> Rules for preparation of the application for entitlement to carry out retraining courses, MoEYS, 2000

<sup>55</sup> Directive No. 17 050/98-20, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA).

### *7.2.5 Recognition of vocational qualifications/prior learning in the Czech Republic from a perspective of mobility in Europe*

In the Czech Republic recognition of qualifications was based exclusively on ‘academic’ recognition, i.e. by the comparison of study programmes with the view of eventual examination to make up for the difference in the education system (see above). The professional recognition of qualifications by assessment of competences and knowledge of the candidate so far did not exist in the Czech Republic. This appeared as a barrier to the free movement of labour in the EU. Thus, a new law on recognition of vocational qualifications of EU citizens (No. 18/2004) was recently adopted in the Czech Republic in the framework of harmonisation of the Czech legislation with *acquis communautaire*. The law concerns recognition of qualifications of EU citizens who wish to work in regulated professions or trades on the territory of the Czech Republic<sup>56</sup>.

The law assigns the coordination function to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS). The recognition body is defined as the part of central administration which is concerned with the specific professions or trade (e.g. MoEYS for pedagogical professions, Ministry of Health for medical professions, Ministry of Industry and Trade in case of all business permissions for regulated trades, etc.).

The law stipulates compensation mechanisms for recognition of vocational qualifications attained in other EU states for the professions regulated in the Czech Republic allowing for one of the following options: proof of practical experience in the trade/profession, examination or adaptation period.<sup>57</sup>

When considering institutions that are significant in the provision of services in the field of recognition of diplomas gained abroad, the Czech National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) has to be mentioned. It has functioned as a regular member of the NARIC network since 1996, as a part of the Centre for Higher Education Studies. NARIC evaluates diplomas and other documentation on education gained abroad to enable, where possible, recognition of the education attained and provision of access to higher education in the Czech Republic, at the request of competent recognition authorities in the Czech Republic (e.g. Regional Education Authorities, MoYES, public universities<sup>58</sup>).

Czech NARIC is a member of informal networks of experts involved in development and linking of methods of the International Credential Evaluation (ICE) and Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR)<sup>59</sup>. The NARIC network has been responsible for the realisation of an enormous increase in types of available higher education programmes as well as of the necessity to facilitate mobility in lifelong learning. It has become clear that NARICs can no longer restrict themselves to dealing only with formal full-time study programmes and

---

<sup>56</sup> These are approximately 470 professions and trades according to the Czech legislation.  
<http://www.ipravnik.cz/clanky/spravni/uznavani030423.html>

<sup>57</sup> [http://portal.gov.cz/wps/portal/\\_s.155/701?kam=zakon&id=2175](http://portal.gov.cz/wps/portal/_s.155/701?kam=zakon&id=2175)

<sup>58</sup> [http://www.csvs.cz/\\_en/databases/naric/](http://www.csvs.cz/_en/databases/naric/)

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.nuffic.nl/ice-plar/>

now have to take into account all kinds of prior learning in their validation and recognition activities. ICE and PLAR have attempted to contribute to discussions within the NARIC (and ENIC) networks on the future role of the NARICs with regard to the recognition of non-formal learning and to gather information on national developments and initiatives on assessment and recognition of non-formal learning<sup>60</sup>. The Czech NARIC has become an important actor in gathering information and expertise on approaches, methods, and legislative and procedural issues regarding the validation and recognition of learning in the Czech Republic. Its expertise and experience could be used in the development of the future system of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

### *7.2.6 Other initiatives: National level*

The Czech Republic lacks a comprehensive qualifications framework that would include all levels of education and qualifications. The debate and some activities towards the creation of a coherent qualifications framework and a system of recognised qualifications are underway. The MoLSA supports the project *Development of a national system of qualifications*<sup>61</sup>. Its objective is to promote communication about qualifications between all players involved, and to link partial initiatives aimed at various aspects of qualifications (description, definition, development or acquisition).

The component of occupations is covered by the recently developed Integrated System of Type Positions (ISTP)<sup>62</sup>, which describes working activities performed in a specific job position, the required work experience, competences, personal characteristics and qualifications. It is expected that the system will form a foundation for the development of a national system of qualifications, which should create links between the requirements concerning training in various fields of IVET and CVT and labour market needs all the way to the requirements for specific occupations.

Following on from the Integrated System a new system of study fields has been proposed for the initial education sector. Each field is characterised by means of professional profile and, in the case of IVET, by means of framework curricula<sup>63</sup>.

So called professional profiles are being developed for IVET in co-operation with social partners. They describe qualifications which are seen as a recognised outcome of training. They serve as a basis for identification of professional competencies necessary for the performance of various occupations, and allow for their projection into VET programmes<sup>64</sup>.

---

<sup>60</sup> See for instance the recent report *Recognition of formal and non-formal qualifications Present situation in the Czech Republic* by Skuhrová, Š.

<sup>61</sup> *Rozvoj národní soustavy kvalifikací (Development of a national qualifications system)*. Prague: NITVE, 2003

<sup>62</sup> ISTP creation was funded by MoLSA and involved a wide spectrum of partner institutions, including the sector of education, and close collaboration with social partners. See more at [www.istp.cz](http://www.istp.cz)

<sup>63</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). *Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Czech Republic*, QCA Consortium, 2004, p. 35. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_Czech\\_Rep.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Czech_Rep.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* See also Kadlec, Miroslav. *Development of Professional Profiles*. NITVE, 2003

The three above mentioned components (ISTP, study fields and professional profiles) should be interlinked and further developed with the subsequent development of a comprehensive national system of qualifications which should cover both IVET and CVT. This could create preconditions for validation and recognition of outcomes of prior learning (formal, informal, non-formal) as well as make a major contribution towards the conceptualisation and standardisation of CVT by taking into account both requirements of the labour market and specific needs of adult population (e.g. adjusted shortened courses leading to recognised qualifications).

#### *7.2.7 Other initiatives: Sub-national level*

The State Employment Services have a network of labour offices at regional and sub-regional (county) level. Labour offices at sub-regional level have 77 Information and Guidance Centres (IGCs). Their aim is to provide information and guidance services to a wide-range of clientele (individuals and groups, young people and the adult population) assisting them in changing occupation, choice of educational or professional path. The centres represent a valuable foundation for the provision of formative validation of competences if all components of available information and methods are used in an integrated manner: individual career diagnostics tools, information on the local labour market; education, training and retraining offers; profiles and requirements of occupations and so on. IGCs' human resource capacity is however limited. Furthermore, some recent surveys among IGCs demonstrated that counsellors lack skills in the application of certain guidance tools and methods in their individual work with clients, in particular when it comes to 'balance diagnostics'<sup>65</sup>. Under these conditions the individual career diagnostics in IGCs become of secondary importance.

In response to the need for more comprehensive and efficient approaches in assessment of individual potential in the labour market, the MoLSA introduced Balance Diagnostic Centres (BDCs). Following a pilot stage, the network of BDCs was created in 2000<sup>66</sup>, which by 2003 comprised 2 methodical and 10 executive centres established at labour offices in the regions and 23 external sites endorsed by the State Employment Services of the MoLSA<sup>67</sup>. The network is open and may include new centres depending on the need. Their task is to assess the overall potential of an individual with the help of complex modern diagnostic methods with a view to recommending an optimal professional orientation and placement (*bilan de compétence*). The assessment takes into account opportunities in the regional labour market, the individual's interests, motivation, psychological characteristics and competences and comes up with an appropriate career development plan for the individual in the form of a final report. The BDCs do not provide a mere matching between job offers and job seekers but try to solve the individual situation of the client, which often includes the process of motivation for training, return to education or employment suggested in the final report. The report can

---

<sup>65</sup> Výzkum služeb kariérového poradenství a potřeb jeho klientů na základních a středních školách v ČR. Souhrnná zpráva (Analysis of career guidance services and needs of the clients at compulsory and secondary schools in the CR. Synthetic report), NITVE, 2003. [http://www.nuov.cz/casopisy/kapr/souhrnna\\_zprava](http://www.nuov.cz/casopisy/kapr/souhrnna_zprava)

<sup>66</sup> The system is implemented on the basis of the Government Decision No. 418/1999 and the subsequent Notification by the Director General of State Employment Services No. 3/2000.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

also be used by the client in the labour market, for example, as part of an application for employment. Being part of the network of labour offices and therefore naturally linked to retraining opportunities offered in the framework of active employment policy, these centres could become important instruments in the provision of formative validation of informal and non-formal learning. The potential of balance diagnostics however, may go far beyond its utilisation by the State Employment Services to a much wider use in the world of work<sup>68</sup>.

The programme Chance was developed in 1991. It assists clients of labour offices in their integration into society and the labour market. The programme was initially implemented in one district but has been very successful and now is widely applied in many districts across the country. The programme is based on an individual and comprehensive approach to the client. The clients – people above 15 years of age, many of whom have dropped out from schooling – take part in the programme on the basis of their own decision and the recommendation of the relevant labour office. The process includes three stages. As the clients are mostly individuals who have not been very successful in school and employment, their awareness of the need for self-fulfilment must be encouraged. After this stage career diagnostic testing is carried out<sup>69</sup>, whereby the client's personality is mapped and his/her professional orientation is identified. Then a one-month motivation course follows, during which the client's suitability for the chosen profession is tested in a working environment in his/her place of residence. This stage is finalised by assessment of the overall suitability of the client for the profession. This is followed by a retraining course or search for an alternative solution. Retraining courses are modularised and consist of both theory and practical training. Theoretical training is provided by *Republikove vzdělavaci centrum* (RVC) or other regional training centres. Practical training is organised in small and medium-sized companies in the client's place of residence, in line with the relevant curricula and agreements concluded between the company and RVC. Upon passing a final examination the participant obtains a certificate. Approximately 600 clients of labour offices are trained in 40 professions within the Chance programme each year. The resulting rate of success<sup>70</sup> in the labour market is high and hovers around 80%.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> This was also one of the conclusions in Král, Jiří et al. *Využití bilanční diagnostiky v ekonomické praxi. Metodická příručka pro lektora. Kurs pro personalisty (Bilans de competence in business practice. Methodological toolkit. Training course for personnel managers)*, DHV CR, 2003

<sup>69</sup> Career diagnostics is carried out with the support of COMDI computer diagnostics.

<sup>70</sup> Success rate is determined in terms of finding employment within one month of the course completion. Clients usually find employment in the enterprises where they underwent practical training.

<sup>71</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). *Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Czech Republic*, QCA Consortium, 2004. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_Czech\\_Rep.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Czech_Rep.pdf).

See also Široký, Vladimír. *Profesní diagnostika při KD Junior Chotěboř (Professional diagnostics at KD Junior Chotěboř)* <http://www.quido.cz/diagnos.htm>



A new and very promising project aimed at establishing multifunctional regional centres for human resource development and continuing vocational training targeted at a wide range of the adult population in the region (employees wishing to develop or upgrade their qualifications, the unemployed, inactive, disadvantaged, etc.). Two pilot regional centres in Vysočina and in Moravia-Silesia are being established<sup>72</sup>. There are plans to establish such centres in other regions too, utilizing existing training capacities. The centres will offer training courses leading to nationally recognized qualifications in the fields most needed in the region (working closely with social partners), with the specific methods and tools adapted to the needs of adult training. The centres will also provide counselling and guidance services, balance diagnostics and validation of competences attained from informal and non-formal learning<sup>73</sup>. Such centres could be a major step forward in the development of the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning, if the project implementation goes hand in hand with such changes in the legislation, which would allow for national credibility and recognition. It is unclear at the moment how counselling, training, validation and certification functions will be combined under one roof avoiding conflict of interest and how and which stakeholders, important for the legitimacy of the validation outcomes, will be involved.

The impetus for the development of validation of informal and non-formal learning at the regional level could be delivered by the recently created Regional HRD Councils as communal advisory bodies to the regional government. The councils aim at the maximisation of the human potential in regions for the promotion of competitiveness in line with the strategic objectives of the region. The councils are represented by all major stakeholders in employment and HRD in the region: regional government, employment services, social partners, training providers, schools, universities, counselling and guidance services. Such councils would be a natural partner for the definition of roles of stakeholders in identification, assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

### **7.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

Generally speaking the Czech labour market is rather liberal from the point of view of the required qualifications for the job performance. Except for the professions and trades which are covered by specific laws and regulations, the acceptance of a candidate for a job is a matter of their competences being recognised by the employer. Qualification requirements at the start-up of a new business are only a consideration for those activities and occupations which are covered by specific laws and regulations. According to various surveys among employers, the informal/key competences and skills (e.g. communication, leadership, team spirit) are often preferred over formal qualifications. Since the beginning of the transformation period, the Czech labour force has also demonstrated high levels of professional mobility, where about 38% have changed their occupation at least once<sup>74</sup>. This would not have been possible without recognition of informal and non-formal learning in the world of work. Therefore, prior learning and competences of the labour force in the Czech

---

<sup>72</sup> The project was prepared by the National Training Fund with the support of Phare programme.

<sup>73</sup> Palán, Zdeněk. Uvažuje se o tvorbě krajských center rozvoje lidských zdrojů. [HN.IHNED.CZ](http://HN.IHNED.CZ) 25. 8. 2003

<sup>74</sup> Czesana, Vera, Matouskova, Zdenka eds. Human Resources in the Czech Republic, NTF, 2003, p.125.

Republic are far more recognised in an informal way, rather than via an established national system of validation.

Having said that, it is important to note that the legal requirement for many trades and professions to possess certain qualifications in practice creates many problems for businesses and often is satisfied by the nominal employment of a person whose qualification meets the requirements<sup>75</sup>. As long as there is no accessible and flexible system of validation of prior learning, such a solution is much easier for an entrepreneur than entering education for the full qualification cycle or passing the comprehensive set of exams for the qualification.

Assessment of competences in the workplace is subject to the employers will and internal rules and procedures of the company, unless specifically regulated by the sector. The same is true for the assessment of knowledge and skills acquired in CVT courses provided by employers or in courses undertaken at the participant's will, which are subject to the employer's wishes, or subject to the procedures used by the training organization.

The prerequisite for formative competence and knowledge assessment in the workplace is the presence of a system of defined qualifications and competence requirements for each job position. According to an employers survey of 2003<sup>76</sup> the majority of enterprises and organisations have such provision (44% for all job positions and 46.3% for selected positions). The companies that have an elaborated system of qualification and competence definitions for all positions tend to be those with over 500 employees, with foreign capital or ownership and with the growing labour productivity. These are mostly in the sectors of finance and insurance, state and public administration, and transportation, storage, post and telecommunication.

Over 80% of employers assess competences of their personnel either regularly (51%) or in special circumstances (33%). Regular assessment is more typical for larger companies, those with foreign capital or ownership, and with the growing labour productivity. Again finance and insurance, and state and public administration are the sectors where regular assessment is more frequent.

Over 60% of Czech companies offer some sort of training (formal or non-formal) to their employees (on the top of legally binding courses). This is not only training leading to specific knowledge and skills (foreign languages, accounting, laws and regulations, IT) but often also training focused on non-formal competences (managerial and marketing skills, interpersonal communication, presentation skills). One third of these companies however do not assess training outcomes. Some 43% of companies ask training providers to submit assessment of the training results of participants. Approximately 15% of companies assess training results informally, e.g. based on work performance. Only a minor share of employers have an

---

<sup>75</sup> There is little official record of such practices but sometimes such situations are revealed by mass media, e.g. Lidové noviny (7.06.2002) give an example of a family-run bistro where a university graduate philosopher and a grammar school graduate successfully run the company for years but still have to employ (nominally only) a lady who possesses the certificate of a cook.

<sup>76</sup> Strietska-Ilina, Olga et al. Identification of skill shortages in the Czech labour market, NOET-NTF, 2003. See also the background report Survey of the labour force – Final report, Median 2003.

established system for assessment of training results (less than 2%), or use some specific assessment schemes (e.g. interviewing, examining or testing the training participant, assessment by the immediate supervisor etc.)<sup>77</sup>.

Many sectors have very elaborate systems of assessment, training and certification of qualifications. These are mostly industries that involve professions covered by specific laws and regulations, or those sectors where international qualifications and certificates play an important role.

For example, electrical engineering has a detailed system for the training and assessment of workers, including modular training leading to specific competences defined as standard requirements for the knowledge and competences of related professional activities<sup>78</sup>. The industry's approach to attestation of vocational competences is that its validity should be accomplished by verifiable continuous training. The Association of Education and Training in Energy and Electrical Engineering also developed a unified system of qualification examination with an international certification in the framework of a Leonardo da Vinci programme. The system has been implemented in practice in the Czech Republic<sup>79</sup>.

The Union of Accountants in the Czech Republic, which has voluntary organization status, aims to contribute to the improvement of the profession of accountants achieving standards comparable to the European Union countries. This goal has mainly been implemented through the system of certification. The system has been designed for the accountancy profession at large, i.e. it offers examination and certification as well as education and training from the lowest-skilled to the top tier of accountancy professions. The system predefines only the general level of education (e.g. complete upper secondary) for candidates for admission to courses and/or examination. It is however possible to apply for the procedure of validation and recognition of previous education, training and experience to the Council for Recognition of Education<sup>80</sup>, which decides whether the candidate can obtain a certificate or should pass the necessary exam. The system predefines compulsory practical experience, which is also possible to validate and recognize from previous experience before registration in the system, and regular participation in training courses for maintaining the certificate. The system was created on the basis of a project of the Union of Accountants, in cooperation with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants. The implementation of the system started in autumn 1997 and by 2002 it recorded 5,900 applicants, of which 2,136 obtained certificates.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Information system for electrotechnicians <http://www.in-el.cz/odbzpus/default.asp>

<sup>79</sup> <http://www2.wepark.cz/aev>

<sup>80</sup> The Council for Recognition of Education is an independent body represented by experts from the world of work, and from upper secondary and higher education. The body evaluates applications for recognition of previous learning and practical experience and decides about satisfaction of qualification requirements on the basis of the evaluation. The decision always derives from the requirements of the system of certification for accountancy professions, documents confirming education and experience of the applicant, school curricula and other materials. Additional documents for attestation, an interview or sitting a test can be requested from the applicant in case of uncertainty.

<sup>81</sup> [http://www.svaz-ucetnich.cz/predstaveni\\_en.htm](http://www.svaz-ucetnich.cz/predstaveni_en.htm); <http://www.komora-ucetnich.cz/>; <http://www.i-servis.cz/isu/>

A system of training in marketing in the Czech Republic has been in development since 1993 by the Czech Institute of Marketing<sup>82</sup> (CIMA) in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute of Marketing (NIMA). CIMA has been accredited by the MoEYS with the rights to issue a certificate of qualification after the completion of the training courses in marketing at three levels; A, B and C. CIMA organises examinations for certifying qualifications and skills of marketing experts and develops and provides further education and training in marketing. Twice a year CIMA organises independent exams of knowledge and competences in marketing under special examination regulations. The exam for CIMA-A-Sales is an open-type exam, i.e. the permission to pass examination is not subject to any entrance qualification requirements. The knowledge and competences required for examination are publicly available and it is the responsibility of an applicant to prepare for the exam. The exam for qualification CIMA-A is open for graduates of the CIMA-A course. Those who wish to pass the exam without participating in the course have to apply to CIMA and the decision on recognition of alternative methods of learning is up to the examination commission. CIMA-B is a next qualification step after the completion of CIMA-A and CIMA-B courses or with the recognition of alternative qualification in a similar manner. CIMA-B certificates are granted national recognition as the state exam and are also comparable across Europe. The emphasis of training and examination requirements is on the competences demanded for practical execution of the profession in the labour market. More than 5000 marketing professionals passed the first level educational programme CIMA-A, and about 1000 students passed the second level of CIMA-B<sup>83</sup>.

The Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic<sup>84</sup> has been very active in promoting the validation of competences and learning. In 1997 they established the Academy of Crafts and Services. The courses for Master Craftsman were developed along with the examinations and certification competence-based systems with the support of the Leonardo da Vinci project. By 2002 Master Craftsman courses in the following professions were prepared: heating plumber, weak-current electrical engineering, heavy-current electrical engineering, electrical engineering, telecommunications, washing/dry-cleaning, and a number of other courses were under preparation (carpenter, jeweller, clockmaker, floorlayer, cook, baker, hairdresser etc.).

The Economic Chamber focused on training and certification of specifically small and medium-sized enterprises' (SME) personnel, where activity fields are interlinked and require multiskilling. The courses were developed in a modular structure, starting from the basic skills certification up to the Master Craftsmen certification. The modular structure provides for the possibility of attending only those modules that are new to the participant. It is also possible that the applicant does not need training in any of the modules and could immediately proceed to the certification examination. Conditions of the examination are

---

<sup>82</sup> CIMA was created in 1992 as a non-profit organization by the decision of the Minister of Industry.

<sup>83</sup> <http://www.cima.cz>

<sup>84</sup> The Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic (ECCR) is an autonomous public self-governing institution representing and protecting the interests of its members – small, medium and large companies associated in regional chambers and trade associations. The Chamber's main task is to take an active part in the formation and improvement of the business environment and to defend and promote the interests of the business community in the Czech Republic. [www.komora.cz](http://www.komora.cz)

defined by the Authorized Trade Community (AŽS) and the office of the Economic Chamber. Candidates must have a certificate of apprenticeship in a particular profession and at least three years of practical experience in the field. The system assures the certification examination under the supervision of an independent and impartial certification body. The examination is pursued by a certificate which is authorized by the Czech Institute of Accreditation<sup>85</sup> according to the Czech norm ČSN EN 45013 of professional certification. The certification body issues an authorization, which is a base for the Master Craftsman Certificate, issued by the Economic Chamber. The certificate is valid for a determined duration, after which re-examination must be taken. This reinforces repeated learning and its recognition throughout professional life<sup>86</sup>.

The last decade of experience of the Economic Chamber showed that due to the lack of legislation on validation of informal and non-formal learning and the state ‘monopoly’ on the nationally recognised certificates, the project results were often impaired. The Economic Chamber does not have legal competences for granting nationally valid and recognised certificates. The motivation for individuals to pass the Master Craftsmen examination, not being part of the national system of recognition and not linked to the career development was low. As the result the Chamber does not provide the Master Craftsmen courses any longer<sup>87</sup>. Therefore, the situation in the legislation can actually harm future development of innovative and extremely useful projects, some examples of which mentioned above.

#### **7.4 Review of existing initiatives: Third sector**

Activities of the third sector with regard to development of informal and non-formal learning can be understood in a twofold way. First, actual activities (or rather emerging examples) in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning in the sector. Second, development and conceptualisation activities in this field provided by institutions representing the sector.

The first type of activity is so far very scarce. One promising example is the newly established Centre for Quality and Standards in Social Services (CEKAS).<sup>88</sup> The centre developed the system of quality assurance for social service providers (who mostly belong to the third sector) and the methodology for evaluation, including self-assessment. Among other criteria the system clearly lays down requirements for human resource management and development, including recruitment procedures and requirements, induction training,

---

<sup>85</sup>The Czech Accreditation Institute (CAI) is national accreditation body with a status of the public service organisation. It was established by the government of the Czech Republic. It provides services in conformity with legal regulations concerning accreditation. CAI accredits both state and private organisations in all fields of accreditation. The accreditation system is based on the position of the EC-defined Global Conception of Testing and Certification. CAI is to provide objective and independent proficiency testing, in conformity with the requirements of international standards and documents, in such areas as Certification bodies for certification of quality management systems and occupational health and safety management system (EN 45012) and Certification bodies for certification of personnel (EN ISO/IEC 17024). <http://www.cia.cz/>.

<sup>86</sup> Report on the situation in the field of training and certification in SMEs in partner countries: Synthetic report, Czech Republic. The Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic. <http://www.eurocertstaff.cz>

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Mrs Dana Moree, Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic

<sup>88</sup> The Centre has the status of non-governmental public benefit organization. It was established under the initiative of the National Training Fund (NTF) in 2003. The activities prior to 2003 had been developed by a team within the framework of NTF. <http://www.cekas.cz>

qualification and competence requirements for each job position, assessment of competences and validation of prior learning of employees, provision of training opportunities in various forms (formal and non-formal). The verification of qualification and competence requirements usually provides an option of recognising certain years of work experience for the specifically required qualification. The system was developed for several areas of provision of social services (e.g. guidance services, asylum seekers services, family and parental advice, counselling for drug addiction etc.). It can be used as an internal tool for quality assurance by service providers as well as for voluntary external assessment.

European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) has been implemented in the Czech Republic since 1999. The guarantor for quality of testing, accreditation of the test centres and issuing ECDL certificates is the Czech Society for Cybernetics and Informatics (CSCI) – a non-profit organisation. In order to publicise and develop the usage of ECDL in the Czech Republic, CSCI established a working group for the development of information literacy ECDL-CZ. So far 12,128 holders of the European Computer Skills Card are registered in the Czech Republic and 8,913 ECDL certificates of different levels were awarded on the basis of tests results<sup>89</sup>.

The second type of activities in the third sector should mention the work of the National Training Fund (NTF), some examples of which are already indicated above. NTF is a non-governmental public benefit organisation founded by the MoLSA for implementation of programmes and projects in the field of human resource development (HRD) and employment. NTF has been in charge of all major Phare programmes in this field, national support structures for Leonardo da Vinci, EQUAL and preparation for the European Social Fund. NTF was responsible for a recent project supported by the MoLSA *Education, research and development as key factors of the development of contemporary society training*.<sup>90</sup> One part of the project, implemented in collaboration with the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NITVE), dealt with the concrete steps in developing the system of CVT. Among others it came up with the number of proposals for recognition of CVT, including elaboration of a model for certification of competences in CVT.<sup>91</sup> In particular it suggests that development of professional profiles based on competences required in the labour market (linked to occupational profiles in the ISTP and to the framework study programmes) can lay the basis for recognised qualifications not only in the initial but also in continuing, non-formal, training. Direct involvement of social partners in the development of the profiles can increase credibility of qualifications. Qualifications in CVT are proposed to be constructed specifically in accordance with the job requirements. The objective here is understood as complementing, refreshing, upgrading, or changing initial vocational qualification. The document suggests the development of the system of validation of informal/non-formal learning and the credit transfer for vocational training, and gradually

---

<sup>89</sup> [http://www.ecdl.cz/aktualni\\_stav\\_testovani.php](http://www.ecdl.cz/aktualni_stav_testovani.php)

<sup>90</sup> Project 'Modern society and its change', 2003. The part on development of CVT system was prepared by the teams from NTF and NITVE.

<sup>91</sup> Palán, Zdeněk. Další vzdělávání v ČR před branami EU. (Continuing training in the Czech Republic at the entrance to the EU). Andragogika: selected papers, [http://www.daha.cz/andr\\_palan.html](http://www.daha.cz/andr_palan.html).

broaden the usage of modular training. These measures should increase access to and participation in training<sup>92</sup>.

The study carried out by the Counselling Centre for Integration (PPI) in the framework of a Leonardo da Vinci project was managed by DHV CR on the Czech side. The aim of the study was to assess the situation in the area of integration of women immigrants living long term in the Czech Republic into work and society and to analyse whether the society is able to identify, assess and recognise women immigrant's competences<sup>93</sup>. The survey was organised among 20 respondents – immigrants from various countries. The findings demonstrated that there is no system or national measures aimed at assessment of competences of immigrants in a formative manner linked to counselling and training systems. The only exception are courses of the Ministry of Interior provided to 'recognised' refugees<sup>94</sup>, nevertheless, without any regard to the initial qualifications and skills of participants. The study also demonstrated that largely the area is not one of concern for the civil society or for education and training. The problem is certainly linked to the lack of a rigorous immigration policy in the Czech Republic and to the current laws regulating residence, which defines employment among the conditions for residence permit or financial security of the applicant<sup>95</sup>. Such a situation is not sustainable in the long run, given the aging population and shortage of skills in certain occupations and fields.

## **7.5 Stakeholders**

State and public institutions under MoEYS and MoLSA are so far more active in this field, given the character of the applied policy research. Even the university research in this field is mostly ordered by one of state departments. For instance the research project of Prague University of Economics *Demand for education and employment of the Czech labour force linked to the integration to the economic and social structures of EU* was implemented within MoLSA's research programme *Modern society and its change*, part of which dealt with recognition of qualifications and informal/non-formal learning. The project maps the situation and offers some solutions based on the best European practice.

Another project in the framework of the same programme (MoLSA, *Modern society and its change*) is *Problems of labour market and employment policy* implemented by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA) in cooperation with the Masaryk University (School of Social Studies) and National Observatory of Employment and Training (part of NTF). The project also mapped the situation, criticised lack of mechanisms for recognition of informal and non-formal learning in the Czech Republic and recommended a focus on elaboration of the national system of qualifications, standardised and independent systems of

---

<sup>92</sup> Rozvoj národní soustavy kvalifikací, Strategicko-operační dokument. (Development of the national qualification system. Strategic/operational document.) NITVE, 2003

<sup>93</sup> The study was not concerned with the recognition of formal qualification as a primary issue but rather with the recognition of informal knowledge and competences, prior learning and experience.

<sup>94</sup> These are mostly those after asylum seeking procedure, which represent a minor part of real immigration to the country.

<sup>95</sup> Counselling Centre for Integration (PPI), Study on immigrant women in the Czech Republic, DHV CR Ltd., Prague 2001

assessment and certification which would cover both IVET, CVT and competences attained informally, particularly stressing close cooperation with social partners. Among important research projects which contributed to the provision of insight into validation of informal and non-formal learning in the Czech Republic are activities of the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (NITVE). The project *Self-evaluation* (Leonardo da Vinci programme) mapped the situation in the field of accreditation of competences in the Czech Republic (2002). The study *Evaluation and accreditation procedures of competencies analogical with the Starfish model* (2002) and subsequent empirical research analysed existing systemic and legal provisions as well as some activities aiming at the evaluation and accreditation of competences and tested the usefulness of the Star-fish self-evaluation model. The research demonstrated that the majority of respondents welcome self-evaluation tools along with consultation with specialists (formative evaluation), leading to some formal attestation (summative evaluation). The project contributed to the development of self-evaluation methods of informal competences with the view of their potential integration into formal and non-formal learning. It also identified main weaknesses of the current situation in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>96</sup>.

NITVE also works on the feasibility study of modularisation of existing courses with the system of credits in IVET linked to *bilan de competence* schemes and validation of informal and non-formal learning with the view of possible use of the results also in second-chance education and in CVT<sup>97</sup>. Furthermore, NITVE elaborated the first proposals for the comprehensive national qualification system<sup>98</sup>. In this respect the Czech Republic could benefit from the discussions and findings of the OECD project *The role of national qualification systems in promoting lifelong learning*.

NITVE also coordinated and/or participated in a number of European projects in the field of the role of social partners in definition of qualifications and professional profiles, transparency of vocational certificates and certificates supplement, standardisation of vocational examinations and many others. In the recent survey NITVE also attempted to monitor the participation in informal learning of the young population aged 20-29, which demonstrated that this type of learning is very important for this generation (and more important as compared to older people) for maintenance and upgrading of their qualifications directly linked to their professional life<sup>99</sup>.

Finally NITVE has submitted a project proposal aimed at the development of processes and pathways which are to increase the access of adults to further training through validation and recognition of their non-formal and informal learning. Among others the project should verify

---

<sup>96</sup> Jezberova, Romana. Summary – the solution of the project Self-evaluation. Czech Republic. NITVE, 2003

<sup>97</sup> Jezberova, Romana et al. Development of self-evaluation methods and its integration to formal and non-formal education, NITVE, 2003

<sup>98</sup> Rozvoj národní soustavy kvalifikací (Development of National Qualification System), Project MS7, NITVE component, 2003

<sup>99</sup> Burda, Vladimír at al. Přístup mladých lidí ke vzdělávání a jejich profesní uplatnění. (Access of young people to education and training, and their work participation). Project in the framework of the research programme supported by the MoEYS, Prague, NITVE, 2003.



and develop appropriate methodologies by using the best European practice<sup>100</sup>. According to the Minister of Education, NITVE was assigned preparation of the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>101</sup>.

## **7.6 Conclusions**

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is a new subject on the Czech policy agenda. The system of validation of competences attained through informal/non-formal learning and through work experience does not exist yet. The value of such competences can only serve as a benefit if recognised by actors in the labour market. Such recognition does not have a systematic character. Nevertheless, there are many initiatives at various levels that support development of aspects of the potential system, especially in particular sectors and regions. Such initiatives are particularly promising in development of formative aspects of validation, including those linked to counselling and guidance. The major trend therefore has been so far supply-driven, rather than initiated from the centre.

Lack of systems and legislative preconditions for validation of informal and non-formal learning further complicates the situation. There is no national qualification framework which would embrace outcomes of initial and continuing education and training. The legislation which codifies validity of modular training had been delayed for many years and the system of training based on modules and credits transferable between various paths and levels of initial and continuing education and training is still to be developed and accepted.

Finally, the absence of a legal framework and clear divisions of responsibilities in the field of CVT creates many obstacles to the development of validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning. It impedes the transfer of results of many innovative initiatives to the system level, their implementation to practice on a larger scale and damages the future initiative as such. Preparation and submission of new projects in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning might be therefore pending until the legislative framework is settled. It is an especially worrying fact given the release of ESF funds for the Czech Republic and the linked hope for large-scale project submissions that could push the system forward.

Certification in the school system is not linked to the post-initial learning. The state administration has a 'monopoly' on issuing nationally recognised certificates. The certificates attained in CVT issued by enterprises or training providers do not have the same weight, and therefore are not equivalent, to certificates issued by schools in the formal system of education. Participation in CVT itself is badly affected by the deficit in independent assessment and certification mechanisms for individuals.

In spite of the presence of many political and strategic documents that touch upon the issue of validation of informal and non-formal learning, which is a positive fact in itself, the overall national strategy on the issue is not very clear. The concrete steps for the implementation of

---

<sup>100</sup> Cihakova, Hana, project proposal

<sup>101</sup> Učitel'ské noviny, 01/2004, interview with the Minister of Education Petra Buzkova.

the proposals have not been designed yet. Many documents are contradictory in their proposals with regard to share of responsibilities and the role of various actors in the system. The Czech Republic still lacks a strategy for establishing the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning with clearly defined stakeholder responsibilities and implementation steps. Such strategy should assign a major role and responsibility to social partners in identification, validation and recognition of competences attained through informal/non-formal learning and work experience in a systematic way at national, sectoral or regional level.

## **8.0 DENMARK**

*By Annelise Hauch (Danish Ministry of Education), Prof. Erwin Seyfried (FHVR Berlin) and Manuel Souto Otero (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

### **8.1 Introduction**

Validation of non-formal and informal learning plays an important role in Denmark's education policy agenda. The Adult Education Reform (2001) strengthened the emphasis on competence-based and lifelong learning oriented systems (s. Danish Ministry of Education, 2002). The reform aimed at an approach to validation that meets the needs of the individual and enterprises. There has been an increasing focus on learning and developing skills outside the formal education system in Denmark (s. ASEM (2), p. 32; Danish Government, 2002). Therefore, better linking of formal, non-formal and informal learning was a goal of the 2001 reform initiative. Validation of non-formal and informal learning as part of this process opens up increasingly flexible pathways between formal education and training and workplace and institutional learning (s. ASEM (2), p. 32).

The present and future initiatives of the Danish Ministry of Education are aiming at promoting a more coherent and systematic practice of recognizing non-formal and informal learning together with formal learning for crediting in education and training (mainstream system as well as provision for adults).

A policy paper on validation of 'real competences' as a follow-up to the 2002 Better Education Action Plan by the coalition government was introduced in Parliament in November 2004. The policy paper "Recognition of prior learning within the education system" ("Anerkendelse af realkompetencer i uddannelserne") contains a set of principles for enhanced assessment and recognition of prior learning (i.e. formal, non-formal and informal), and plans for next steps:

- The individual citizen should be able to request an assessment of his or her prior learning based on the framework and regulations applicable within the individual areas of education
- The individual has a responsibility for contributing to the documentation of his/her prior learning.
- A user fee may be charged for a competence assessment, excepting the low skilled when a personal study plan is prepared for them.
- A competence assessment should always be based on the objectives and admission requirements of the education programme in question.
- The individual's competences should be recognised irrespective of where and how they were acquired, but without compromising the quality/standard of the education and training programmes.
- The methods used must ensure a reliable assessment, inspiring confidence in the outcome.
- The result of the assessment should be documented by issuing a certificate.

Recognition of prior learning after competence assessment may result in the following:

- Entrance qualifications for an education/training programme
- A shorter study plan ('credit' in an education programme)
- Documentation of competences/qualifications in relation to part of an education programme
- Recognition in relation to a full education programme, if possible.

In its parliamentary debate the policy paper met with general endorsement from all political parties. In 2005, all parts of the education and training sector, the social partners and the third sector were invited to take part in development initiatives and dialogue. The necessary legislative amendments are being and will continue to be prepared to implement the initiatives outlined in the paper. Development work has been initiated, including development of clarification (identification) and documentation schemes in working life as well as in the third sector (liberal adult education and civil society activities).

A crucial issue which the Danish Ministry of Education is currently examining is the need to look at the use of fiscal tools that can help regulate the prior learning assessment activity. Educational institutions, the Ministry argues, must have the proper financial incentives to recognise an applicant's prior learning including resulting reduction of study time on an individual basis. The taximeter principle (funding per student activity) works as a negative incentive in this respect because it encourages the institution to offer the 'whole package'. Existing arrangements operate with funding per individual competence assessment or per personal study plan.

On the whole, the Ministry will try to ensure that within the public budget available priority is awarded to those with the lowest level of education and training. Graduated user fees for competence assessment will be introduced, except for the low skilled when their objective is a personal study plan.

## **8.2 Existing initiatives**<sup>102</sup>

### *8.2.1 Public authorities*

The Danish experiences with validation of non- and informal learning are based mainly on the adult vocational training and vocational education and training schools (s. Danish Ministry of Education, interview May 12, 2004; The Danish University of Education, interview June 21, 2004). Yet important developments have recently occurred in other areas.

This section of the chapter presents an updated overview of existing arrangements on recognition of prior learning in the following areas: General upper secondary education, initial vocational education and training (VET), tertiary education, general adult education and vocationally oriented adult education.

### *8.2.2 General upper secondary education: A more flexible credit transfer system*

Within general upper secondary education, a new A Level reform in Denmark (taking effect from 2005) has introduced a credit transfer system based on an assessment of the individual student's prior learning. The objective is to give the students the opportunity to get credit transfers for previously completed studies, periods of stay abroad, etc. and therefore be granted admission to subjects at a higher level or extra optional subjects or – if the particular credit transfer is very substantial – a reduced A Level course.

### *8.2.3 Initial VET: Individual competence assessment as a general principle*

Following the Better Education Action Plan the government has amended the Initial VET legislation, taking effect from 1 August 2003, introducing a general principle of individual competence assessments as a basis for preparation of trainees' personal education plans. In order to manage highly individualised VET programmes, all trainees have to have a personal education plan drawn up. Together with a contact teacher (tutor), trainees draw up a personal education plan describing all their learning objectives and how to attain them. The personal education plan is based on an assessment of trainees' competences and outlines an individual pathway through the VET system. When the trainee starts practical training in an enterprise, the latter is also involved in the definition of the overall objectives for the training in cooperation with the trainee.

Flexible pathways (personal education plans) adapted to the trainee's actual ('real') competences may shorten education periods (exemptions), but they may also lead to longer education pathways adapted to individual needs, or to additions in order to enable the trainee to acquire additional qualifications.

---

<sup>102</sup> This section relies importantly on the information contained in the paper and a presentation from Annelise Hauch (Danish Ministry of Education) to the OECD in January 2006.

The national trade committee for a particular VET programme has the authority to decide on exemptions from programme requirements that exceed four weeks (exemptions of up to four weeks being within the authority of the college). The social partners are equally represented in the bipartite trade committees.

In connection with 2004 amendments of legislation, similar provisions of individual assessment of competences now apply at the institutions of social and health education.

Since 1992, following a Parliament resolution, all ministerial orders on initial VET programmes regulated that in Adult VET, students at least 25 years of age who can document relevant non-formal learning may get credits as part of a VET programme. In general, these former special arrangements are now being replaced by the general principle of individual competence assessment of trainees in the initial VET system. However, for specific reasons, some VET programmes expressly indicate special pathways for adults with prior learning.

#### *8.2.4 Tertiary Education: Admission*

Within tertiary education, the individual educational institutions may – as previously – grant admission to students on the basis of individual assessments of these applicants' qualifications when the applicants have actual qualifications that are comparable to the general formal admission requirements (exemption from formal requirements).

In June 2004, the Government decided to change the restricted admissions system for tertiary education with effect from summer 2007. The objective of the new admissions system is, firstly, to encourage and assist young people to complete their studies faster and minimize the time between completing their A Levels and continuing their studies at tertiary level, and secondly, to strengthen the course-specific qualifications of the successful applicants in order to reduce the drop-out rate. Two quota systems are in place.

Quota I, which is based on the results from the qualifying examination, will – with minor adjustments – continue to be the main admission route to the studies where admission is restricted.

Quota II has been changed. Quota II applies to certain selected studies and provides a small group of applicants with a further chance of admission after a reduction in the quotient of admission, including adjustment for any relevant course-specific skills enhancement. For all studies, this group permits admission of students following individual assessment and entrance examinations or similar.

The system clearly attaches importance to qualifications for studying but also provides opportunities for prior learning assessment with the aid of examinations, interviews, and other means.

### 8.2.5 *General Adult Education*

On the whole, practice in Preparatory Adult Education (literacy and numeracy courses) already lives up to the principles of the Government policy paper on Recognition of prior learning, especially through individual competence assessment for placement at suitable level and personalised study plan. The same may be said for General Adult Education at lower secondary level, although development and enhancement is called for.

### 8.2.6 *Vocationally oriented adult education and training*

#### *Adult Vocational Training ('AMU', CVT): Individual Competence Assessment and individual training plan*

Since 1997 Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) centres and technical and commercial Vocational Education and Training (VET) colleges have been offering individual competence assessment (ICA) for the identification of competences and referral to courses within the adult vocational training programmes (AMU). The goal is twofold: First, to establish individual training plans that identify the individual's prior formal and non-formal learning; second, to offer individual training in accordance with (since 2004) the participant's job competence profile as reference point, and drawing up an individual training plan referring to the adult vocational training courses and VET single subjects listed in a common competence description that match the participant's job/competence profile.

The target group consists of employed workers of all skill levels. The scheme may be used by an individual for further personal or career development or, more typically, by enterprises as part of a Human Resources Development plan. The Public Employment Service may buy adult vocational training courses according to the identified needs of unemployed workers.

In the Adult Vocational Training scheme, ICA may be said to fall into the category of formative assessment approaches in which the validation process helps the student to fill in the knowledge and skills gaps on the way to meeting a job competence profile since the purpose of the ICA is to assess prior learning of the student and linking it to institutional learning which results in a personalised study and training period at the adult vocational training institution. However the ICA may also result in the recognition of prior learning, giving a right to credit transfer into initial VET, and therefore may be said to be summative in this respect.

The ICA operates at two levels. At the individual level, the ICA starting point is the individual's personal ideas and professional and educational aspirations. At the enterprise level, the competence analysis focuses on the qualification needs of the company.

During the ICA the participant's prior learning is assessed by different methods (s. Danish Ministry of Education, 2002):

- Interview, to establish personal ideas and priorities
- Interview, to assess and recognize prior work experience and formal learning relevant to the present situation
- Tests, written and/or oral
- Practical exercises
- Simulation

The training plan based on the assessment of the individuals' prior learning covers technical, general and personal areas.

The vocational training committees according to the legislation on Adult Vocational Training, in which the social partners are equally represented, do not play any part in individual competence assessment.

*Basic Adult Education Scheme: Individual competence assessment, Recognition of prior learning and individual study plan*

The Adult Education Reform (2001) introduced the Basic Adult Education Scheme ('GVU'). This scheme aims at introducing a new, coherent and flexible way for low skilled adults to have their formal, non-formal and informal learning assessed and recognised with a view to acquiring formal VET qualifications while retaining their work.

VET colleges offer a one-stop individual competence assessment and recognition of the student's prior learning. This forms the starting point for an individual study and training plan which allows for part-time study in a single subject structure qualifying for a VET diploma, without the practical training part and therefore without an apprenticeship contract with an enterprise. The target group consists of part-time students who want to combine the study with continued employment (s. Danish Ministry of Education 2002). The admission criteria are threefold: 25 years of age, minimum two years of relevant work experience, and qualifications corresponding to compulsory school exit level in relevant subjects.

The Basic Adult Education Scheme is a summative approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning. It enables the student to close the knowledge gaps on the way to mastery (diploma identical to a VET diploma).

The reference points for the individual competence assessment (ICA) are the targets of the corresponding VET programme. These targets are indicated either in an annexe to the regulation of each VET programme or in attached guidelines. The assessment is part of the formal VET systems. ICA includes the two years of relevant work experience, which are admission requirements for the desired education programme, and should contribute towards exemption for the practical training part. For ICA methods, see above under Adult Vocational Training.



The personal study plan drawn up by one college on the basis of individual competence assessment is binding for other colleges that provide the same programme.

In contrast to initial VET, the national trade committees - in which the social partners are equally represented - do not take part in the individual assessment and recognition of practical competences in a Basic Adult Education programme. The college informs the relevant trade committee on the individual study and training plans that it has drawn up for participants. The trade committee has the right to advise the school on future practice.

Individual Competence Assessment (ICA) in the Basic Adult Education programme and ICA in the CVT programme (see above) are to be merged into a joint concept.

*Advanced levels of the Adult Education System: Work experience as part of admission requirements, study in interplay with work experience*

The Adult Education System as part of the Adult Education Reform (2001) also introduced a new framework for further education at tertiary level.

The reform of the Adult Education System aims at better connecting formal education and non-formal learning at work. This promotes the goal of further education at advanced levels to develop progression in professional competence rather than the progression in study competence, which is dominant in the mainstream higher education programmes (s. Danish Ministry of Education, 2002).

The Adult Education Reform (2001) introduced relevant work experience as part of the entrance requirements for the Adult Education System. Although validation of non-formal and informal learning is not recognized as part of the education programme at this level, the (shorter) duration and the organization of the content and teaching methods of the continued education programmes is to a high degree based on the life and work experience of the adults. Especially in connection with the final student's project there is interplay between theory and the adult's prior non-formal and informal learning acquired through work and life experience. In accordance with the Act on Open Education (which governs provision and financing of vocationally oriented adult education and training), the target group of the study programme are individuals that are working.

The admission criteria for this programme are twofold: Relevant educational background and two years of relevant work experience are required. The educational institution assesses the relevance of the work experience in two dimensions: relevance in relation to the previous educational background and relevance in relation to the desired further education programme.

In the context of implementation of the 2004 Government Policy Paper on Recognition of Prior Learning in the Education system, the following legal amendments are foreseen for the advanced levels of the Adult Education System to bring it in harmony with the principles of the paper:

- The introduction of general access for applicants who do not have the formal qualifications to have their corresponding prior learning assessed and recognized
- The shortening of courses in the ordinary programmes on the basis of recognition of non-formal competences
- The possibility of having certificates or diplomas issued exclusively on the basis of recognition of non-formal competences.

#### *8.2.7 Regional initiatives*

Two projects have been initiated on the regional level: First, a consortium of vocational schools in the Århus area, together with the Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers, is working on validation of prior learning. Second, an adult education and training centre on the island of Fyn is a good practice example for accreditation of prior learning and innovative ways of meeting the needs of people who have little or bad experiences with schooling.

#### *8.2.8 Industry initiatives*

The largest Danish Telecom company TDC assigned a private company, Ordkløveriet, to develop basic training for their dyslectic employees. Ordkløveriet introduced validation of informal learning in their 11 day basic training courses. In the first two days of the course, an elaborate testing system (developed by Ordkløveriet and approved by the National Education Board in Denmark) was used to find out about the status of the participants competences in reading and writing. The system consists of various tasks of reading and writing developed by Ordkløveriet, complemented by testing tools from outside specialists and individual 30 min interviews to find out about the learning needs and preferences of each participant.

The method falls into the category of formative validation approaches. It aims at tailor making the following nine day courses on the basis of the recognized non-formal and informal learning results of the first two days. At the end of the basic training the participants are tested via a questionnaire on their achievements during the course. So far two trial and three follow up courses with 15 participants each have taken place between November 2001 and spring 2003. More courses for TDS and for other companies in Denmark are planned.

It is important to mention that, in the context of the implementation of the Government Policy Paper on Recognition of Prior Learning in the Education System, the individual should have a responsibility for contributing to the documentation of his or her competences. Thus, methods and tools that the individual may use to describe and document his or her prior learning are of great importance for the assessment and recognition vis-à-vis the education system. It may also benefit the individual on the labour market, e.g. in connection with job-seeking, or in his or her present job, just as it may support competence development in the enterprise.

There are already a variety of tools developed by companies, organisations related to the labour market and others, as well as a number of tools for job seeking. However, clarification (identification) and documentation tools in the form of a portfolio in order to ensure the best

possible interaction between people's work and leisure pursuits – and the competence assessment vis-à-vis the education system - need to be developed further.

The Ministry of Education is presently developing such tools in cooperation with on the one hand, the social partners and on the other hand, stakeholders in the 'third sector' (liberal adult education organisations and voluntary organisations etc.). These development projects should be completed by autumn 2006.

#### *8.2.9 Third sector initiatives*

There is little information in English on recognition of prior learning initiatives in the third sector available, although there are a number of interesting initiatives in place in relation to validation of non-formal and informal learning in the third sector in Denmark.

The day high school sector has done a project with developing the portfolio method together with the Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers. However, no documentation in English or interview partner have been available for further information. It is documented in Danish on <http://www.daghojskoler.dk/> (link: portfolio & realkompetence).

New projects in the third sector are being developed. Seminars with scientific consultants have already taken place. Among the NGOs who have initiated development projects are: NetOp (Netværk for Oplysning) in cooperation with LOF (Liberalt Oplysnings Forbund), both adult education associations, and DUF (Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd), which is the Danish Youth Council. Information in English on these particular projects can be found on the website of the Nordic Network for Adult Learning: [www.nordvux.net/object/5982/validationobject.htm](http://www.nordvux.net/object/5982/validationobject.htm), and [www.nordvux.net/object/5981/validationobject.htm](http://www.nordvux.net/object/5981/validationobject.htm), respectively.

The "Danish Adult Education Association", which is a non-profit umbrella association for the liberal adult education associations and other associations within the "Folkeoplysning", has also had, for some years now, a "Realkompetenceforum": This is a forum for input, mutual learning and coordinating ongoing work in its member organisations. The Board of the Forum makes, and is responsible for, all political decisions on "Realkompetence" (Prior Learning including Non-formal and Informal) in liberal adult education. Links to ongoing projects are to be found on <http://www.dfs.dk/aktiviteter/realkompetencer/rkprojekterimedlemsorg>. An English description of the Forum itself can be seen on <http://www.nordvux.net/object/5983/validationobject.htm>.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

The Danish Government is taking the validation system further by going beyond recognizing formal and non-formal learning within the framework of the Adult Education System. A change of perspective towards the needs of the individual and enterprises is under way. National education policy also aims at a more coherent and systematic practice of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

There are some initiatives in the private and third sector. However, they are in the developing stage so that little information is available at this point. It is too early to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the various Danish validation initiatives since there is too little information on the results and no evaluations available at this point.

Denmark does not have a tradition of evaluation. It is more – as one employee of the Danish Ministry of Education has put it - “a tradition of trust”. In the context of the unexpectedly negative Pisa study results for Denmark, the topic of evaluation is gaining more and more importance which might also cover the validation initiatives on non-formal and informal learning.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Literature:**

*Danish Ministry of Education:*

Recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning in CVT, VET and other adult education programmes in Denmark. Fact sheet, June 2002:

[http://us.uvm.dk/videre/voksenuddannelse\\_dk/recognition.htm?menuid=350535](http://us.uvm.dk/videre/voksenuddannelse_dk/recognition.htm?menuid=350535)

*Danish Government:*

Better Education. Action Plan, June 2002:

<http://pub.uvm.dk/2002/better1/>

*ASEM Lifelong Learning Initiative:*

Thematic Report 2: Integrated Approaches in Lifelong Learning and Recognition of Prior Learning. Working Group 2, September 2002:

[http://www.uvm.dk/asem/reports/asem\\_thematic\\_report\\_2.pdf](http://www.uvm.dk/asem/reports/asem_thematic_report_2.pdf)

*Danish Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs:*

Recognition of Prior Learning within the education system. Danish Government policy paper presented to the Parliament, November 2004:

<http://pub.uvm.dk/2005/priorlearning/recognition.pdf>

### **Phone and email interviews:**

Aalborg University, Centre for Interdisciplinary Study of Learning, April 26, 2004.

Aarhus Technical College, July 6, 2004.

Confederation of Danish Industries, May 3, 2004.

Danish Council for Adult Education, April 28, 2004.

Danish Federation of Trade Unions, April 30, 2004.

Danish Industries April 23, 2004.

Danish Ministry of Education, May 12, 2004.

Danish Ministry of Education June 24, 2004.

Danish University of Education, April 28 & 30, May 3 and June 21, 2004.

Ordkloeveriet, July 7, 2004.

Roskilde University, Department of Educational Research, April 27, 2004.

VUC FYN Glamsbjerg, Adult Education and Training Centre, August 6, 2004.

Workers' Education Association, April 30, 2004.

## **9.0 ESTONIA**

*By Aili Saluveer (University of Tartu)*

### **9.1 Introduction**

Estonia is in the midst of a major transition process involving all sectors: policy, education, the labour market and third sector. The developments of the first decade following the restoration of independence have received considerable support from international cooperation: Estonia has joined the Bologna and Sorbonne conventions establishing a European Higher Education Area as well as the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region and has adopted the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act.

Since 1992, Estonia has made constant progress in the gradual establishment and improvement of the education system and related legislation. The legal framework was built up concurrently with changes in the subject matter, including the perceived need to take account of non-formal and informal learning. The Universities Act and Applied Higher Education Institutions Act now allows for accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL) in HE curricula. Universities and higher education institutions are working out their internal regulations for implementing APEL, collecting useful information and trying to implement suitable best practice. There are not many activities in vocational education, but providers need to start preparing curricula and training programs according to the professional standards.

In the rapidly changing job market one could follow two slightly opposite trends: on the one hand, great attention to official qualifications in some situations, on the other hand, valuing work experience more than a university degree. Requirements for professional qualifications are worked out for many professions.

In the national policy agenda one can notice remarkable trends and discussions between universities, other educational institutions, the Ministry of Education, NGOs and employers in conferences and forums as well as in specific workgroups about accreditation of prior and experiential learning.

### **9.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

#### **9.2.1 *Increasing need for validation initiatives***

There have been big changes taking place in Estonian educational policy in recent years. Starting the reform of higher education according to the principles of Bologna Declaration in 2001, Estonian Universities recognized the need for accreditation of prior formal learning. Being the second reform during the last ten years, it brought along many new qualifications that differed from the previous ones both in purpose and length of study. However, this is just one of the aspects promoting new discussion around accreditation of prior learning and also of work experience.

Together with curriculum reform, there was also reform of HE institutions. Many previous vocational non-HE institutions were reformed to vocationally oriented HE institutions, which then created the need for transfer of studies between different levels of education.

During the last fifteen years the education system and curricula have become much more open, giving greater opportunity to take into account learning that is not exactly connected to the field of studies concerned. Educational institutions in different areas are interested in valuing prior learning and work experience and are implementing the system and procedures for APEL. During the last six years the number of students in Estonian universities has doubled to 60,000.

Within this context, the University of Tartu initiated its APEL system in 2001. In June 2002, an international conference on APEL was held in Tartu with the help of the THENUCE network. This conference and the example of the system at the University of Tartu initiated several discussions in other universities as well as at the Ministry of Education, and brought along two new projects in the same field. By February 2003, the University of Tartu together with the Ministry of Education had completed a survey covering APEL practices and attitudes across Estonia in all sectors (within the European Transfine project). The new version of the Universities Act (approved at the end of January 2003) now allows 50% of the HE curriculum to be obtained through APEL. Most of the HE institutions have now worked out their internal regulations for implementing APEL, but not all of them are available on websites for the public.

Higher education institutions are more interested in recognising prior certified learning rather than in valuing non-certified or informal learning. The main problem is the rigidness of the academic staff and lack of knowledge in the field of assessment of informal and experiential learning as well as lack of good instruments for the purpose of assessment.

In vocational education one may not find many activities, but there is great opportunity to recognize learning from experience. Discussions have begun on the subject and vocational education is now preparing curricula and training programs according to the professional standards.

### *9.2.2 Development plans*

In 2001, the Minister of Education formed an expert work group for the purpose of developing *the Estonian lifelong learning strategy*. Employees representing various education sectors and levels, large and small enterprises and the public sector as well as various fields of activity were appointed as members of the work group.

*The Estonian national development plan for introduction of the Structural Funds of the European Union* – a single programme document for 2003-2006. In connection with the integration into the European Union, the Structural Funds of the EU, where one can apply for funds for promoting various fields, will open to the Estonian state. The European Social Fund also provides funds for the promotion of adult education. One of the priorities is working out the system and regulations for the accreditation of prior and experiential learning.

The experts formulated recommendations with respect to the national adult education priorities, which is enforced as of July 2004. The national adult education priorities are adopted by the Government of the Republic and the draft State Budget Act allocates the means for realisation of the priorities.

*National adult education priorities for 2004-2006* are as follows:

- 1) Providing better access to the life long learning for adults, including those who have dropped out of education;
- 2) Development of the counselling system for adults, including career counselling and study information database for adults;
- 3) Development of the system for accreditation of prior and experiential learning;
- 4) Development of the Model for financing adult education, including changes to the taxation system to motivate employers to invest in the schooling of their employees;
- 5) Quality assurance of adult education, including work-related training.

The Ministry of Education and Research and the National Adult Education Council have worked out a *National adult education development plan for 2005-2008*. There is one chapter about national initiatives in the accreditation of prior and experiential learning and about development of the national regulations and system for APEL guidance and counselling.

### *9.2.3 Example from the University of Tartu*

The University of Tartu is the first in Estonia, to have worked out the system and the procedures for the accreditation of prior studies and work experience and is now in the implementation stage. Since summer 2003 an APEL specialist has worked at the University of Tartu to, amongst other things, develop the tools for APEL, information and guidance materials and to establish and develop a counselling and assessment jury system across the whole university.

Three regulations for implementing APEL at the University of Tartu are as follows: part in the Regulations of Admission, part in the Regulations of Tuition, Rector's directive for the implementation of the system. Depending on the volume of the accredited subjects or work experience, the application is reviewed either by the lecturer of the given subject or the committee (academic staff only) appointed by the Dean of the Faculty. A particular subject will be assessed by the lecturer, a bigger group of subjects (from 5 credits) and the qualification requirements for admission will be assessed by the committee. The student is given a written answer within one month from the date of submission of the application. If necessary, the assessor may demand additional documents, the compilation of a portfolio, an examination or an informal interview. The decisions of accreditation of prior learning and work experience may be contested according to the procedures provided by the Regulations of Studies. Methods used for accreditation of prior learning are summative assessment and credit transfer.

The University of Tartu is partner in two European APEL related projects – VaLEx (Valuing Learning from Experience) and REFINE (REcognising Formal, Informal and Non-formal



Education). Local partners in these projects are, for Valex; Universities and higher education sector and NGOs and for Refine; higher education sector, vocational education sector and youth sector. Activities in these projects are: piloting the use of the portfolio for accreditation of informal and non-formal learning, creating a course program for this and developing support materials for students, counsellors and APEL assessors.

### **9.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector**

Employers have always appreciated prior formal, non-formal and informal learning upon hiring people and valued work experience as well as other skills, personal characteristics and abilities. The main tool used for first evaluation is the CV and interview as the next step. Most companies have worked out a personnel policy and internal rules for measuring the potential of the applicant, but these rules are not available publicly.

There are some useful internet-portals, CV-Online for employers and employees; Rajaleidja (Pathfinder) for young people that contains many interesting and useful materials about studies, training opportunities, how to find work, compile a better CV and some additional information for self evaluation and self development.

In the job market one could follow two slightly opposite trends: on the one hand, great attention to official qualifications in some situations, on the other hand, valuing work experience more than a university degree.

(1) Requirements for professional qualifications are worked out or elaborated for many professions. Several qualification requirements became more difficult to achieve. In some public service occupations an official degree (Master's degree) enables employees to receive a salary that is higher by 10%.

(2) In many cases, employers value work experience more than a university degree. Several reasons for this can be found, for example, a rapidly changing labour market that values recent work experience over 'old' education; many SME (small and medium enterprises) managers have not themselves completed a university degree and therefore do not value it; new and rather liberal regulations that have resulted in a plethora of new HE institutions being established during the last ten years which are considered as being of low quality and therefore, whose education provision is not valued.

Today the main activity is setting professional standards. The Professions Act provides the basis for the development of the requirements for professional qualifications and the conditions and procedures for the attestation and award of professional qualifications.

As assigning a profession is not obligatory and is not directly related to studies in the profession but at the same time, to meet the qualification requirements, it is necessary to complete certain additional training or work independently, one can agree that assigning a profession may be related to APEL.

Employers are interested in certifying employees' skills as this is important for staff policy development, for the benchmarking of the company and for competitiveness in the market.

The representatives of over 1,500 different institutions (companies, training providers, professional and vocational associations) participated in active development of professional standards between 1998 and 2004. As of September 2004, professional councils have approved 419 professional qualifications as professional standards. A professional standard is a document which establishes the requirements for knowledge, skills, experience, values and personal characteristics necessary for the professional qualification.

The award of professional qualifications is a process in the course of which a person attests the level of his or her professional competence and a body which awards professional qualifications assesses the match to the professional qualifications applied for and issues a professional certificate.

Methods of attestation of professional qualifications are:

- 1) Written or oral examination;
- 2) Test assignment;
- 3) Attestation on the basis of documents; or
- 4) A combination of the above methods.

There are no certain instruments for assessment of non-formal and informal learning, a description of professional activities is mostly used in the form of a CV or statements from employers.

#### ***Example from one of the biggest employers of Estonia – Hansabank***

The companies of the Hansabank Group share a common personnel policy, aimed at guaranteeing the competence of all units in carrying out the strategies and goals of the organisation through consistency and staff and maintaining their reputation as a valued employer. Prior to the recruitment process the tasks and requirements for the new employee are described. The recruitment process is objective, systematic and fair. On selection, measuring the potential of the applicant goes beyond the specific vacancy. Hansabank's aim is to create and pursue long-term bilateral employment relations with staff members.

#### **9.4 *Review of existing initiative: The Third Sector***

There are some very active NGOs, like the Association of Estonian Adult Educators ANDRAS, Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association, Estonian Education Forum and Estonian Association for Personnel Development PARE, that are the main links between formal, non-formal and informal education, employers and the public sector.

The Association of Estonian Adult Educators (AEAE) ANDRAS is an Estonian non-governmental organisation, which unites the representatives of different branches of adult education and aims at increasing the competence of its members in the field of andragogics. The Estonian Education Forum's (Eesti Haridusfoorum) main activities are development of a concept of education policy based on as extensive social agreement as possible, and promoting of social partnership with the public sector.

The Estonian Association for Personnel Development PARE connects human resource professionals. PARE draws attention to the importance of human resource management in society, gathers and mediates human resource management know-how, creates opportunities for personnel staff for professional development and regular exchange of information.

The youth sector is interested in this topic as well, they have organised a conference about valuing informal learning and are involved in a number of projects.

NGOs representing all of the most important interest groups in educational policy are taking an active part in forming the educational policy, executing educational research, organising training, seminars and conferences and gathering and distributing information concerning adult education. The main aim of the NGOs is to support democratic processes like participation, partnership and social agreement in Estonian education policy. They have co-operated with different public and private organisations, including the Ministry of Education to compose the concept and strategic plan for the Estonian education system. One of the main forms of activity is the annual educational forum process - a set of conferences where the situation of education in Estonia is discussed and where the education and labour policy principles of Estonia are developed, specified and improved. Such an approach enables the moulding of a consensus among different interest groups as regards the draft resolutions prepared by experts, which should result in the realisation of the adopted resolutions.

## **9.5 Conclusions**

According to the national regulations it is possible to apply APEL in some cases but it has not been regulated in detail. If there are any regulations for the application of APEL at all, then these are internal regulations for a given institution. As the process of the accreditation of prior and experiential learning started only in recent years, there is no qualitative or quantitative information on the results of the initiative yet. Some research is done on mapping of non-formal education /adult education.

In the national policy agenda one can notice remarkable trends and the Ministry of Education together with other stakeholders has prepared some important documents connected with validation of non-formal and informal learning like *National adult education priorities* and a *National adult education development plan*.

The University of Tartu is working as a promoter in this field. There are different activities involving co-operation between Universities as well as other educational institutions and the Ministry of Education for development of APEL tools and practices in Estonia and to promote the APEL Network in Estonia. There is a need for good tools for accreditation of informal and experiential learning as well as for improving the skills of APEL assessors and for setting and implementing quality standards for APEL. Another important aspect is the need for improvement of the system of APEL guidance and counselling in Estonia. Estonian Universities have already prepared a project proposal for Structural Funds of the European Union to request funding for achieving these goals.

Employers agree that there is a need to work out common criteria for recognizing APEL in Estonia. The State has started to create an official system by working out professional standards and professional qualifications and adopting laws on professional qualification. But there is no vision of the system in its entirety. People are aware of the need to create uniform principles and tools to simplify comparison of qualifications.

The third sector has taken an active role and is working together with other sectors in forming education policy in Estonia.

Although existing information and practical experience in validation of non-formal and informal learning is rather limited, Estonia is now in an active position in the development of the system, tools and procedures for recognition of prior and experiential learning.

## **10.0 FINLAND**

*By Anne-Mari Nevala (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

### **10.1 Introduction**

Finland is one of the few European countries that has permanent systems and comprehensive national policies in place for validating informal and non-formal learning. The public and voluntary sectors in Finland have had a number of validation initiatives in place for over a decade and the private sector, as well as social partners, are integrated into the planning and development work of those initiatives. The implementation of competence-based qualifications, the National Certificate of Language Proficiency and the Computer Driving Licence are prime examples of the ways in which competence and skills acquired outside of formal education system are recognised in Finland.

The following chapters will look at the central validation initiatives of public, private and third sectors, discuss their institutional frameworks and summarise their key outcomes.

### **10.2 Review of existing Initiatives: Public Sector**

Validation activities are, to a great extent, decentralised in Finland - each individual education institution is provided with a significant level of freedom. The Finnish public authorities have been active in developing national initiatives to recognise informal and non-formal learning since the early nineties. Public authorities believe education policies should take advantage of non-formal education and also consider other spheres of life (work, civil society activities and hobbies) as learning environments<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, key competences (such as communication and problem solving skills) play an increasingly important role in today's economically competitive societies and labour markets, hence informal and non-formal learning environments are regarded as equally important in developing them as formal education.

The following sections will introduce the four validation structures of the Finnish public authorities and impact and outputs of each initiative.

#### **10.2.1 Competence-based qualifications**

The competence-based qualification system (*Näyttötutkinto*) is the most established form of validation in Finland. Competence-based qualifications can be awarded regardless of how and where the skills and knowledge have been acquired; knowledge, skills and competence can be demonstrated in officially approved tests<sup>103</sup>. The qualifications came into force in 1994 through the implementation of the Vocational Qualifications Act 306/1994 and are now included in the Act on Vocational Adult Education 1998. The framework was created by the National Board of Education in a close co-operation with the main labour market organisations and teachers. The Board is active in improving the system and funds a number of current development projects such as AIHE and [W@KKU](#).

---

<sup>103</sup> Ahola (2003) Validation of prior learning in Finland. Nordic Council of Ministers.

There are three levels of competence-based vocational qualifications (basic, further and specialised). The initial vocational qualifications can be obtained through tests that are similar to those taken by young people in vocational education. The further and specialist vocational qualifications are mainly intended for adults with three to five years of work experience who wish to validate their practical competences and vocational skills. Nevertheless, the non-formality of the qualifications is obscured to a small extent by the fact that the overwhelming majority (95%) of the candidates taking the tests choose to prepare themselves for the examinations by undertaking some formal training<sup>104</sup>. This is because it is not always possible for an employee to learn the whole variety of skills and competences required for a qualification at a single workplace as the line of work in a single company is often fairly restricted. However, the preparatory training is voluntary and usually tailored to each student individually. The training package is drafted jointly by a representative from a training institute and the student, and is structured to complement the student's prior learning and work experience. Recently, the National Board of Education has introduced a widespread adult education project (AIHE) with the aim of further strengthening the role of tailored training.

The popularity of competence-based examinations has increased rapidly since their introduction and they have continued to strengthen their position in the Finnish education system. Nearly 400 qualification titles are in place, a total of 422 educational establishments have a right to carry out examinations and almost 90,000 competence-based qualifications were acquired during the first 10 years of its operation<sup>105</sup>. The statistics for the first six months of 2003 continue to show increasing popularity; some 13,100 students obtained the qualification during the first half of the year. Table 2.1 displays the number of people who have acquired a competence-based qualification from 1995 onwards.

**Table 10.1: Competence-based vocational qualifications in Finland**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No of vocational qualifications acquired through competence based examinations</b>
<b>1995</b>	547
<b>1996</b>	2,645
<b>1997</b>	5,152
<b>1998</b>	8,159
<b>1999</b>	12,815
<b>2000</b>	16,903
<b>2001</b>	20,180
<b>2002</b>	23,383
<b>Total</b>	<b>89,784</b>

---

<sup>104</sup> Nyysölä (2002) Koulun ulkopuolella opitun tunnustaminen. National Board of Education & Ahola (2003) Validation of prior learning in Finland. Nordic Council of Ministers.

<sup>105</sup> National Board of Education (2003) Statistics <http://www.oph.fi/page.asp?path=1.17629,18771,24250>

### 10.2.2 National Certificate of Language Proficiency

National Certificate of Language Proficiency is a test aimed at adults to measure their practical language skills regardless of how and where their linguistic proficiency has been acquired. The tests measure language skills in practical situations in which an adult could be required to speak, listen, write or read a foreign language. The Act on language tests was passed in 1994 and the first national certificates of language proficiency were granted in the same year. Some 22,000 people had been granted a Certificate by the end of 2003<sup>106</sup>. The test can now be taken in 9 different languages and there are over 100 educational institutions arranging tests. The following table displays the continuous increase in the popularity of the tests.

**Table 10.2: Number of National Certificates of Language Proficiency acquired since 1994**

Year	Certificates acquired
1994	1,408
1995	1,949
1996	1,938
1997	2,188
1998	2,191
1999	2,209
2000	2,487
2001	2,275
2002	2,467
2003	2,865
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,977</b>

Source: Centre for Applied Language Studies / Jyväskylä University

### 10.2.3 Regulating access to formal education

The Finnish legislation permits people to apply for upper secondary schools, vocational institutes, polytechnics and universities even if they do not meet the standard entry requirements. Individuals can be considered if they can, by other means, demonstrate that their prior learning (formal, informal or non-formal) has provided them with the necessary knowledge and competence required for the successful completion of the qualification.

Although necessary provisions and appropriate legislative frameworks are in place, the number of students whose informal or non-formal learning is recognised as a part of an application for upper secondary schools and universities can be regarded as rather low. Universities very rarely acknowledge work experience in the selection process; work experience is only recognised when entering teaching training. The Act on Matriculation

---

<sup>106</sup> Centre for Applied Language Studies / Jyväskylä University

Examination 1000/1994 provides school principals with an opportunity to admit people to Matriculation Examinations (*Ylioppilastutkinto*) who have not completed the necessary studies. However, it has been suggested that only a handful of cases take place per year and mostly in the case of foreign language examinations<sup>107</sup>.

According to the Act on Polytechnic Studies 225/1995, individuals can be accepted to polytechnics if they can demonstrate necessary competence and skills. However, in 2001 only 144 people were chosen through ‘flexible student selection’ that allows individuals to demonstrate their special talent or experience in the field in which they are aiming to study. In 2002, the figure was slightly higher (188 people) but it is still less than a percentage of all students<sup>6</sup>.

Basic vocational institutes accept a greater number of candidates than other educational institutes without standard entry qualifications. Approximately 4 per cent of people starting basic vocational education in Finland each year are chosen through the ‘flexible student selection’<sup>6</sup>. In 2001 this included 1,698 students and in 2002 some 1,770 students entered basic vocational education despite not meeting the entry requirements<sup>108</sup>.

#### *10.2.4 Accreditation*

The legislative framework on upper secondary schools outlines that studies completed elsewhere, even outside of formal education systems, can, in special circumstances, be accredited. However, accreditation of informal and non-formal learning is still very limited at all educational levels. Nevertheless, development work has been initiated to broaden the scope of recognising non-formal and informal learning – polytechnics in particular have expressed their keen interest in developing this aspect<sup>109</sup>. The National Board of Education is in the process of adding the principles of accreditation in to the core curricula, which local educational providers will be obliged to include in their practice.

#### *10.2.5 European Computer Driving Licence*

In addition to this, the Finnish Information Technology Development Centre (TIEKE) together with education and labour administration and labour market organisations launched in 1994 a Computer Driving Licence (CDL) that has become widely acknowledged proof of information technology skills not only in Finland but all over the world. More than 144,000 people have obtained the licence in Finland and over four hundred educational institutions in the country have been granted a permit from TIEKE to carry out tests and grant the certificate. Four different types of certificate have been developed to match the different levels of know-how and skills most often required in the information society. The European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) has now been introduced in some 130 countries<sup>110</sup>.

---

<sup>107</sup> Nyssölä (2002) Koulun ulkopuolella opitun tunnustaminen. National Board of Education

<sup>108</sup> TAYH database

<sup>109</sup> Ahola (2003) Validation of prior learning. Nordic Council of Ministers.

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.ecdl.fi>



TIEKE is the managing and developing body behind the initiative. The development work of the CDL was initially co-financed by the Ministry of Education. The development of the European Computer Driving Licence was partly financed by the European Leonardo da Vinci programme. A Committee, consisting of representatives from educational institutions, social partners and national education and employment authorities lead the development work of the Licence.

#### *10.2.6 Impact*

The competence-based qualification system is by far the most established and extensive public sector scheme for validation of prior learning in Finland. The overall impact of the system on the field of vocational training has been positive<sup>111</sup>. It has resulted in increased consideration of labour market needs and increased co-operation between different labour and education organisations and private companies.

Validation structures are not developed to the same extent in other parts of the Finnish education system (accreditation, regulating access) although legislation already provides plenty of opportunities for further development<sup>7</sup>. The Ministry of Education has announced in its latest Development Plan (2003 – 2008) the commitment to take further action to create the methodology and basis for all education levels on how to accredit and validate non-formal and informal learning.

### **10.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

#### *10.3.1 Industry sectors*

Various labour market stakeholders are actively involved in the development of public and voluntary sector initiatives. Many industry sectors and different trade unions have a particular interest in the development of the competence-based qualification system and representatives from different professional sectors, trade unions and employer organisations are represented in the numerous Examination Boards around the country who plan and arrange the competence-based skills tests and grant the certificates. The following labour market organisations are currently involved in the organisation and development of competence-based qualifications:

- Employers' Confederation of Service Industries (PT)
- Confederation of Finnish Industry and Employers (TT)
- Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK)
- Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees (STTK)
- Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland (AKAVA).

Furthermore, numerous sector specific trade unions, for example, the Finnish Metalworkers' Union and the Finnish Forest Industries Federation, are represented in the Examination

---

<sup>111</sup> Yrjölä et al. (2000) Näyttötutkintojen kokonaisarviointi. National Board of Education.

Committees. Altogether 21 trade unions have been involved in ALVAR - a quality assurance project within the area of competence-based testing and assessment. The sectors with the highest number of competence-based qualifications are technology-traffic and cultural industry sectors.

### *10.3.2 Individual companies*

Many industries and individual companies have successfully exploited the opportunities of the competence-based education system and have established procedures to recognise skills and competences that employees acquire at work (in a formal, informal or non-formal manner). Companies particularly from the traditional manufacturing sectors have been keen on validating skills of their workforce in order to broaden their employees' skills-base and therefore provide greater flexibility and opportunity to refine their production systems according to the current economic and market trends. One of the first companies to adopt formal procedures was Koskisen Oy, which, since the early nineties, has been developing training and assessment methods in order to recognise and, at the same time, broaden the skill levels of its employees. The experience from Koskisen Oy is presented in the box below<sup>112</sup>.

---

Koskisen Oy is a manufacturing company in the field of wood production. During the past 10 years some 400 employees (approx. 37% of all employees) have been able to validate the skills and learning they have acquired at work and obtain an official qualification. Currently the company offers 'in-house' training, which together with work experience provides employees with an opportunity to attain one of a range of nationally recognised qualifications (various wood production and management qualifications). The skills are tested by an external assessor, the employer and employee representatives in practical and written skills tests after 1-2 years of work experience. The procedures have had significant individual, company and industry level impacts:

- Individual benefits (employees):
    - Improved self-confidence.
    - Broadened and improved skills-base.
    - Greater understanding and adoption of work processes and tasks.
    - Opportunities for higher pay and grants.
  - Benefits to the company:
    - Multi-skilled, motivated, committed, adaptable employees.
    - Company has succeeded to transform itself from a basic manufacturing enterprise into a high value-added production company – the highly skilled workforce has been the fundamental base.
    - Transformation towards a team working culture – staff members increasingly work together and are able to replace one another during absences.
    - Move towards a more equal, less hierarchical employee structure due to increased skill levels.
    - National level recognition for its human resources policies.
- 

<sup>112</sup> Source: Interview with Esa Kallinen from Koskisen Oy.

- Excellent working environment and low staff turnover levels (turnover levels have reduced by 35% in ten years).
  - A number of national certificates / awards (e.g. award for good employer, best apprenticeship scheme provider of the year, best place to work 2004 ‘*Suomen parhaat työnantajat 2004*’ - 2<sup>nd</sup> position and the only awarded manufacturing company)
  - In spite of the major role of education and training, the productivity levels have always remained high. During the early training periods, the productivity of each participating employee slightly falls but in the longer term significantly improves as a result of new skills and motivation.
- ° Wider impact:
- Has helped to raise the status and credibility of the wood production industry.
  - The largest companies in the same industry (e.g. Stora Enso, UPM) have now also introduced similar procedures.
- 

As the experience from Koskisen Oy revealed, the initiative has not only benefited the employees and the company itself but it has had a wider impact on the industry sector. Other companies have set up similar initiatives; for example, Finnair has established schemes especially in the technical and maintenance side of their business. Furthermore, Fortum Gas, which is a leading energy company in the Nordic area, has extensive experience in providing employees with an opportunity to obtain an official qualification that matches the key competences they have learnt in the work place (in the field of chemistry and management).

#### **10.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

Overall, many voluntary sector organisations consider the validation of non-formal and informal learning to be extremely important although only a few have official methods for validating knowledge and skills. However, three initiatives that have been implemented partly in collaboration with third sector organisations (including Youth Organisations) can be identified in Finland; these have had different levels of success:

##### **10.4.1 Knowledge and Competence in Non-Formal Adult Education (VSOP)**

VSOP is the most comprehensive unified development programme in the history of Finnish non-formal adult education. The programme provides continuing education for staff in the field of non-formal adult education aims to organise further research into non-formal education and develops methodologies and tools for making informal learning and learning within non-formal adult education visible and more recognised. One of the outputs of the project has been a pilot initiative in the field of arts & crafts. The project aims to identify validation methods for educational institutes providing handicraft courses. The project is led by the Finnish Adult Education Association and financed by the Ministry of Education.

#### *10.4.2 Recreational Activity Study Book*

One of the earliest efforts to promote the validation of non-formal learning in Finland was the establishment of Youth Academy and the *Recreational Activity Study Book* in 1994. Activity in projects, positions of trust and responsibility, courses and other recreational activities can be recorded in the study book. Recording merits and different skills in the study book is one way of validating informal and non-formal learning - once young people start their studies they may get extra points and/or get part of their studies accredited. The Academy has written flexible, agreements with some 250 educational institutions around the country including basic vocational institutes, polytechnics and faculties of education in universities<sup>113</sup>. The educational institutes, however, have the freedom to make case specific decisions about learning that has been recorded in the study books. Statistical data about the impacts is limited. Over the last seven year period (1996-2003) over 70,000 young people have requested the book, of which some 11 per cent have registered with the Academy. Small scale surveys into the study book have revealed that in 2001 some 29 per cent had benefited from their informal activities in the study book. In 2003 the figure was 10 per cent<sup>9</sup>.

### *10.5 Stakeholders*

#### *10.5.1 Finnish government*

The Finnish Parliament decides on education legislation and the general principles of education policy. The Government, Ministry of Education and National Board of Education are responsible for the implementation of this policy at the central administration level. Lifelong learning and validation of prior learning became a key issue in educational debates in the 1990's as the ageing of the labour force, the growing differences in education between generations as well as the increasing demand for ever higher skills all presented new challenges for education. As a result, the government is highly committed to developing lifelong learning and methods to recognise prior learning.

#### *10.5.2 Ministry of Education*

The Ministry of Education is committed to continue development work in the field of informal and non-formal learning so that they can be recognised as a valid form of learning alongside institutional education. Validation activities are a fundamental part of the national lifelong learning strategy<sup>114</sup>. In 2002 the minister for Education also accepted a detailed plan for the recognition of prior learning in Finland – the plan consists of specific action points for development work.

The Ministry of Education determines the number, titles and other regulations of the competence-based qualifications. The decisions are, however, based on suggestions from the National Board of Education, Ministry of Labour and social partners. The Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education hold the overall responsibility for the

---

<sup>113</sup> Youth Academy (2004)

<sup>114</sup> Adult Education Council (1999) Adult Education Policy in the First Years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

competence-based system but the current educational laws provide educational institutions with a considerable level of freedom. However, there is separate legislation for universities and polytechnics for which the Ministry of Education is responsible.

#### *10.5.3 National Board of Education*

The National Board of Education formally reports to the Ministry of Education. It operates as a planning and expert body and is responsible for formulating the core curricula on the basis of which comprehensive and upper secondary schools and vocational institutes draw up their own curricula. In practice, each educational institution may apply the basic rules according to local needs.

The National Board of Education is responsible for the development and implementation of the competence-based qualifications and appointing the Examination Committees. Similarly, the Board is the managing authority behind the National Certificate of Language Proficiency and responsible for appointing a nine-member Language Examination Committee.

#### *10.5.4 The Ministry of Labour*

The Ministry of Labour also acknowledges the importance of lifelong learning and validation of learning that has taken place outside of the traditional, formal education system. One of the key objectives of the National Action Plan for Employment is the recognition of prior learning as a way of improving employment in the country. The Ministry of Labour is involved in deciding the titles for the competence-based qualifications.

#### *10.5.5 Social partners*

Social partners are pivotally involved in the planning and development work of the education system and representatives are strongly represented in different councils and committees in the field of education:

- The Adult Education Council was set up by the Government to deal with matters concerning development, research and evaluation in adult education and training.
- The Training Committees operate in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. These were created to develop contacts between vocational education and the labour market.
- The Examination Committees operate under the National Board of Education and they consist of employees, employers, teachers, and trade union and employer organisation representatives. They are responsible for co-ordinating the competence-based tests with educational institutions and awarding certificates.
- The National Board of Education also appoints the Language Examination Committees. The main task of the Committee is to develop and monitor language

proficiency tests in terms of choice and content. The Committees consist of experts from the fields of language teaching, skills testing and labour markets.

- The Consultative Committees operate at vocational institutions and develop links with local working life.

#### *10.5.6 Provincial State Offices*

As previously mentioned, current education laws allow educational institutions to assess and recognise competences acquired outside of the formal education system and to credit non-formal and informal studies. It is the responsibility of the Provincial State Offices to oversee the legality of implementation at comprehensive and upper secondary schools.

### **10.6 Conclusions**

Within the competence-based education system, the national certificate of language proficiency and computer driving licence have been successful initiatives and have become strongly rooted in the Finnish adult and vocational education culture. The competence-based qualification system has had a strong impact on validation activities and contributed to a closer co-operation between education and labour market stakeholders. Although Finland can be regarded as one of the frontrunners in this field, there is still room for development work so that the full potential of other validation mechanisms and existing legislative frameworks can be realised. For instance, knowledge, skills and competence obtained in hobbies and in other activities do not receive sufficient accreditation in formal education – accreditation of previous formal studies and work experience are considerably more common. In terms of competence-based qualifications, it has been identified that although many individual employers are fairly familiar with the system, more individual companies should possess concrete knowledge and experience of the system. It is also worth considering how validation practices could better reach young people in traditional formal education, not only in vocational education.

A great enthusiasm to further improve and unify the current validation practices can be sensed; the national authorities show a commitment to future development work. The main education and lifelong learning strategies highlight the importance of validation of informal and non-formal learning. The Finnish Committee for Lifelong Learning has stated that the competence-based system is only the beginning of a more extensive system in which people can demonstrate their skills and knowledge. The Ministry of Education has also produced an official plan for the development work, a number of different development projects have been instigated and social partners show interest in staying involved. Consequently, validation of informal and non-formal learning in Finland can be expected to further grow in importance in the future.

## 11.0 FRANCE

By Simon Roy (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)

### 11.1 Introduction

As is often noted<sup>115</sup>, France has a long tradition of recognition of non-formal learning. In the field of engineering, for example, individuals have been able to obtain a State Engineering Diploma on the basis of professional experience since 1934. On the other hand, France is also a country where formal qualifications (obtained through formal learning) have traditionally been particularly valued in the labour market.

The last 20 years have seen a number of developments in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning, culminating in the adoption of the 2002 Social Modernisation Act, which introduced the concept of Validation of Knowledge acquired through experience or *Validation des Aquis de l'Expérience* (VAE). This national legal framework has created a wide-ranging right to validation in France, which the nation's public bodies, training organisations and businesses are currently implementing. These developments are examined in the sections which follow.

### 11.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector

#### 11.2.1 Background

Over the last 20 years, the legislative framework in the field of non-formal and informal learning in France has developed in three main phases. In the mid-1980s, a first phase of activity saw the adoption of a decree to allow professional experience to be taken into consideration in determining access to higher education<sup>116</sup> and the creation of a network of 110 publicly-run skills assessment centres or *Centres Interinstitutionnels de Bilans de Compétences* (CIBC). These centres, established by the Ministry of Employment in 1986, were designed to allow individuals to analyse their skills and the opportunities open to them and, on this basis, to define a personal training or occupational plan. At this stage, the objective of the initiative was not to provide summative validation<sup>117</sup>, but rather to provide guidance and promote training opportunities.

A law passed on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1991 gave all workers with at least five years professional experience<sup>118</sup> a legal right to obtain a *bilan de compétences*, or personalized skills audit. The same law introduced the right to 24 working hours paid leave to undertake the process and an

---

<sup>115</sup> See, for example, *Making Learning Visible* (Cedefop, 2000) or *La Validation des Aquis de l'Expérience en France : un appui possible?* (TRANSFINE, 2003)

<sup>116</sup> in 1985

<sup>117</sup> There were, in any case, no defined standards against which to judge an individual's skills

<sup>118</sup> And having worked for the same company for at least 12 months

accredited centre (including, but not exclusively, the *Centres Interinstitutionnels de Bilans de Compétences*). The system is financed by a combination of compulsory employer contributions and direct subsidies from central government. The *bilan de compétences* is also available to those out of work. Indeed, a study undertaken in 2000 using data from previous years found that roughly three quarters of the *bilans* were performed for job seekers<sup>119</sup>, suggesting that (at this stage at least) the scheme had become a tool for tackling unemployment, as much as system for promoting lifelong learning among the working population.

The following year (1992), the concept of *Validation des Acquis Professionnels* (VAP) or Validation of Prior Occupational Learning was introduced into French law. This legislation allowed people with five years' work experience to be exempted from certain examinations for qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Education (secondary and higher education), on the basis of previous professional experience. To obtain validation of this experience, the individual was required to submit a portfolio detailing the activities undertaken and skills (competencies) gained, which was then examined by an assessment panel (*jury*), who, on this basis, could award credits for elements of a course of study or to allow access to a course where other formal qualifications would otherwise be required.

In 2002, within the context of the "Social Modernisation Act", this model of validation was extended to include all the main types of qualification (certification) used in France and allow complete qualifications to be awarded on the basis of knowledge gained through experience. This broadened concept of VAP, referred to as *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience* or VAE, is examined in more detail in the next section.

### *11.2.2 The Current Situation: Summative and Formative Approaches*

The developments outlined above have created a legal and educational environment in France where non-formal and informal learning is taken into account through both summative and formative approaches.

#### ***Summative Approaches***

The 2002 legislation on the *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience* (VAE) places more emphasis on summative validation (the award of certificates) than the previous concept of *Validation des Acquis Professionnels* (VAP). Whereas VAP was designed to allow professional experience to be taken into account alongside more traditional means of assessment in the award of formal qualifications, VAE can be used as a basis to award full qualifications, rather than just units of "parts" of a full diploma.

Access to validation of knowledge gained through experience is now a right for everyone with at least three years of work experience (compared to five previously). Non-formal and informal learning can be considered as a basis for the award of all types of nationally-recognised qualification, which are now overseen and documented by the newly-created National

---

<sup>119</sup> Ministry of Employment 2000, *L'activité des Organismes Prestataires de Bilans de Compétences en 1998*



Vocational Certification Commission (*Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle*), presented in the box below.

***The Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle – CNCP***

The National Commission for Vocational Certification (CNCP) was created in January 2002 by the same legislation that set in place the concept of *VAE*. The body has three key objectives:

- to establish and maintain a National Register of Vocational Qualifications (*Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles*);
- to oversee reform and updating of qualifications (diplomas and certificates) on the basis of developments in education and the labour market;
- to provide recommendations to organisations that deliver vocational qualifications and provide information about the relationship between different types of qualification;

The Commission is composed of ministerial representatives, social partners, experts and representatives of the Chambers of Commerce and the Regions. It has also set up a specialized Commission to examine requests to include qualifications in the *Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles*. The body functions on the basis on a national secretariat and a network of regional “correspondents”.

The National Register of Vocational Qualifications maintained by the CNCP will contain around 15 000 different qualifications, including:

- Roughly 11 000 awarded by universities;
- Over 700 secondary-level qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Education (CAP and BTS etc);
- 600 certificates awarded by other ministries, including the 150 *certificats de compétences professionnelles* (CCP) awarded by the Ministry of Employment, using the ROME<sup>120</sup> professional profiles as the standard reference;
- 800 qualifications awarded by private organizations, including the *certificats de compétences d’entreprises* (CCE) awarded by the Chambers of Commerce (see below);
- 400 other so-called *certificats de qualification professionnelle* (CQP), vocational qualification certificates<sup>121</sup>.

Individuals wishing to undertake VAE are now entitled to paid leave to do so, provided certain conditions of service are met. The assessment takes place at accredited centres (including *Centres de Bilan de Compétences*) on the basis of a portfolio of experience, drawn

---

<sup>120</sup> *Répertoire Opérationnel des Métiers et des Emplois*, a national register of professional profiles developed by the *Agence Nationale pour L’Emploi* (ANPE), the French Employment Service

<sup>121</sup> La VAE en France: Un Appui Possible?, p. 17

up by the individual and submitted to an assessment panel or practical examinations to test the candidate's knowledge gained through experience. Where panels (*jurys*) are used, these are generally composed of the assessors who, in most cases, would usually award the qualification on the basis of more traditional examinations or practical work. The standards or *référentiels* vary depending on the type of qualification and in many cases are still under development.

The new system calls upon assessment panels to take a more comprehensive view of an individual's skills and experience and make decisions on a "collegiate" basis, rather than each evaluator submitting an assessment relating to their particular subject area, as occurred under the previous VAP system.

### **The development of VAE**

Since the launch of VAE, the system has developed rapidly, although not entirely without problems. The most recent consolidated figures available show that 14 374 candidates were examined to obtain a diploma via VAE in 2003, a 90% increase compared to 2002<sup>122</sup>. Roughly 75% of candidates were employed, compared to 23% unemployed. 60% of candidates were women. Nearly half of candidates aimed to obtain a higher education diploma (BTS) and just over 20% a professional secondary education certificate (*Baccalauréat Professionnel*). Of the candidates whose dossiers were examined in 2003, 49.1% successfully obtained a full diploma, 39% received recognition for a component of a diploma and 11.9% were effectively rejected.

Despite the increasing uptake of VAE, there is some evidence that the system is still struggling to assert itself in the French educational and labour market culture, which has long judged individuals on the basis of formal qualifications. In March 2005, the director of the *Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle* (CNCP), Bernard Decomps, resigned, claiming that the organisation lacked the resources to implement VAE effectively. *Le Monde's* education correspondent commented in an article at the time that this development in part reflected the difficulties of implementing a system that challenged "*la tyrannie du diplôme*" (the tyranny of formal qualifications) in France<sup>123</sup>. Given that the system is still in its early phases, however, more time is needed to evaluate the extent to which these are teething troubles or more fundamental problems.

### ***Formative Approaches***

Alongside the new system for VAE, the well-established concept of the *bilan de compétences* will continue to play an important role. Since its introduction, this personalised skills audit has been conceived as a formative guidance and counselling tool, rather than a summative assessment and validation instrument. This is made clear in the objectives set out in the legislation governing the *bilan*, listed below.

---

<sup>122</sup> Note d'information: Ministère de l'éducation nationale, December 2004.  
<ftp://trf.education.gouv.fr/pub/edutel/dpd/ni0436.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> Alain Faujas, La validation de l'expérience peine à se mettre en place, *Le Monde*, 22 March 2005

### ***The Objectives of the Bilan de Compétences***

- To take stock of occupational and personal experience;
- To identify and assess knowledge and skills acquired through work, training, and social life;
- To identify the potential of the individual;
- To put together and structure elements to define a personal or occupational ‘project’;
- To help the individual manage and exploit their personal resources;
- To organise the individual’s occupational priorities;
- To allow an individual to maximise the use of their attributes in career choices and career changes.

Following an analysis of the expectations of the candidate and their skills and abilities, the *bilan de compétences* results a synthesis document drawn up by the professional counsellor employed by the accredited centre. This document summarises the rationale for the assessment the competencies and aptitudes uncovered and how these relate to the objectives of the candidate. Finally, advice is given on necessary steps to reach the objectives in question. In the context of VAE, the *bilan de compétences* will remain a useful step for many individuals to take to assess their skills in advance of seeking VAE. As such, the *bilan* is an “upstream” instrument within the VAE system.

#### ***11.2.3 Role of Sub-National Public Authorities***

The regions in France are responsible for many aspects of the day-to-day management of adult education provision and upper secondary education (they are responsible for *lycées*, or upper secondary schools, for examples). Since the introduction of *Validation des Acquis de l’Expérience*, many regions have been very active in developing tools to assist both candidates and professionals working in the field and called upon to implement the new system. All regions have established a co-ordination centre for VAE within their training information service and a network of information points within existing establishments (*Points-Relais-Conseil*)

In the region of Nord-Pas de Calais, for example, 86 *Points-Relais-Conseil* for VAE have been established in organisations such as the ANPE offices (job centres) and universities. For more information, see [http://www.c2rp.fr/decouv\\_localis/mission.php?mission\\_id=6#](http://www.c2rp.fr/decouv_localis/mission.php?mission_id=6#)

### ***11.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector***

#### ***11.3.1 Sector Initiatives***

In 1998, the national network of Chambers of Commerce and Industry launched the *l’Association pour la certification des compétences professionnelles*<sup>124</sup> (ACCP) to validate

---

<sup>124</sup> Association for the Certification of Vocational Skills

non-formal learning acquired in the workplace. The ACCP obtained European Standard EN 45013 for the certification of individuals and established a system of certification based on *Certificats de Compétences en Entreprise* (CCE).

CCE certification is available to employees, on the basis of a portfolio submitted to an assessment panel (similar to other forms of VAE). However, the certificate is not a formal diploma of qualification (which often have an impact on remuneration within the French system of collective bargaining), but rather a standardized means to gain recognition for workplace skills.

The ACCP defines the standards against which the CCEs are award and the Certificates are currently available in the following fields:

- Secretarial and Personal Assistant skills
- Sales
- Remote Sales (*Vente à distance*)
- Customer Service
- Management
- Office IT skills
- Maintenance
- Hotel Reception
- Communication

For more information on the certification methods and standards used, refer to the ACCP website: [www.accp.asso.fr](http://www.accp.asso.fr)

Increasingly, businesses are beginning to understand the importance of VAE and the management of people's professional experience. As a result, several companies have launched VAE projects. Danone, for instance, has launched a major VAE project. With 43% of the workforce being 45 years and older and 40% not having a school leaving certificate, the VAE project is to raise the level of qualification of the workforce, thus leading to a more productive workforce with more mobility within the company. Other examples of private sector VAE initiatives include the textile industry, the tobacco industry group SEITA, AXA insurance and the Banque de France.

### *11.3.2 Examples from Individual Companies*

The importance traditionally attached to formal diplomas in France and the importance for the individual of having credible, transferable qualifications means that there has been limited development of standards and certification at the level of the firm. In large companies, such as the state railway SNCF, workers can seek advice about VAE from the in-house training association AGECEF-SNCF<sup>125</sup>.

---

<sup>125</sup> Association pour la gestion des congés individuels de formation du personnel de la SNCF

## **11.4 Conclusions**

As outlined in the previous sections, France has put in place a detailed legal framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, implemented mechanisms to oversee the process of “certification” and developed dense networks of guidance, assessment and validation centres throughout the country. At the time of writing, many aspects of the implementation of *Validation des Acquis de l’Expérience* (VAE) are still being developed or refined and it will be important to monitor how this progresses.

One of the major challenges facing the system is to gain credibility in a country where particularly high importance has traditionally been attached to qualifications gained in formal education, often at the expense of skills acquired through professional experience. A culture shift may be required to allow greater value to be attached to vocational skills and to bring the formal education system and non-formal learning closer together.

Another challenge raised in the literature is a lack of appropriate validation methodologies<sup>126</sup>. Two main methods are used to assess skills gained through experience in the context of VAE: examinations and the assessment of portfolios. In the latter case, assessment panels are called upon to attribute “value” to an individual’s experience, which may vary considerably in nature, depending on the context in which it was gained, and is difficult to formalize and assess against specific standards. Moreover, assessors are generally more used to formal examination procedures, and in many cases have not received detailed training on how to implement such assessment methodologies. This is another area where future developments will be of crucial importance.

---

<sup>126</sup> See La VAE en France: Un Appui possible?, 2003

## **12.0 GERMANY**

*By Prof. Erwin Seyfried (FHVR Berlin)*

### **12.1 Introduction**

In the past there has been little need for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Germany. The formal education system was able to provide the necessary highly qualified workforce (s. BMBF 2004, p. 134). Today, economic, technological and societal changes pose new challenges to the German education and training system. The increasing competition in a globalized world, quick technological changes and an anticipated shortage of skilled employees in the near future require cross-professional mobility and continuous learning. Individuals are challenged to take responsibility for their education in order to master the new challenges. Non-formal and informal learning as part of the lifelong learning initiative are gaining momentum in this context (s. BMBF 2004, p. 11).

Two recent research projects, the “Weiterbildungspass” (continuing education pass) and the “Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung” (competence development as a culture of learning) financed by the federal and the regional Ministries of Education show the rising awareness of this issue in the regional and national policy arena.

The first study focuses on the question whether a national “Weiterbildungspass” is a useful instrument to help individuals to review, document and assess their educational history.

The second study focuses on developing and testing efficient continuing learning structures in companies and strengthening individual professional competences. Assessing competences is one part of this project.

The future relevance of the topic on the policy agenda can be derived from the Bund-Länder-Kommission’s<sup>127</sup> explicit goal to strengthen the individual’s responsibility and self-organization capabilities in continuing education which includes non-formal and informal learning (s. BMBF 2004, p. 23).

Since the mid-nineties initiatives have been undertaken to credit part-qualifications and additional qualifications that do not amount to a full qualification. Experiments in this field have focussed on step-wise qualification modes that link different education settings in a flexible way. Experiences with this approach have been rather limited so far (s. Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004, p. 35).

---

<sup>127</sup> The „Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung“ (Federal and Länder committee on planning education and promoting research) is a committee of German federal and Länder Ministries of Education.

## **12.2 Existing initiatives**

### *12.2.1 Public authorities*

There have been two major initiatives by public authorities recently. The Federal Ministry of Education and the Länder Ministries of Education are the main actors in the public sector who are promoting the topic of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Germany.

### *12.2.2 “Weiterbildungspass” initiative*

The first initiative is a study on the feasibility of a „Weiterbildungspass“ on a national scale. It is a project of the „Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung“ that ran from April 1, 2002 until October 31, 2003. It analyzes the existing 51 regional pass initiatives in schools, vocational training, occupation, honorary offices and in the private area. It draws conclusions for developing a model of a national pass that reviews, documents and assesses informally acquired competences no matter the means and the field of learning. In addition, the model passes’ function is to identify the individuals’ educational, professional and life goals and to motivate the pass owner to realize these goals. The study analyzes the passes’ benefits, acceptance and value on a corporate level and for the society.

#### *Goals of the passes*

The study concludes that the goals of the pass initiatives are heterogeneous but often motivated by labour market policy and economic impulses (s. BMBF 2004, p. 65). The goals fall into three categories: individual, societal and corporate.

The major individual goals are to “sensitize for lifelong learning”, “see the need for continuing education” and “take responsibility for learning”

A prominent societal goal particularly in the field of vocational and language training is promoting “geographic mobility and flexibility”. Societal goals in the honorary sector are promoting “Dialogue between cultures”, “inter cultural qualifications”, “gender equality” and “acknowledging the value of the practical work”. In the field of training teachers, one societal goal of the pass is to use it as an instrument to analyze further educational needs particularly in new media.

On the corporate level, pass initiatives are aiming at “helping with selection of personnel”, particularly on the apprenticeship level, and “developing human resources”. This is expected to reduce personnel and fluctuation costs and bureaucracy.

#### *Existing methods and instruments*

There are two different types of passes: the first one operates with an open recording system. This means that in a concrete context the performed activity is described, the duration registered and both certified by a third person or organization. In a more complex approach

the pass provides an open list of suggested competences that include e.g. ability to work in a team, to work independently, to cooperate at work etc. This list can be completed by the person who fills it out. The basic problem of this method is that “activity” is equated with “competence” without assessing in how far the activity has been a learning experience (s. BMBF 2004, p. 72).

The second type of pass is based on a closed recording system. This means that a complete list of competences is given. The person who fills it out has no room for additional recordings. Certificates of attendance partly with assessing attended formal and non-formal continuing education courses can be included.

In regard to the assessment stage in the open and the closed recording system, there are little systematic and checkable procedures that go beyond describing learning efficiencies and competences. Mostly the assessment stage consists of self-evaluation of the pass owner along a given list of competences without involving external institutions that scientifically measure the competences.

#### *Role of the social partners*

The social partners consider the following aspects of the pass initiative positively: Firstly, the pass helps to make the individual’s qualification history clear. Secondly, it increases the motivation. Thirdly, it proves basic competences. Fourthly, it lists and describes the company’s tasks and projects. Fifthly, it facilitates mobility, and, finally, the pass helps to classify the employee on the wage scale at a new company.

The social partners fear some critical developments that have to be avoided. These are the following: Firstly, discrediting those who have little written proof of lifelong learning activities. Secondly, using an external competence recording and assessing system as well as acquiring certificates in a more flexible way could fundamentally challenge the traditional vocational and employment system as a whole (s. BMBF 2004, pp. 111, 112).

#### *Conclusion for a national model pass*

The study finds out that the regional pass initiatives are locally limited, not systematic in identifying and recording informally acquired competences and focused on specific topics and concrete problems with some innovative approaches. This heterogeneity results in a lack of transparency for the individual (s. BMBF 2004, pp. 150, 152).

Based on the analysis of the existing passes in continuing education, the study suggests the following characteristics of a model pass (s. BMBF 2004, p. 151):

- integrating reviewing and counselling
- supporting individual reflexion, review and goal setting of the education, life and work biography
- being suitable for all target groups and across educational fields
- being open for third party assessment and self-assessment



- covering formal, non-formal and informal learning
- offering help and motivation for further education, life and career planning
- having a high „brand recognition“ and a high market value

The study recommends to follow the example of existing passes and to integrate German and European approaches. The competence fields of the European curriculum vitae are suggested to be used as a minimum standard.

### *12.2.3 “Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung” initiative*

The second initiative by public authorities is part of the initiative “Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung”, financed by the BMBF and the ESF which runs from 2001 until 2007. The study focuses on developing and testing efficient continuing learning structures in companies and strengthening individual professional competences. In regard to validation of informal learning, the initiative attempts to find means how to implement informal learning in a more effective way in continuing education. The initiative consists of about 200 projects. “Certifying Internet and multimedia learning” is the title of one project within the “Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung” initiative that deals with validation of informal learning. It focuses on competence development and the change of the culture of learning. The project’s goals are twofold: Firstly, it aims at improving existing certificates in the IT- continuing studies area so that the certificates can mirror the real competences of the participants. Secondly, it analyzes alternative certification methods. This includes validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The results of this one-year project are not yet available since it has ended very recently on June 30. 2004.

### *12.2.4 Part-qualifications and additional qualifications*

Additional qualifications are defined as “... learning in formal, non-formal or informal settings that may be linked to recognised vocational qualifications, and may in this way extend, actualise and increase the relevance of existing national qualifications” (Hanf and Reuling 2003, quoted in: Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004, p. 35). The Federal Ministry of Education has supported experiments in regard to additional qualifications. It has introduced additional qualification as a priority in a project aiming at reforming vocational education and training (“Reformprojekt Berufliche Bildung”) in 1997.

#### *Goals*

Part-qualifications and additional qualifications may contribute to opening up the formal qualification structures. Its main features are using modules and mixing learning outcomes from different settings and contexts. These characteristics would enable individuals who have not completed a formal qualification to enter education and training and to access the labour market. It would give young people an opportunity for career development through apprenticeship (Karriere durch Lehre). Additional qualifications would also give enterprises a

new and flexible instrument for human resource and competence development (s. Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004, pp. 35-36).

### *Existing methods and instruments*

In the late 1990s experiments with part-qualifications and additional qualifications were started. These tests had two main features: Firstly, a modularization of qualification: The tests experimented with a step-wise qualification mode. Secondly, a mix of learning outcomes from different settings and contexts: The tests linked education, training and work together in a flexible way. Additional qualifications are normally acquired by systematic training. The amount of hours vary from 20 to 200 hours (s. Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004, p. 36).

The public education and training system as well as the chambers have developed additional qualifications. The former provide them for free, the latter for a fee ranging from 50 to 500 € (s. Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004, p. 36).

### *Conclusions*

On the one hand, Colardyn and Bjornavold consider the experiments as beneficial to the German education system: “The experimentation on part-qualifications (*Teilqualifikationen*) and additional qualifications (*Zusatzqualifikationen*) may in the end make it easier to combine learning outcomes from formal and non-formal settings. While not a main focus so far, the orientation towards a more unit-based system may prove important for the opening up of the German vocational education and training system to external learning outcomes.” (s. Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004, p. 36). On the other hand, they express doubts about these approaches: “Experiences so far are rather limited and it is yet an open question whether this approach will become a real alternative for the groups targeted.” (s. Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004, p. 35).

### **12.3 Industry initiatives**

The corporate sector is interested in validation methods particularly in three areas: selection of apprentices, selection of personnel and human resource development (Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag, interview April 23, 2004). The awareness for the need of recognition methods for non-formal and informal learning exists in the corporate sector. However, the existing systems are so far tailor made for the specific needs of the companies (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, interview, June 23, 2004). Companies have some experiences with documenting and assessing informal learning. However, they see themselves at the beginning of this development. There are ideas how to identify, assess and use informal learning but there are little steps towards implementing them (s. BMBF 2004, p. 95). Some major companies like DaimlerChrysler in Daggenau are developing procedures for recognizing and certifying informal learning. DaimlerChrysler has undertaken a pilot project on learning in the process of change which includes validation methods for non-formal and informal learning. The reports on this project will be available sometime in fall 2004.

An overview of validation methods in German companies titled “Kompetenzmessung im Unternehmen“ will be published by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft QUEM in 2005.

#### ***12.4 Third sector initiatives***

There are several pass initiatives in the honorary sector like the “Hamburger Freiwilligenbuch” (Hamburg voluntary booklet). They describe the tasks that the pass owner has performed and the duration which are both certified by a third person or organization. There are no standards for describing the tasks. Often the attendance of continuing education seminars are described as tasks. The assessment of the competences are limited to confirming the existence of competences (s. BMBF 2004, p. 73).

There are other passes like the “Nachweismappe Ehrenamt” (certificate booklet for honorary posts) that give lists which include competences like “ability to work in a team”, “motivation”, “working independently”. The “Kompetenzbilanz” (“competence record”) by the “Deutsches Jugendinstitut” (national research center for studies on youth) shows the highest level of complexity: It derives fields of experiences from family related activities, that are analyzed by questions like “What have I learned from this?” and “Which competences have I acquired by this activity?” These competences are assessed on a five level scale, from level 1: “I am very good at it.” to level 5: “I am not good at it.” Today, the “Kompetenzbilanz” is the only pass in Germany that uses a real measure instrument for assessing competences (s. BMBF 2004, p. 74).

The “IG Metall” (union for metal workers) publishes a “Kompetenzhandbuch” (handbook on competences) that helps to develop a profile analysis of competences. It gives a list of competences for the following three areas: professional, method and social competence. Each competence area comprises between nine and 16 individual skills.

## **12.5 Conclusion**

### *12.5.1 National policy trends and on-going research*

It is too early to systematically compare the efficiency and effectiveness of the different approaches to validation of non-formal and informal learning in Germany. Many initiatives are still at an early developing stage like the national pass or are still being researched like the IT-certificate.

The various public initiatives show the relevance of the topic on the national policy agenda. The study on the feasibility of a “Weiterbildungspass” concludes that there is a real political willingness to implement the pass on a national scale.

In the corporate and third sector the topic is gaining momentum. However, the approaches are mostly at a developing stage, unsystematic and few.

There is continuous research on the area of conflict in which validation of non-formal and informal learning moves between individual, corporate and societal demands as well as on corporate validation approaches.

### *12.5.2 Overall framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning*

In Germany there is no legal framework for lifelong learning. Due to the federal system the federal government and the Länder governments share the responsibility for education which requires a high level of cooperation between these two political levels. The “Weiterbildungspass” is one example for this kind of cooperation. In addition to the cooperation on the vertical level, the cooperative system in Germany requires also horizontal cooperation between the government and social partners.

## **Bibliography**

### *Literature:*

Arbeitsgemeinschaft betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V.: Projektdatenbank, July 2004:

[http://www.abwf.de/main/projekte/frame\\_html](http://www.abwf.de/main/projekte/frame_html)

Arbeitsgemeinschaft QUEM (ed.): "Kompetenzmessung im Unternehmen", edition QUEM, Bd. 18, 2005.

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) ed.:  
Weiterbildungspass mit Zertifizierung informellen Lernens. Machbarkeitsstudie im Rahmen des BLK-Verbundprojektes, January 2004.

Danielle Colardyn/ Jens Bjornavold: The Learning Continuity, January 2004.

### *Phone and email interviews:*

Arbeitsgemeinschaft betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V., Berlin, April 28, 2004.

Bundesinstitut für Berufliche Bildung, Bonn, April 20, 2004.

Bundesinstitut für Berufliche Bildung, Bonn, June 23, 2004.

DaimlerChrysler, Gaggenau, May 5, 2004.

Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung, Bonn, April 27, 2004.

Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, Frankfurt, April 23, 2004.

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF), Berlin, April 23, 2004.

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF), Berlin, April 28, 2004.

Sozialforschungsstelle, Dortmund, April 27, 2004.

## **13.0 GREECE**

*By Anna Manoudi (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

### **13.1 Introduction**

Even though there are few systems in use for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Greece, the profile of validation has been rising on the national policy agenda. The issue has been in discussion for a number of years, especially within the public sector organisations responsible for adult education.

The establishment in 1997 of a new institution for the accreditation of training structures and curricula and a recent framework law (passed at the end of 2003) for the rationalisation between the systems of initial and continuous training are two positive recent developments that are expected to promote the establishment of validation methods in the near future.

### **13.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

#### *13.2.1 Institutional, political and legal framework in Greece*

A new framework law (Law 3191/2003) with a serious bearing on vocational education, training and job search assistance in Greece, was recently passed in the Greek parliament. The implementation of this new law is expected to rationalize the provision of services such as vocational education and training, accreditation of competences and training outcomes, counselling and vocational guidance and lastly employment-related assistance. The new law is also expected to exploit synergies and promote collaboration among the various ministries and numerous governmental agencies and bodies active in training and employment related activities in Greece. The new law provides for the development of a national system for better co-ordinating vocational education and training with employment (ESSEEKA).

The new framework law aims at addressing a number of drawbacks and inadequacies that are part of the Greek educational and training system. Historically, there has been fragmentation and lack of coordination among the various educational and training streams and levels. General education, vocational education and initial training (all provided by the Ministry of Education), are organized in distinct and mutually isolated pathways. Continuing training, on-the-job training and active labour market programmes are governed by the Ministry of Labour and the Manpower Employment Organization (OAED). In addition, several other ministries and organizations operate their own systems of vocational education and training at the sectoral level. The new law is clearly ambitious as it seeks to activate and coordinate many actors and systems but has prospects for success.

As regards validation of non-formal and informal learning, even though there are scarce initiatives currently taking place in Greece, an institution was set up in 1997 that could potentially take this forward in the future. The National Accreditation Centre of Vocational Training Structures and Accompanying Support Services (EKEPIS) was created through Law

2469/1997. It operates independently, supervised by the Ministry of Labour and is responsible for accreditation of structures offering continuous vocational training.

EKEPIS is responsible for:

- 1) providing accreditation to training **providers** and training **structures**. In Greece, these are the Vocational Training Centres (KEKs) and Accompanying Services Structures (KESYY).
- 2) providing accreditation of training staff (EKEPIS is compiling a Single Register of Instructors).
- 3) providing accreditation of training curricula provided by KEKs. This means that the content of the courses offered has been checked and accredited but the qualifications that individuals gain by attending these courses are not officially recognised yet. Courses offered by KEKs are not connected with the general VET system and do not lead to official accreditation or diploma. This aspect of accreditation is currently under development by the EKEPIS. The intention is that by establishing standards for the contents of courses, and by accrediting the curricula, this will lead to an automatic recognition of the knowledge gained by persons participating in the training. Hence, there are plans for EKEPIS to develop the accreditation of qualifications in the future.

The effort of EKEPIS, that began in 1997, to co-ordinate continuous vocational training provision in Greece has been evolving step by step, starting with the accreditation of training structures, moving on to the accreditation of courses and trainers. The accreditation of competences and qualifications is the final aim of EKEPIS and this is now in the discussion and development stage.

The social partners participate in the EKEPIS administrative body in a consultative role, contributing to the framing and implementation of policies in the field of accreditation of continuing training.

### *13.2.2 Existing methods and instruments for the validation of non-formal and informal learning*

The Ministry of Education recently set up a system of summative assessment, based on examinations to confirm and certify the knowledge of modern languages obtained through non-formal training. The process leads to obtaining the 'State Certificate of Competence in Languages'. The first examinations took place in 2003. The certification can be obtained by Greek native speakers for foreign languages including English, French, German and Italian. Foreign nationals can obtain certification for their knowledge of Modern Greek.

### *13.2.3 Norms/ standard setting*

One of the main norms of the assessment is transparency and for this reason detailed information on the certification method is widely available on the internet and through communication with the Ministry and its agencies. The details of the structure and content of the certification procedure are available for the benefit of the language learners and language teachers that will be involved but also for the employers (who will be the end users of the

language certificates when recruiting). The examination topics are designed with the aim of maintaining between examination cycles:

- stability
- reliability
- construct validity and content validity.

The examinations are designed around the question of ‘what should the user of a language be able to do at each level to be considered adequate in order for his knowledge of the language to be certified’ and consists of 4 phases, as follows, aiming to assess:

- the ability to comprehend written text
- the ability to produce written text and inter-relate between Greek and the foreign language.
- listening comprehension.
- the ability to speak (monologue) and to converse in the foreign language under examination.

**Table 13.1 Certification procedure are available for the benefit of the language learners in Greece**

<i>Written exam</i>	<b>Assessment of:</b>	<b>No. of questions</b>	<b>% of the grade</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Length of text (in words)</b>
<b>Phase I</b>	✓Written comprehension	75	25%	90´	1.500-2.000
<b>Phase II</b>	✓writing ability ✓inter-relation between Greek and the foreign language	2-3	30%	90´	230-300
<b>Phase III</b>	✓Listening Comprehension	25	25%	15´-20´	500-800
<i>Oral exam:</i> <b>Phase IV</b>	✓ Speaking ability ✓ Conversation	5-10	20%	15´- 20´	Not applicable

Standards also exist for the type of questions to be put under each phase, including multiple choice, short answers, ranking and role play among others.

No evaluation of this validation methodology has yet taken place, it is considered too early to evaluate the programme since the first examinations took place in 2003.

#### *13.2.4 Public-Private-Third sector partnership initiatives*

Three EU projects involve Public-Private-Third sector initiatives: 2 Equal projects (ESPARTAKOS and PROOPTIKI) and one Leonardo project. All 3 projects are pilots for validation. All projects end in 2005.



The idea of the ESPARTAKOS Equal project, co-ordinated by the Hellenic Management Association, is to work with a portfolio of skills in order to provide training and finally to validate non-formal and informal learning in the sectors of informatics, logistics and hostelling. The process involves the following steps. Firstly, employees have to fill in a check list of their skills. A paper from the employer, for instance, stating that the employee has developed certain skills in their work or has followed a certain training course is sufficient. Depending on the skills employees already have, they receive different parts of the training programme. If the beneficiary does not have previous practical experience, it is compulsory for him to work for around 3 months. This is done through internships in companies with which agreements have been signed, as the Development Partnership of this project has very solid social partners (Chambers of Commerce, Unions).

The PROOPTIKI (PERSPECTIVE) Equal project, coordinated by European Profiles<sup>128</sup>, is focussed on people who come from the former Soviet Union and seeks to find a way to validate non formal and informal learning and work experience, in particular for lower skilled workers. The validation is done through a flexible portfolio of documents which is followed by a validation procedure.

The Leonardo project EPO “European Postmen”, co-ordinated by the Hellenic Post Office and involving Greece Continuing Training Centres as well as the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training<sup>129</sup>, aims at developing a common competence profile for European postmen involving 15 units and for two different skills levels. The project started in 2004, a course has been designed and the first set of postmen is due to follow the course and validate their skills.

### ***13.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector***

Research as part of this study has brought to light little information on sector or company-specific methods for identifying, assessing and recognizing competences acquired through informal or non-formal learning in the private sector. Indicatively, it can be mentioned that the following validate learning acquired through training courses provided outside the formal education system:

- certification is offered by Private Educational Institutes for courses offered by them but these are not officially recognised by the State,
- Certain major private companies, examples of which are encountered in particular in the banking and IT sector offer certification for the in-house training courses their employees participate in.

---

<sup>128</sup> European profiles is a company involved in any European projects specially in Eastern Europe.

<sup>129</sup> This is an independent organisation that belongs to the Ministry of Education.

### ***13.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector***

In this section, a self-standing validation system of summative assessment used by a major non-profit Greek organisation, the Hellenic Business Administration Corporation (E.E.D.E.) is presented as a good practice example. This certification is not part of any formal validation system, but the certificates in question enjoy recognition by employers. Hence, the validation system offers ‘social recognition’ of the training received. This is because EEDE is widely known for offering quality non-formal training.

EEDE offers a number of ‘Post-Graduate Programmes’. The Programmes recognise prior learning, since they are open to individuals who have either a University degree or possess 8 years of work experience.

About 2000 individuals have participated in the EEDE ‘Post-Graduate Programme on Business Administration’ since 1989. The Programme lasts for one year and there are 4 thematic cycles. A round of examinations is held after the end of each thematic cycle and there is a requirement to submit a dissertation at the end of the course. If the results of the 4 examination rounds and the dissertation are satisfactory, a certificate is issued to the participant which certifies the knowledge gained and recognises the holder as ‘possessing extraordinary management knowledge and ability’. This certification is not part of any formal system, is self-standing and is recognised in the labour market by employers.

### ***13.5 Conclusions***

As outlined above, to date, an overall framework for validation has not been developed in Greece but the foundations for creating this have been set, in the form of the establishment of a new institution for the accreditation of training structures which has been very active in the past few years. A recent framework law which aims to better co-ordinate the systems of initial and continuous training and which establishes a number of Committees for the development of adult learning is also expected to help in this direction.

It is too early to judge the efficiency and effectiveness of the national validation system of language competence which has been in place since 2003. It should be noted however, that European (e.g. European Computer Driving Licence) and International (e.g. Microsoft, Cambridge) systems for validating computer competences, are being used very successfully in Greece and have been enthusiastically received both by adult learners and employers. For cultural reasons, educational attainment is very important for younger generations of Greeks. Greek society would be very receptive to any initiatives aiming to validate informal and non-formal learning and that would help to clarify the complex environment of adult learning in Greece.

## **14.0 HUNGARY**

*By Cohen Zoon (ECORYS-Netherlands)*

### **14.1 Introduction**

In Hungary, the validation of non-formal and informal learning is clearly in a developing stage. This national overview relies on the scarce information about the current situation in this country. ECORYS-NEI has expanded its current knowledge and information by contacting representatives from the Ministry of Education and other educational bodies in Hungary.

The individuals we have spoken to draw the same conclusion: the validation of non-formal and informal learning is a Hungarian policy goal for the (near) future. So far little has been accomplished in this particular field, but there are some encouraging developments: as stated by the Adult Training 2001 Act: “Adults entering for training may request preliminary assessment of his/her skill level, which the training institution is obliged to identify and take into consideration”. On this basis the National Institute for Adult Education has prepared software promoting the identification, assessment, validation and recording of prior learning. At present there are 50 accredited adult training institutes using this system.

Following this section we will describe what has been accomplished on a national level by the public authorities. Due to the lack of information concerning sectoral organisations, individual companies, general output and third sector, we have only made general remarks regarding these areas. The chapter then goes on to provide an overview of the present stakeholders that work on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary. The last section of the chapter presents the conclusions about the national overview of Hungary.

### **14.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

#### **14.2.1 General situation**

In the report ‘The learning continuity’ by Colardyn & Bjørnåvold<sup>130</sup>, the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary is described as a situation in which ‘there are legal possibilities for assessment and recognition of professional experience. They are available for specific purposes or in specific occupations (mostly, crafts and skilled worker level)’. The authors also mention the possibility of Hungarians preparing for vocational examinations. Adult learners have the right to request a preliminary assessment of knowledge and skills when applying for training.

The same report also states that currently, Hungary is the only country in Eastern Europe that is in the process of developing a new approach towards validation of learning and recognition of competences. Although this remark sounds promising the report also concludes that an expansion of the concrete application of legal provisions in Hungary is yet to start.

---

<sup>130</sup> Colardyn, D. & Bjørnåvold, J., *The learning continuity*, 2004.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is a relatively new and undeveloped concept in Hungary. This is reflected by the remarks given by Mr. János Sz. Tóth, the director of the Budapest Link Office of the European Association for the Education of Adults. In 2001, a new law on adult education was passed by the Hungarian Parliament. The law promotes the validation of non-formal and informal learning, but concrete initiatives have not reached the implementation stage yet.

As one of the accession countries of the EU, Hungary has been placed in the so-called Concrete Objectives Work Programme of the European Commission in 2003. It is expected that through this programme, the validation of non-formal and non-formal learning will be given priority status and will become more professional in the following years. Several expert groups are working on lifelong learning and adult education. These bodies advise the Minister of Labour and have given the recognition of non-formal and informal learning priority on their policy agendas.

The National Adult Training Council has published reports in which the validation of non-formal and informal learning is stressed as a point of attention<sup>131</sup>. Nevertheless, in Hungary validation of non-formal and informal learning is hardly found on the work floors of enterprises.

Although this report has mentioned that there are only some sporadic examples of the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary, it is worth mentioning some general projects and initiatives. From this perspective it is important to say that in Hungary, most of the policy formulation is centralised on a national level. The Ministry of Education is the primary initiator for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

So far in relation to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, there are two particular projects which can be detailed<sup>132</sup>.

#### *14.2.2 The Oracle Project*

The Oracle Project is funded under the EU Joint Actions: Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and the Youth Programme. The theme under which the project was submitted is the 'construction of bridges between qualifications: a system of transfer and accumulation of training credits for lifelong learning'.

The Oracle Partnership is spread across four countries: Portugal, Italy, Hungary and Ireland. An International Team, under the leadership of the University of Coimbra co-ordinates and provides expertise for the project partnership. The local partners each have formed a team of local actors to ensure the successful delivery of the project objectives.

---

<sup>131</sup> National Adult Training Council, *Tasks to be accomplished in preparation for the accession to the European Union*; discussion paper

<sup>132</sup> This particular information was given by Mr. Nehez Gyozo of the Hungarian Ministry of Education

The West Pannon Regional Development Agency coordinates the Oracle project in the Hungarian Region of Western Transdanubia. Local actors involved in the project include local authorities across the region, trades unions and employment agencies. The project is supported by Hungarian Ministry of Education.

The Oracle Skills project aims to identify and code tacit knowledge, implicit skills and latent abilities with special concern for the recognition and coding of non-formal and informal knowledge skills and abilities and their validation as the basis for the transfer of recognised credit standards for employment between EU member states as a means of increasing social inclusion.

#### *14.2.3 National Development Plan - Human Resources Development Operational Programme*

Hungary has prepared a National Development Plan (NDP), which sets the framework for the utilization of Structural Funds assistance. Based on a comprehensive analysis of the economic and social situation of the country, the NDP has identified the objectives and priorities to be supported from Structural Funds sources in the period 2004-2006. The overall objective of the NDP is to reduce the income gap compared to the EU average. In order to achieve that, the strategy is implemented through operational programmes. One of them is Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRD OP).

Development is based on job description analysis. The exact tasks, competencies and competence profiles generate requirements and common, specialised modules. Along with the process of modularisation, measurement and assessment methods are being elaborated. A separate form of adult education system is being developed within the framework of the National Development Plan, which is harmonised with the above mentioned efforts. In the case of some registered vocations, there is a possibility for the citizens to apply for and take successful professional exams on the basis of informal and non-formal learning without fulfilling formal requirements. To keep up with economic change, a flexible system of training will be required that is able to meet the needs of the significantly growing number of individuals taking part in training programmes. The necessary co-ordination and adult education institution systems as well as methodology must be developed or created in areas where they do not exist yet. Within the framework of the open learning environment the measure exclusively supports the objectives of the non-formal (not school system) training developments. Much attention will be paid to the whole of flexible learning system, as modules, prior learning assessments, certification, portfolio and electronic learning environments.

Policies in Hungary are often presented in the context of lifelong learning, which has become one of the policy priorities in the last 2-3 years. A report by the European Commission emphasizes that the introduction of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary should be promoted for securing people's employability, particularly after they've started working<sup>133</sup>. A Portfolio-system seems to be a practical tool for accomplishing this. Another goal, which is

---

133 European Commission, Hungary, Report on the Consultation Process Concerning Lifelong Learning

attached to the validation of non-formal and informal learning is the prevention of social exclusion.

### **14.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

#### *14.3.1 Industry sectors*

Hungarian umbrella organisations on a sectoral level have not really started to set up concrete initiatives regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning. There are no particular sectors, which are currently working on this topic. In general, there seems to be an expectation on sectoral level that initiatives will be taken by the government and national bodies (ministries)<sup>134</sup>. There seems to be a centralized approach at work here. It functions very much top-down instead of bottom-up (coming from the industrial bodies or industries themselves).

The European institution for craft and small businesses, the Avignon Academy, has developed a tool for small and craft enterprises that is nowadays used in Hungary for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. According to the Avignon Academy, non-formal and informal learning may be easier in small and craft enterprises than in larger companies. First of all, the informal way of acquisition of competency in small and craft companies is prevalent for a large number of competencies. Secondly, the workers of craft enterprises have a high degree of knowledge in competencies even if this knowledge is not corresponding to the standardized disciplines. Thirdly, the worker is able to perform an activity even if he is not able to decode which are the elements of standard knowledge related to the activity<sup>135</sup>. With a fair amount of small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) in Hungary, there seem certainly possibilities for this country in expanding the use of systems of validating non-formal and informal learning.

In the context of strengthening the innovation of industries, the European Commission has pleaded for more attention on validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary. From the perspective of the Commission, it could 'awaken' variety in the labour force. Therefore, it is definitely in the economic interest of the Hungarian industry sectors to introduce the validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>136</sup>.

#### *14.3.2 Individual companies*

Like the industrial umbrella organisations, there are not, as far as we know, a significant number of Hungarian companies, who have started to set up processes for the promotion or implementation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

---

134 This particular information was given by Mr. Nehez Gyozo of the Hungarian Ministry of Education

135 Source: The Avignon Academy

136 Source: European Trend Chart on Innovation, 2002. The same remarks are made in the program of the European Commission for engaging people in active citizenship in central and Eastern Europe.

The companies, which are currently working on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary, are primarily West-European multinational companies. They have introduced general international concepts amongst their networks. The Hungarian Ministry of Education hopes the possibilities for Hungarian employees in French (Renault and Danone), Italian (Fiat) and German (BASF) organisations may eventually lead to a greater interest in the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungarian companies as well.

#### *14.3.3 General output*

While the concept of validation of non-formal and informal learning is still at the beginning stage, no reliable output material can be presented here.

#### ***14.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector***

So far, there have been very few attempts made regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Hungarian third or voluntary sector. It would appear that in the following number of years, Hungary has to work on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in both public and private organisations. Activities like the completion of an infrastructure for the recognition of skills have to be fulfilled, before the thoughts regarding the voluntary sector can be presented. In other European countries we see that only after the introduction of validation of non-formal and informal learning in the public and private sector, the introduction into the voluntary sector can take place. In that sense, the voluntary sector is clearly not the first step to be taken in relation to the validation of non-formal and informal learning..

Nevertheless, the Hungarian ministry of Education is aware of the fact that much of non-formal and informal learning takes place during voluntary work. According to one of our respondents<sup>137</sup>, the ministry assumes that this is a possibility for sustaining efficiency advantages in the labour market. In the following years targets will need to be set to validate aspects of learning in voluntary work. According to the authorities, a good way for expanding the possibilities of non-formal and informal learning in the voluntary sector are possibly found in the youth sector as in other European countries, the achievements in the youth sector are promising.

Much will depend on the speed of the process in the public and private sector. If Hungary succeeds in developing a basis for non-formal and informal learning in a couple of years, this may lead to an interest for initiatives for the voluntary sector<sup>138</sup>.

---

<sup>137</sup> This particular information was given by Mr. Nehez Gyozo of the Hungarian Ministry of Education

<sup>138</sup> Colardyn, D. & Bjørnåvold, J., *The learning continuity*, 2004.

## **14.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities**

### *14.5.1 Ministry of Education*

The ministry is the responsible national body for formal vocational education and the system of state recognized vocational qualifications.

### *14.5.2 Ministry of Employment and Labour*

The recognition of skills is particularly a subject, which plays a role in making the labour market more efficient. Therefore, the Ministry of Labour cooperates with the Ministry of Education on the promotion of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

### *14.5.3 National Council of Adult Education*

The National Council of Adult Education is an advisory body for the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education. It is currently working on steps that have to be taken to allow Hungary to meet the standards set by the European Commission on adult education.

### *14.5.4 National Vocational Education Council*

In the light of directing tasks, the council operates as a preliminary, professional decision-maker and it has a reporting and an advisory function on a national level. The council consists of representatives of employers and employees, chambers of commerce, maintainers of schools, and representatives of ministries responsible for vocational education and training.

### *14.5.5 Structural Funds and European Social Fund*

For developing and implementing the validation of non-formal and informal learning it is expected that Hungary will partly rely on financial resources coming from these Funds. The role of these funds is also to be found in official policy documents<sup>139</sup>.

## **14.6 Conclusions**

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has not developed significantly in Hungary yet. The first policy outlines have been presented, particularly in the context of Hungary as an accession country of the European Union. So far, there are no concrete examples from practice.

Sectoral umbrella organisations and individual companies are still not involved in setting up initiatives. These bodies expect national initiatives for starting up the implementation of non-formal and informal learning in Hungary.

---

<sup>139</sup> National Adult Training Council, *Tasks to be accomplished in preparation for the accession to the European Union*; discussion paper



While initiatives have not been undertaken yet, there is no material that gives insight in the general output of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

So far, there are no developments within the third or voluntary sector regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning at all. Nevertheless, in Hungary this is perceived as a possibility for the future (after introducing non-formal and informal learning in the Hungarian industries).

In general, Hungary is in the first stages of introducing the validation of non-formal and informal learning between its borders. There are certainly signs that the concept is going to be used in the following years, but this has not been made concrete. Policy makers seem enthusiastic about the chances for employers, employees and Hungary as a state in itself.

## **15.0 ICELAND**

*By Arnbjorn Olaffson (Educate Iceland)*

### **15.1 Introduction**

For the last eight years the Icelandic government has laid an increased emphasis on lifelong learning. In 1998 a Minister appointed committee on lifelong learning produced a report on recommendations and proposals for increasing participation in lifelong learning in Iceland. The report deals with lifelong learning from various standpoints and focuses on the organisation and administration of adult learning. In the report one of the key arguments concerns the need for short and transparent routes for adults to formal graduation and that this be achievable through recognition of their prior learning. The committee also pointed out the need for a general policy for validation of adults' experiences and knowledge.

Validation has been practiced in Iceland for decades, e.g. with assessment of work experience within the skilled trades since the late 1920's as well as the recognition of vocational education and training that has been acquired abroad. However, the systematic and organised approach towards the recognition of adults' skills and the apprehension of the importance of being able to validate prior learning for re-entry into the formal school system is a relatively recent notion. The interest can be traced back to growing awareness of lifelong learning in Iceland – both from the public as well as the government.

The actions taken after the report was published can be described as the first formal procedures specifically aimed at validating non-formal and informal learning. The Ministry presented the key features of the Copenhagen Declaration to upper secondary schools and the occupational councils and have encouraged both to be actively involved in future developments. Icelanders have therefore recognised the importance of validation of non-formal learning, but specific initiatives are just now getting underway.

### **15.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

The main initiatives taken regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning on a national stage come from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The Ministry's goals are laid out in a service agreement with the Education and Training Service Centre from 2003, which gives the latter responsibility for the initial development of a means of validating non-formal and informal learning along with an advisory role on how such a system will be implemented in Iceland. [See chapter 2.2]

Different activities can be classified as pertaining to the field of validation of non-formal learning, but public initiatives have mostly been aimed at the assessment of knowledge and skills in connection with;

### *15.2.1 Career planning*

Unemployment agencies maintain a national database of job seekers. Information in the database includes information about an individual's formal education, work experience, skills and other competences, such as language skills, management experience, driver's licence, computer skills, artistic talent and practical experience in industrial trades. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Directorate of Labour are responsible for labour issues in Iceland. Local unemployment agencies operated by the Department of Labour are charged with the task of providing information on available jobs and education to those seeking employment.

### *15.2.2 Enrolment in upper secondary schools and universities*

No comprehensive legislation applies to adult education in Iceland. The Upper Secondary School Act of 1996 however covers several aspects of adult education. Municipal education centres, union study centres and lifelong learning centres work together to prepare adults for reentry in the educational system and further education. Adults are evaluated according to the requirements stated in the National Curriculum Guidelines. The guidelines state that:

“Schoolmasters at upper secondary level are responsible for assessing and validating the student's previous education – both formal or non-formal. Non-formal education, in this context refers to the knowledge or skills that the individual has acquired through means other than formal education, such as privately run courses or experience gathered on the job market.” [The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture: National Curriculum Guidelines 2004]

In reviewing previous studies, schools are expected to ascertain whether the studies in question can be said to equal any given line of study deemed necessary as preparation for a new line of studies and whether the individual student has met the preconditions for completing his studies at upper secondary level. If there is any doubt as to whether previous studies can be validated, the student has a right to undergo examination in order to demonstrate his actual skills and knowledge.

It has been shown that schools at upper secondary level have had difficulties in measuring or validating adults' work experience and informal and non-formal learning. This prompted the Ministry of Education to encourage schools to go further in validating learning and to try to gain new experiences when assessing individual learning in order to reach an appropriate and fair conclusion as to the proper starting point for each individual's new studies. Thus the schools have been asked to focus on the goals of the study programme in question and the actual skills and competencies of each individual seeking admission or assessment. It has been underlined that individuals have a right to special assessment examinations where there is doubt as to the correct starting point for studies in upper secondary school. The Ministry's policy is that repetition of previous paths of learning should be avoided at all costs. It is stated in art. 6 of the Law on Universities no. 136/1997 that universities can themselves decide who is admitted for studies at the university in question. Generally speaking, it is required that students have passed matriculation examination or its equivalent. In some cases applicants with substantial work experience who have not completed their matriculation examination

may be admitted, but there is little evidence to suggest that any significant number of students are enrolled at universities in Iceland on this basis.

### *15.2.3 Developing individual curricula*

The Ministry of Education has charged different professional educational centres with the responsibility of verifying study contracts for all those wishing to complete vocational studies within regulated industrial professions. According to the Upper Secondary School Act, a study contract must be signed for all courses of vocational study in this country, and this applies to young apprentices as well as adults.

It is quite common that an individual with extensive work experience in a particular field seeks to complete formal studies and be licensed as a professional in his field. These individuals must first get a study contract with an approved master. When doing this, they can ask to have their work experience assessed in order to shorten the length of practical training required. The education centres previously mentioned do not have particular assessment tools, other than assessing the type of training the individual has received and measuring it against the national curriculum and the requirements of the labour market. Some education centres have only looked at the time of training, but not its contents. In spite of this, some centres have demonstrated an interest in developing more useful assessment tools and would like to take as their point of departure the descriptions of in-company training that in the future will accompany all curricula for vocational education.

### *15.2.4 Issuing school-leaving certificates*

Students who complete individual courses receive diplomas that confirm the passing of a particular course of study, but these diplomas are not valid within the official school system. On the other hand, they can form a basis of assessment for further studies at particular school levels.

School leavers from upper secondary school level receive certificates upon graduation which have a formal standing within the school system since they provide the basis for enrolment at universities and other further education institutions. These however do grant professional recognition within regulated professions.

Within regulated industrial professions, students who graduate from a vocational programme at upper secondary school level must apply for a journeyman's examination as soon as they have completed the required length of practical in-company training. If they pass the test, they are granted permission to work as licensed professionals and to enter a master study programme. Students who complete examinations in health professions must apply for recognition to the Ministry of Health and Social Security.

Individuals who come from abroad have the possibility of getting their vocational education recognised on the basis of art. 14 of the Regulation on Journeyman's Examinations no. 525/2000. The foreigner would receive a letter from the ministry stating they have equal competencies to an Icelandic person in a similar position. The individual from abroad would

however still need to sit an exam to gain the Journeyman qualification. The Minister of Education can fully recognise education that has been acquired abroad, so that the individual in question will be issued an Icelandic journeyman's certificate. If there is any doubt as to the contents of study abroad or length of practical work experience, the individual has the opportunity to demonstrate his skills and knowledge in a practical examination.

There was previously an alternative way for individuals to seek recognition as licensed professionals without having to take the formal route through the education system - the so called Ten Years' Examinations. This possibility was in existence from approximately 1950 until 1998 when it was abolished by law. Initially, it applied only to those who had had accidents and suffered injuries during their apprenticeships so they were unable to complete their vocational education, but who were able to work at particular jobs with satisfactory results. This examination gradually became interpreted so liberally that anyone who had gained ten years' work experience under the guidance of a qualified master had the right to undergo a practical examination, the passing of which granted the individual in question the right to work as a licensed professional within a certain regulated trade. The Ten Years' Examinations were abolished in 1998.

#### *15.2.5 Regulations for validating non-formal education and workplace experience*

The Ministry has issued guidelines for upper secondary schools for validating non-formal education and skills acquired on the workplace for two separate professions, social service workers and medical secretaries, in order to shorten the formal study path. Currently work is being done in developing guidelines for validating non-formal learning and experience for assistants in pre- and compulsory schools.

#### *15.2.6 Improving the individual's position in the labour market, job development or wage increases*

Wage contracts sometimes contain options that enable employees to increase their wages through vocational education. It is up to the employers themselves to maintain an overview of the degree of education that the employee has reached. This applies especially to civil servants, municipal employees and those working within the social and health sectors, where a special system of continuing education has been established.

#### *15.2.7 The Educational Gateway*

Recently, the Ministry has striven to lay the foundation for new forms of education by utilising information technology.

The Educational Gateway is a means to that end. It is a web based environment for responding to the needs of students, teachers, schools, parents and others connected with education. The Educational Gateway includes a sub-site which deals with the validation and assessment of prior learning, where it is possible to find guidelines for self assessing prior vocational education. To begin with the guidelines will primarily benefit those seeking either

to certify foreign vocational education and training or certify the vocational education obtained in Iceland for use abroad.

#### *15.2.8 Conferences and work-groups*

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture organised a conference on validation of non-formal education in February 2003 in order to introduce international initiatives on the subject and address the need for national strategies. The conference served as a formal start-up and forum for the discussion of validation of non-formal learning and development of national policies in Iceland.

The Research Liaison Office at the University of Iceland (RLO) organised a conference on the development of adult learning in Iceland and Europe in March 2004. As part of the preparation for the conference the RLO formed a working group to discuss methods for validating non-formal learning and skills. The working group looked at the motivation for developing a system for validating non-formal learning and skills, the essential requirements of such a system and the methods and tools needed for successful implementation of such a system.

A delegation from Iceland attended a two day conference in Stockholm in November 2003 organised by the Nordic Council of Ministers on validation of non-formal learning. The objective of meeting was to discuss and share information on the Nordic initiatives being taken on the subject of validation.

### *15.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector*

#### *Fræðslumiðstöð Atvinnulífsins – The Education and Training Service Centre*

The Education and Training Service Centre functions as a mutual platform for partners from the Ministry and both sides of industry with special focus on the task of development of validation of non-formal, informal and individual competences. The Centre's main task is to function as an advisory body for the Ministry of Education and develop methods for validation on non-formal and informal learning.

The Education and Training Service Centre opened in 2003. Currently the centre is developing and formulating its approach as well as structuring the tasks ahead and various initiatives in the field of validation.

The Centre's initiatives that are concerned with validation of informal and non-formal learning include:

#### *Advisory role*

According to the service agreement with the Ministry, the Education and Training Service Centre is "... to aid the Ministry in developing methods to validate education and educational progress, including validation and accreditation of non-formal learning and training in

cooperation with work life and educational providers. Also, to assist in developing personal portfolios for individuals within the target group [i.e. unskilled workers].”

#### *Working groups and committees*

The Centre has members on a steering committee which works with the assessment and validation of knowledge acquired outside the formal school system as a means to shorten the formal education for unskilled workers.

A working group appointed by the Ministry, including two representatives from the Ministry, one from the upper-secondary system and one from the Education and Training Service Centre, was appointed in the fall 2003 to serve as an advisory body for the Ministry in matters regarding validation. The committee has met numerous times and is well on its way in developing rules for validation of non-formal education. The first results are due in the fall 2004.

The Centre has also attended national and international conferences on the subject of validation, as well as participating in various working groups.

#### *Projects and specific initiatives:*

- Development programmes for unemployed people in the Sudurnes region which aims to assess and validate the unemployed skills in order to enter vocational education at the Sudurnes Comprehensive College. This is a joint project between the regional Directorate of Labour office, Sudurnes Comprehensive College, Sudurnes Centre for Lifelong Learning and the Education and Training Service Centre. The first students are scheduled to enrol in the college by the fall 2004.
- Joint development project between Iceland Telecom, Efling Trade Union, Starfsafl (fund for the educational support of untrained workers in the greater Reykjavik area), Reykjavik Technical School and the Education and Training Service Centre. The project aims to develop methods of assessing and validating the competence of unskilled employees at Iceland Telecom for them to shorten the formal telecommunication technician study path at the Reykjavik Technical School. As a part of this project, special focus will be put on developing methods for the employer to verify the workers job related skills.
- Joint project between Efling Trade Union and the Education and Training Service Centre et al, which aims to validate the competences of unskilled employees at the Psychiatric Ward at Landspítali University Hospital to shorten the formal study path as social service workers.

The projects and initiatives at the Education and Training Service Centre have only recently started and even though the general process of validation has been structured, the specific methods and procedures are still under development. The Education and Training Service Centre has recognised four main steps in the validation process:

1. The identification of the individual's skills, either in groups or privately. Currently the registration forms and individual portfolios are being developed.
2. Documentation of the individual's skills in accordance with the National Curriculum Guidelines.
3. Validation of individual skills in association with the upper secondary school in question (a workgroup including members from the upper secondary school will decide how the process of validation will take place, ex. personal interviews, written information)
4. Acknowledgement of the individual's skills, which leads to enrolment in an upper secondary school at the appropriate place in the study path in light of the individual's skills and previous education outside the formal school system.

The first results of the projects will be visible in 2004, but to date the Education and Training Service Centre has established itself as a pivotal actor in the development of methods and procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning in Iceland. Their strong ties to both sides of industry as well as the service agreement with the Ministry of Education and close contact with the educational system (both formal and non-formal) will ensure that the procedures developed will be widely acknowledged.

All information regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning in Iceland will be managed either by or through the Centre in the future.

#### ***15.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector***

##### ***Mennt – EDUCATE Iceland***

EDUCATE Iceland is a co-operation forum between the educational sector, social partners, local authorities and others interested in education and training. The main focus of the work of EDUCATE is to gather and disseminate information and to facilitate transference of knowledge and competences.

Even though it is not strictly concerned with validation of non-formal and informal learning, EDUCATE Iceland is currently involved with a project aimed at recognising educational providers outside the formal school system called "Accreditation of Lifelong Learning". The project is a two year pilot project funded by the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci programme and is set to be finished in the fall 2005. The project aims to develop a new approach to meet the need for increased transparency and quality assurance in continuing and lifelong learning. For more information go to [www.all-accreditation.com](http://www.all-accreditation.com)



## **15.5 Conclusions**

From what has been said in this chapter, it can be noted that the work on identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Iceland is in its initial stages. Previous efforts in this direction have been heavily influenced by formalities, official demands, curriculum and adaptation to school-based education programmes. In other words, the emphasis has been on exposing what the individuals concerned cannot do, instead of focusing on what they can do. This has obviously prevented adults from having their skills and competences fairly assessed and thereby made effective participation in lifelong learning less likely.

It is becoming increasingly clear that a concerted government effort is needed to push this process further in order to gain real results in validating non-formal learning. The existence of centres for lifelong learning, the discussion on lifelong learning within the EU along with a pressure from individuals and labour unions for a system of validation of non-formal learning has led to the first steps being taken to lay the foundation of such a system. It has been acknowledged that vast amounts of human resources exist in society - and that society would benefit from making them visible.

The work and the development of methods regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning has only recently started in Iceland. The lack of initiatives from the social sector and a national policy does not mean that they have been idle, but rather that the apparent need for a structured and well defined validation system has not been considered necessary up until recently. Even though the process is still marked by information gathering, network building and a few pilot projects, awareness of the importance of validation, the relatively small size of the formal school system, close contact with policy makers and governmental bodies, and wide participation of social actors, will ensure a comprehensive and unified system of validating non-formal and informal learning in Iceland.

## **16.0 IRELAND**

*By John Konrad (Konrad Associates International)*

### **16.1 Introduction**

This area of educational policy and practice is currently undergoing rapid development. This report is based primarily on discussions with key stakeholders, supplemented by quotations from relevant studies and documents. The period covered in the study is the last four years.

As will be seen subsequently, whilst only a limited analysis has been undertaken, care has been taken to make the approach capable of regular updating.

### **16.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

#### *16.2.1 Overview of political and practical initiatives by public authorities National Framework of Qualifications*

There are many changes currently taking place in education and training in Ireland. The new National Framework of Qualifications was developed between 2001 and 2003, co-ordinated by the National Qualification Authority for Ireland [NQAI] a key element in these changes. It signals significant progress in the creation of a single, coherent, more easily understood qualifications system for all levels of education and training. It is also compatible with European and international developments to enhance learner mobility within and between national systems<sup>140</sup>.

The NQAI maintains the Framework. While all the awards made by the national awarding bodies in Ireland are included in the Framework, they are not all included in the same way because these bodies differ with respect to their structures, functions and autonomy. For example, as discussed below, Universities have a significant degree of autonomy. The Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1999 established separate but interdependent roles for the NQAI and the Awards Councils - the Further Education and Training Awards Council [FETAC] and Higher Education and Training Awards Council [HETAC]. The overall standards of awards of FETAC, HETAC and the Dublin Institute of Technology [DIT] are set by the Framework and these bodies, as awarding bodies, are responsible for setting detailed standards for named awards, validate programmes, make awards, agree and monitor quality assurance procedures and ensure fair and consistent assessment of learners. In the case of the DIT, which is both a provider and an awarding body, it validates its own programmes and ensures that quality assurance procedures are in place.

The awards councils may also delegate authority to make awards to particular institutions that are within their remit. This will be based on criteria and procedures agreed between the Councils concerned and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. Such criteria and procedures have been agreed by HETAC and the Authority and are being implemented.

---

<sup>140</sup> See <http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/>

The universities are both providers and awarding bodies and set the standards for their awards. Awards made by the universities will be accommodated in the Framework on an agreed basis with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

The State Examinations Commission is responsible for setting standards for the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate. These awards are accommodated in the Framework on an agreed basis with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

### *16.2.2 Review of National Policies for Education*

Currently, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] has been undertaking a review of national policies in Higher Education during 2004.

“We regard it as critical that the cause of lifelong learning is reinvigorated. It is self-evident that significant generations of potential graduates did not penetrate higher education in the past and that, though on a lesser scale the situation continues now. ... Much more needs to be done to facilitate credit transfer and accumulation, including the recognition of work experience and prior experience. ... However, progress is slow and there is an urgent need to secure agreement across the various providers and to move on to develop a mechanism to enable the introduction of APEL to encourage adult students to resume learning.<sup>141</sup>”

This quotation summarises the current situation where the fit between the needs of the economy and the outcomes of the formal education and training systems needs significant development in access to Higher Education. Changes that meet this need will also be capable of use in recognising competencies in Further Education.

### *16.2.3 Key Questions*

“To improve training outcomes, governments and social partners could establish systems of accreditation and recognition that facilitate investment in adult skills. Recognition of prior learning is a prime example. This means that non-formal learning is either accredited as a formal qualification, or recognised for the purposes of acquiring a new formal qualification. While recognition of prior learning can prove a useful stepping-stone into further learning, it is essential to ensure that certification systems are credible and transparent to employers, while also reflecting changing skill requirements. Otherwise, certified skills might lose value in the labour market. In addition, recognition of prior learning needs to be translated into higher earnings/better career prospects for the workers concerned. How to create a system of recognition and accreditation of skills that can be used as “currency” in the labour market, while keeping track with changing skill requirements? In particular, what is the experience of

---

<sup>141</sup> OECD (2004), Review of National Policies for Education: Review of Higher Education in Ireland – Examiners’ Report, EDU/EC(2004)14, September, Para 59.

social partners defining jointly education and training curricula leading to recognised qualifications?<sup>142</sup>”

These questions, though formulated in the context of Higher Education, are also relevant to the development of a coherent strategy of Lifelong Learning at all levels.

### ***16.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector***

Developments relating to RPL in Ireland relate to the establishment in Ireland of a new framework of qualifications by the national Qualifications Authority in 2003. The framework is defined as ‘the single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards’

The new National Qualifications Framework provides for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in both the workplace and in the voluntary sector. All learning can be accommodated from the most basic to the most advanced and includes that achieved through experience in the workplace or other non-formal settings. Under the terms of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 the Councils are required to ensure that providers facilitate access, transfer and progression of learners (within the framework of qualifications) (Section 14d); and to make or recognise awards to persons who apply for those awards who in the opinion of the Council have achieved the standards determined by the Council (section 14c)

The National Qualifications Authority has defined Recognition of Prior Learning [RPL] as: ‘Recognition of learning that has taken place, but not necessarily been assessed or measured, prior to entering a programme. Such prior learning may have been acquired through formal, non-formal and informal routes’

There are a number of organisations in Ireland who have devised and implemented APL/RPL to date. The examples quoted below are designed to indicate the range of developments and are not necessarily representative of particular sectors.

---

<sup>142</sup> OECD/Department for Education and Science, Ireland: International Colloquium on Business-education partnerships: Learning from the world of work Dublin, January 24-25 2005 paragraph 19. [Further activities are planned for later in 2005]

### 16.3.1 FÁS

“FÁS — Training and Employment Authority, was established in January 1988, under the Labour Services Act 1987 to provide a wide range of services to the labour market in Ireland. For example, FÁS Food Industry Training and Development Unit, Services to Business provides a wide range of training programmes for the Food Industry. These training programmes are delivered in training establishments or are conducted on site, i.e. in-company.

FÁS recognises and arranges certification of skills whether they are acquired formally on courses or informally through work and/or life experiences.

It is FAS policy to widen access to certification, to acknowledge life-long learning and emphasise the importance of skills acquired by means other than formal training. FÁS, through its Certification and Standards Department, has developed a process of Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), which allows existing employees gain certification using the APL system.

“In Ireland there have been a number of pilot experiences in the recognition of prior learning developed as a result of a demand for access/entry to education and training and for certification of skills. Assessments of Prior Learning (APL) responses have been devised to respond to the needs of industries experiencing organisational change. FÁS, the training and employment authority worked with the Irish Electricity Supply Board in an accreditation programme for semi-skilled linesmen who were all experienced workers. These workers were fast-tracked through an electrical apprenticeship and were credited for prior experience as part of the process.<sup>143</sup>”

FÁS has devised and implemented an APL process since 1992. A methodology incorporating advice, skills analysis and a variety of evidence gathering procedures followed by assessment and verification was developed by FÁS. APL in FÁS operates within the existing systems of assessment and certification using the FÁS training standards for awards. APL processes undertaken include facilitating employed and unemployed persons in sectors of retailing, teleservices, meat trade, childcare, craft electricians, and construction skills. FÁS has worked with ESB, private retailers, Chambers of Commerce, and CIF. Training and supporting documentation has been developed for facilitating the process for all involved in the process to support advisers/facilitators, and assessors/verifiers. FÁS adopted the term ‘taking credit’ for initial work in the field.

The FÁS definition of APL is that of S. Simosko: ‘ the accreditation of prior learning is a process that enables people of all ages, backgrounds and attitudes to receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already possess’.

Evaluation elements regarding the assessment of all APL material included authenticity, validity, sufficiency and currency of material and a minimum of two items of evidence for a

---

<sup>143</sup> OECD (2004), *The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning*, para 3.5 page 16. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/57/27/34376318.pdf>

particular outcome or set of outcomes. In FÁS each sectoral area presented with particular requirement – an individual interview was a feature in retail APL while a panel of assessors was a feature in electrical sectors. Union agreement was also a feature to consider.

Using the same model FÁS International devised and implemented a major project in RPL for craft sector in South Africa with the Building Industry Training Board and subsequently the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA).

FÁS also participated through Leonardo in a number of APEL projects on the development of a common model for APL in the EU.

### *16.3.2 Failte Ireland (CERT/NTCB)*

Failte Ireland (National Tourism Development Authority) formerly CERT has in place a methodology for APL for craft and other awards in a range of occupations, entitled: ‘get your experience recognised’. A model process has been adopted similar to that of FAS. Clear methodology with supporting documentation has been devised and tested. The process is individually focussed with growing numbers participating.

Candidates apply to Failte Ireland, are appointed a Mentor, prepare a portfolio of evidence, which is submitted to Failte Ireland, are interviewed by an APL committee and awarded a certificate if they achieve the standards. There is ‘no written examination’.

The process operates within the existing assessment processes of NTCB and is verified accordingly. Full awards have been made following successful APL applications.

### *16.3.3 NCVA (1994-2001)*

The NCVA devised an RPL process titled APEAL in its Work Experience Module to enable candidates use experience acquired informally in the workplace and gain recognition for learning. A feasibility study was undertaken to test the model which utilised a Portfolio building process structured according to guidelines and criteria in the NCVA assessment process. The portfolios were externally moderated.

NCVA also participated as the awarding body for the DIT/OMNA Childcare APL programme and devised a model for the process. The DIT/Omna project devised a 9-stage process including Contact, registration, and introduction, assistance by a mentor, mentor contact, portfolio preparation, portfolio building, assessment and recognition. Supporting documentation and training materials were also developed.

This included devising of evidence and criteria of competence for NCVA Modules and the identification of required training. DIT/OMNA assisted candidates to gather evidence and graded and using the mainstream NCVA processes for assessment and verification enabled 10 candidates to receive awards in Childcare.

#### 16.3.4 HETAC (NCEA) APEL Policy

The APEL model established by the NCEA – National Council for Educational Awards now HETAC is about gaining exemptions from subjects within a programme of learning and credits the candidate to a maximum of 50% of an award. The HETAC model is applied within outcomes based programme/award.

An individual can make an application to an institution with supporting reasons why the applicant feels his/her case merits consideration. Applicants prepare a Portfolio describing the prior experience in the context of ‘credible learning and experience is endorsed by employers where appropriate. An assessor(s) evaluates the portfolio and tests out other instruments which may be utilised as required. Assessors must match the learning with the outcomes of the subject from which the candidate seeks exemption.

HETAC has specified a number of criteria for rigorous application in assessment of the portfolio which include:

- Balance between theory and practice,
- Transferability of learning, and,
- Academic level of learning.

The Cork Institute of Technology has further implemented RPL in a number of sectoral areas. The DEIS – Department of Educational Development have developed a number of initiatives in this field and have made full awards using the RPL process.

Up to 50% of an award can be achieved in any year with 35% in award bearing year Learning portfolio is the approach taken - is developed including CV, job description learning outcomes and proof which can be endorsements and such evidence as syllabi/prospectuses. Other Institutes of Technology and Universities in Ireland also have policies and practices in APL/RPL. Waterford Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tralee and the University of Limerick are examples.

#### 16.3.5 *Developments in Further Education*

FETAC is currently developing policy and approaches and these are subject to wide consultation with stakeholders. A draft Policy Paper will be presented to FETAC in January 2005. The following excerpts are from the March 2005 draft<sup>144</sup>.

Recognition of Prior Learning is defined as a process of identification, assessment and recognition of learning howsoever acquired (Includes formal, non-formal and informal learning).

FETAC Strategy:

- Aims to facilitate the recognition of learning undertaken throughout life within a personal, civic and social and or employment related perspective.
- Makes quality assured Awards, determine national standards, and ensures providers operate fair & consistent assessment of learners.

---

<sup>144</sup> Personal communication from Angela Lambkin, FETAC

Draft FETAC policy:

- FETAC aims to introduce RPL to the further education and training sector. From 2005 all new providers who register with FETAC and agree their quality assurance policies with FETAC will begin to facilitate learners through its providers using RPL for the purposes of access to programmes, exemptions from programme requirements and to attain full awards as appropriate<sup>145</sup>.
- HETAC the higher education and training awards council has the same responsibilities and functions as FETAC and is in the process of developing an RPL policy and procedure. In partnership with FETAC, the CEDEFOP Virtual Community on the Identification will provide support during 2005 for the above development at a European level.

#### ***16.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector***

The Community Women's Education Initiative (CWEI)<sup>146</sup> is a partner in the Socrates-Grundtvig ADEPT project. CWEI developed learning portfolios at foundation level. The learning portfolio at foundation level is aimed specifically at making visible the learning of traveller women by exploring the meaning and value of story telling in the traveller culture. This portfolio uses a number of non-written techniques for this purpose:

- Collages and photography with which the women produce a family tree to record knowledge learned from their families;
- Individual interviews with the traveller women to explore learning and skills within their cultural background

At the end of this process a portfolio is produced that includes a folder with the collage work, the transcript of the interviews and a highlight of the areas that are particularly significant to the particular women. The purpose of this work is to build the women's confidence, encourage team work and identify the skills and knowledge within them and validate it. The method has been piloted with 67 women in two groups.

#### ***16.5 Conclusions***

Ongoing research is principally taking place in the context of European projects. It is expected that with the implementation of the National Qualification Framework and the outcomes of the OECD study, co-ordinated national development will occur.

It is currently too early to evaluate the impact of the proposals, but this should be possible in the second half of 2005. As already identified above, APEL is an important part of a strategy to improve the synergy between the needs of the economy and the delivery of the National Qualification Framework. Some of the parameters for promoting social inclusion are

---

<sup>145</sup> Policies Actions and Procedures on Access, Transfer and Progression, NQAI, 2003

<sup>146</sup> CWEI is a women's community education organisation providing education initiatives for women who left the education system early and have not achieved high levels of formal qualifications.



identified below. Analysing the efficiency and effectiveness (with references to the costs and benefits of different initiatives) of current initiatives and the overall framework for validation

At the time of writing, it is not yet possible to carry out this analysis. The study has identified a range of policies and initiatives, together with the Action Plan 2005 – 2007 for Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education Ireland. In the context of achieving a broader range of teaching and learning practices, one of the Action Points is to “Promote modular, credit-based learning and accreditation of prior learning with financial and other resources.”<sup>147</sup> . In particular, the evaluation of developments will be improved by the introduction of appropriate data collection, which would enable the identification of the impact of the new policies.

---

<sup>147</sup> Higher Education Authority (2004), Action Plan 2005-2007, Dublin, November, page 18.

## **17.0 ITALY**

*By Elisabetta Perulli and Massimo Tommasini (ISFOL)*

### **17.1 Introduction**

A broad-ranging discussion aimed at promoting the adaptation and innovation of the Italian VET and qualification systems has been taking place since early Nineties, but an extensive reform in this field is not yet completed and finalised: national institutions are still proceeding in the attempt to design new rules for the national VET system and Labour Market inside the European framework.

Within such a general attempt, the establishment of a validation system for non-formal and informal learning has become a strong and widely shared priority in the last ten years. All social and political stakeholders, irrespective of their institutional aims and background (Ministries, Regions, Trade Unions, Employers Representatives, VET system providers, Universities, Youth Association and voluntary sector), actually agree regarding the need of validation of non formal learning through formalized recognition pathways or certification procedures.

At the present, however, nothing comparable to the APL in UK or to VAE in France has been put in place in Italy, due to different factors. First of all, two historical-cultural factors must be taken into account: the relevant formal and legal value of educational qualifications obtained through formal education pathways and the traditional weakness of short-term and adult education and training. The combined results is that the economic and social value of VET, independently from formal qualification released, is not culturally perceived. Moreover the professional and occupational regulations are largely based on the legal status of formal qualification and on the juridical values of education or academic titles. Such a crucial role of formal recognition is reinforced by the low level of institutional trust at a national level, especially as far as VET providers and employers representative bodies are concerned.

Nevertheless, as a result of the mentioned political awareness about the basic principles underpinning the validation of non-formal learning, a relevant number of national agreements and regulations dealt with this topic (IFTS, Adult Education and Training, Certification of Competence), envisaging the opportunity of validation of non formal learning, although not concretely defining a *system* (assumed as a whole organizational and resources framework composed of standards – both in terms of procedures and qualification contents – bodies, tasks and funding).

As a consequence of this systemic weakness, the different experiences and practices of validation undertaken within the different contexts (private, third sectors) cannot be outspread and the results cannot be fully recognised. Furthermore, such results are not comparable, since the purposes themselves, and the underlying principles driving each specific experience, are quite different in relation to different context and demands. For instance in some cases the validation activities can be carried out for firms purposes, in other cases for educational institutions purposes or as a support to young or adult job-seekers. At any rate, in this report

the general situation is shortly presented underlining the most relevant points in the debate, the state of art concerning regulations and the bottlenecks that characterize the Italian approach in relation to the issue of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

### ***17.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector***

At a national level, since the Government itself is responsible for designing guidelines concerning the VET and welfare policies, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education and University ordinarily convert such general guidelines into national Laws and Decrees and design the overall architecture taking into account aspects such as training pathways, qualification levels, duration, access.

However, during the last ten years the most important role in the implementation and management of the VET system, has been increasingly transferred to Regions and autonomous Provinces. At present the Regions hold the whole responsibility both for VET and school system, within a general national framework designed through the recent Law n. 53/2003.

Moreover, in almost all sectors of reform, a negotiated process has been carried on, involving all the concerned actors: Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education and University, Regions, Social Partners.

In such a complex governance frame, the issue of validation of non-formal learning has been institutionally dealt with in several ways and in different moments, but essentially through:

- formal agreements between Government and social partners. For instance the Employment Agreement between Government and Social Partners in September 1996 (which confirmed and upgraded the relevant results of previous negotiations; in particular the Agreement in July 1993), contains several strategic guidelines for reforming the VET system, identifying among its core points the establishment of: "*a certification system as a suitable instrument to assure an unitary and visible pathway of lifelong learning to every single individual, to allow the recognition of training credits, and to register the effectively acquired competences*".
- National laws of decrees. Recently the most important national laws have been the above mentioned Law 53/2003, reforming the VET system (school, vocational training and apprenticeship) and the Law 30/2003 reforming labor market rules (contracts, job placement services). The first one (Law 53/2003) confirms the importance of alternating school, training and work in the lifelong learning perspective and envisages the further creation of institutional devices and practices aimed to valorise individual experiences, irrespective of the learning context in which they have been developed. The latter, Law 30/2003, provide the establishment of the "Libretto Formativo del Cittadino" (Citizen Training Portfolio), a kind of individualised document assumed as a comprehensive official document whose aim is "*to register the competences acquired through training programs included in the apprenticeship and "first access" contracts, through continuous and professional training lifelong*

*attended (...), and further, according to the EU guidelines about lifelong learning, the competences acquired non formally or informally and properly recognised and certified”.*

- At present both these framework Laws are in a start up phase through the arrangement of regulatory Decrees.
  
- Ministry Decrees. In May 2001 a Ministry of Labor Decree ruled the “*Certification of competences in vocational training system*”. Within the Decree the new competence certification system is meant as aimed to the transparency of training programs, to put in value individual experiences, to help the matching between job supply and demand in the labour market. Competences are defined as “*...structured cluster of knowledge and abilities , normally connected to specific job profiles, acquirable through vocational training programmes, work experiences and self-learning, which are valuable also as training “credits”*” This Decree envisages the building of a system of national standards for the competences certification and establishes three kinds of Certification devices: the Vocational Training Qualification Certification, the Vocational Training Competence Certification and the Accreditation of Competences Procedure acquired on the job or on self learning in order to allow the access to formal training paths or to get a specific degree. According to this Decree also the “Citizen Training Portfolio” should be established by each Region in order to document and register the different certification acquired by the individuals.
  
- Regional laws and regulations. The Emilia Romagna, Piemonte and Val d’Aosta Regions have attempted a self- regulation of their own VET system and promoted some initiatives of validation of non-formal and informal learning addressed to specific target groups. But the availability of these services is not generalised and the Regional self-ruling approach is at present showing several limits and disadvantages mainly linked to its lack of generalisation. Therefore Regions have been presently trying to put in place coordination initiatives in order to establish common qualification and competences standards and learning certification procedures.

Thus, from the viewpoint of validation of non-formal learning, all the aforementioned ruling documents, due to different reasons, actually remain at the stage of concept frameworks.

As an exception, a particularly interesting case in the panorama of VET system in Italy regards the Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTS) pathways.

The *IFTS* system was created, according to its establishing law (Law 144/99) “*to qualify and broaden the training supply for young people and adults, both employed and not employed*”.

From such a viewpoint, *IFTS* pathways are characterised as open options for potentially very different users (both young people and adults, both employed and not employed), ‘anchored’ to changing needs of local markets and not to once for all identified training needs. Moreover *IFTS* pathways are promoted and managed at least by four different VET providers: a school, a University, a training agency and a company. Once the *IFTS* training is successfully

concluded, the University partner assures the recognition of a certain number of university credits valid for further enrolling in University academic courses.

This complex amount of provision has entailed the simultaneous start-up of two types of initiatives within the *IFTS* pathways:

- the attempt – recently concluded, albeit on an experimental basis – to define National Competence Standards (see Agreement between National Government and Regions, 19 November 2002);
- the accreditation of prior learning envisaged by these pathways.

Concerning the latter, the *IFTS* implementation regulation of 31 October 2001 states:

*“ART. 3 (procedures for accessing pathways)*

*1. Young people and adults generally enter the higher technical education and training pathways on the basis of an upper secondary education certificate. Access to the pathways is also permitted to those who do not hold the upper secondary education certificate, after accreditation of competences acquired in previous education, training and work pathways, after completing the compulsory schooling, taking into account, in particular, the qualification attained during the fulfilment of the compulsory training requirement specified in Art. 68 of Law 144/99.*

*2. For the purposes of access to the IFTS pathways, the accreditation of competences consists in the certification of the abilities acquired previously, also through work and life experiences, and the recognition of any training credits for the determination of the length of the individual pathway. The procedures for accreditation of competences are defined by means of the agreements stated in Art. 5, paragraph 3”.*

Following these principles a concrete device of validation of previous learning has been designed in *IFTS* and has been launched through specific guidelines attached to the regulation documents on August 1st 2002 (Agreement between Government and Regions). Such guidelines can be synthesized as follows:

- the validation is meant to facilitate the access to *IFTS* pathways or a transfer from a system to another;
- the building of a national competence standard system is envisaged by all the institutional and social actors as a necessary requirement to guarantee the reliability of the validation processes;
- the planning of validation process must be articulated into three sequential steps:
- guidance/counseling, aimed at allowing the active involvement of individuals in self-analysis and in the identification of their own specific training needs;
- assessment, aimed at collecting evidences of prior learning in a systematic way and at checking the acquisition of specific competences. A specific dossier is setup for this purpose;
- certification/recognition, allowing the access (or crediting a bonus) to a specific training pathway.

According to the results of monitoring data and information, even if the outcomes concerning the above procedure are not yet available, it seems that the procedure has been applying in a good percentage of the IFTS courses with favorable effects on accessibility of training activities by employed and unemployed trainees. By now we are still waiting for the monitoring data related to the courses 2003/2004. Regarding the courses 2000/2002 we have the following data: in the 85,6 % of the courses an entry guidance/counseling service has been provided and in the 29% of these has been an accreditation of prior learning toward the course.

**Table 17.1 – Entry guidance/counseling (val. %)**

	<b>1999/2000</b>
Yes	85,6%
No	14,4%
n. of courses	243

**Table 17.2 – Effects of the guidance/counseling (val. %)**

	<b>1999/2000</b>
No effects on accreditation	58,0%
Accreditation of prior learning	29,0%
The results has been registered in the final certification document	23,0%
<b>Totale</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Survey ISFOL-Codres 2002

Considering the average number of participant is 15 per course, we can deduce that more than 3500 users has been involved in the process, even if we do not have specific data nor on the number of beneficiaries neither on the relative amount of credit. The next survey carried on by Isfol on behalf of Ministry of Education will be more precise on these numbers. We must also take into account that the courses in 2003/2005 period has been increased of the 30% as well as the practices of accreditation are significantly diffused.

Concerning the University system, at the moment the Italian system is involved in a large-scale reform process which has been started three years ago (see Decreto n.509 del 3/11/1999). The validation of prior learning is envisaged by the reform, including the validation of this learning as ECTS credits, but there is neither a diffused practice of such a provision nor shared guidelines concerning procedures and results of the validation.

This does not mean that the issues of assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning value are ignored, but simply that are not considered as an immediate priority matter. Nevertheless some good experiences have been developed in particular within the IFTS system. The IFTS experience can be considered as a crucial crossroad for increasing the awareness of the importance of validation issues within the university system development.

At this regard it is to remark the interesting experiences of LUMSA University ([www.lumsa.it](http://www.lumsa.it)). This small private University carried on in 2002/2003 an innovative project (“Degree and experience”, see Corradi, 2003) in which a method of validation of previous learning, based on the analysis of the individual biography, was successfully applied within an academic course in “Social Sciences”.

### **17.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

Also in the enterprises sector the lifelong learning and the quality of competences are no longer meant only as accessories in assuring growth and competitiveness of both individuals and organisations, but increasingly as essential strategic factors. Many Italian large and medium companies, during the recent years started programmes and invested resources in competences management and validation, often through specific information system and software (like for instance SAP).

Also within the above mentioned institutional documents (Laws 53 and 30/2003) regarding the VET and Labour Market reform, the relevance of learning in the workplace is often underlined. For instance, in both laws the apprenticeship contracts are considered as one of the possible pathways (the other being school and vocational training) valid to accomplish the “Right -Duty of Education and Training” established for under- 18 young people.

Moreover the multiplication of contracts types (for instance in Italy *temporary jobs* have been introduced only in 1997) and the rapid escalation of the importance of flexibility in the labour market caused the progressive relevance of recognition of individual competences, acquired through different work experiences, both from companies and individuals standpoints.

Even companies representatives expressed an accrued demand of competences transparency of new-comers in organisations in order to optimise the recruitment and access activities (see *Transparency Leonardo Project*).

Unfortunately, like in the institutional context, an unbridgeable gap remains between sharing the principle and enforcing it in reality assigning real value to learning in the workplace. In addition to this element, we can observe that as far as enterprises are concerned, every action affecting the methods of assessment, optimisation and management of human resources, generates implications for labour contracts and negotiation and often produces negative effects.

According to a study research carried on by the University of Rome “La Sapienza” Sociology Department (see Viteritti, 1999) one of the central problems for enterprises lies in procedures: who assesses and recognises the skills acquired and how (institutions, enterprises, VET providers)? In practice many enterprises use internal standards and parameters but several problems arise when such standards and parameters, which are considered proprietary tools, have to be made visible and in some way “exportable”.

Given such a concern, a potential system of validation should ensure individuals that their skills are widely recognised without hindering enterprises autonomy. In this perspective a strong and negotiated public co-ordination is considered necessary to ensure the enlargement

and diversification of “recognised learning contexts” without violating firm’s HR management prerogatives.

The above research study underlines that investments in in-company training is generally increasing, but a reduction of courses and other school-type actions is observed in favour of work-based actions (through learning centres, social exchanges, rotation and integration of functions and skills) arranged so as to support both individual and organisation growth. While until recently such courses of action seemed limited to middle-high strata of the company population, they are now becoming common methods at all levels. Also, as shown by several “local network agreements”, the school/enterprise co-operation is becoming increasingly widespread (Formez, 2004). Agreements, partnerships and projects for specific training and practice or study periods, involvement of enterprises in guidance actions, link- and service-desks, are diffused throughout the country, promoted by enterprises or by industrial and local associations.

In conclusion, on one hand a shared awareness has been raising within the companies world that on-the-job learning is important, on the other hand a broad and shared definition of validation practices has not yet reached equating new types of learning to traditional VET paths.

The enterprises associations (such as National Craft Confederation or SMEs associations) as well as single research institutes have been devoting efforts to translate important pilot experiences of analysis and identification of competences carried out in single corporate contexts into the wider industrial system. Pilot projects have been implemented at both national (Ruffino, 2001; ISVOR FIAT, 1999) and trans-national level (i.e.: through several different Adapt and Leonardo projects). The challenge is now to diffuse such best practices and capitalise what has been learned from them, promoting more extensive and homogeneous actions.

#### ***17.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector***

In Italy the learning experiences carried on in the third sector, especially within Catholic associations, is quite widespread and socially valued. Moreover in 2001 the revision of the V Chapter of the Italian Republic Constitution (concerning State/Regions governance general principles) formally recognised the role of the third sector in developing activities of general interest on the basis of the subsidiarity principle. Nevertheless, according to present laws and regulations in this field there is no sufficient institutional recognition and validation either of the associations themselves or of the competences acquired through the activities carried on within them (Florenzano, 2004).

As stated in different web documents (see below) the types of experiences mainly recognised in this sectors are those acquired through the following channels:

Civil Service: the national regulation (law n. 64/2001, “Establishment of the National Social Service”) states that competences acquired through the Social Service can be recognised as credits towards vocational training pathways or valuable access requirements to regulated



professions. Also universities can recognise such competences as credits. The above regulation allowed the diffusion of “agreement protocols” between associations engaged in civil service projects (namely ARCI, FIVOL, Opera Don Bosco, see websites list) and universities or training agencies, although they did not generate common guidelines assuring validation process and results standards.

Voluntary Associations (“volontariato”): many different associations operating in the voluntary sector have been very active in claiming their central role in promoting and valuing informal learning and individual cultural development. In recent years a co-ordination Forum (Third Sector Forum) has been established representing all Voluntary Associations ([www.forumterzosettore.it](http://www.forumterzosettore.it)). The Forum signed several agreement protocols which are in fact very interesting for formal VET institutions. In 2000 the Forum signed an Agreement with the Ministry of Education stating “*the possibility of a certification of training credits acquired through association activities, with a specific attention to the definition of competences acquired by young people (also in distance learning), in voluntary activities, in social and cultural enterprises and associations*”. More recently (2004) the Forum signed an Agreement with the CRUI (Italian University Rectors Conference) in order to improve cultural and operational relationships between the voluntary sector and the Universities.

Cultural or political activities within Youth Association. Youth associations joined together in 2003 creating the Youth Forum (<http://www.giovanidelleacli.org/forumdeigiovani.htm>) which includes over 40 different associations sharing common leading themes and demands. Among them one can underline the goal of the establishment of a framework system allowing the visibility of experiences and learning acquired through the participation to associations activities. This framework is aimed at increasing mutual trust between formal VET institutions and youth associations and allowing the development of specific devices for simple (or even automatic) recognition of learning. In particular some youth associations developed interesting experiences about recognition of learning through study visits in foreign countries and agreed the validation of this experiences as university credits on a local basis. It must be also remarked the role of Third Sector (no-profit) enterprises in the development of social supply projects aimed to support disadvantaged population in the identification and validation of their own individual competences in order to prevent social and occupational exclusion (something close to the French “bilan des competences”). Concerning such experiences Isfol in 2000 developed a specific research study (cfr. Isfol, National Employment Program Agency, 2000)

### **17.5 Conclusions**

Indeed, the issue of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Italy is relevant in the reform processes involving the whole education and qualification system. Institutional initiatives at this regard can be clustered within two main categories:

- proactive initiatives, aimed at focusing VET and HE systems and activities on competences, the latter being assumed as outcomes of formal, non formal and informal learning. These initiatives essentially entail both alternation between classroom and experiential activities (as envisaged in various ruling documents in

particular concerning University reform, IFTS and training within apprenticeship contracts) and codification of training programmes according to competences-based standards;

- compensatory initiatives, aimed at recognising work or life experiences within formal frameworks through the adoption of principles, rules, procedures and instruments related to the training credit system. Excellent examples – in many ways close to the French *VAE* and the English *APEL* – are those of already quoted *IFTS* pathways.

The bridging process between formal education and training and non formal and informal learning in different contexts is at present involving many different actors and stakeholders: social partners, companies, third sector association and enterprises.

In the very end it can be stated that there are several interesting practices in the above mentioned contexts, but they remain as local experiences not constituting a *real validation system*. This is mostly due to two elements:

1. the lack of national standards regarding qualifications and competences is a felt by the different stakeholders as a sort of “original sin” and maybe represents the main hindrance to the adoption of the emerging European perspective on formal and informal learning;
2. the lack of a procedural and methodological frameworks useful to compare and to accredit the different experiences developed so far. In Italy there is not yet a common concept about how the “Validation of non formal and informal learning” should be defined and what is the role of the institutions in order to offer or to legitimate this kind of service. From this point of view the Italian situation reflects many of the open issues raised at an European level in the process and Documents regarding the common principles for the validation of non formal and informal learning (May 2005).

## **18.0 LATVIA**

*By Vladimir Menshikov (Laboratory of sociological Researchers, Latvia)*

### **18.1 Introduction**

Since 1991, when Latvia gained independence, there have been difficult situations during the transition from the planned system to the market relations; this has caused a change in the paradigm of the whole educational system. In view of the unstable economic situation and the lack of experience and traditions both in informal and non-formal education the Ministry of Education and Sciences has had some certain difficulties in organising and financing informal and non-formal education.

At present the system of education in Latvia has had an uncertain attitude towards informal and non-formal education. First of all, it applies to the absence of a legislative base and national conception. On the other hand, by the end of the 90s, within the framework of the concept of Lifelong learning more attention is paid to informal and non-formal. As regards the question of validation of informal and non-formal education (it is necessary to make a reservation that in Latvia the term “validation” or its equivalents have not been used until recently) we would risk placing Latvia in the category with countries who are at the stage of experimentation and uncertainties (Countries at an experimental stage (to a varying extent) accept the need for initiatives but are still uncertain whether and how this could influence existing structures and systems on a more permanent basis). At present it is possible to point to the fact that the inclusion of Latvia into common European space promotes the rapid understanding of the wide range of problems connected with validation, and it prompts possible solutions to them. The theoretical calculations and experience of other countries should be reconsidered. It will avoid “to run free” and to join in the creation of the own national “Comprehensive system”, and, subsequently, in the creation of “Common principles” regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning at the European level.

In general the current situation, concerning the validation of informal and non-formal education in Latvia, has some preconditions to face the future with optimism. Despite the passive position of the state structures and objective impossibility of full financing, the number of the initiatives at a decentralized level grows slowly, but steadily. The initiatives indicate the necessity of changes of the present situation; it specifies that the educational system should meet the requirements of the market and open society.

### **18.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

From the moment, Latvia became independent, a number of laws on education have been passed: Law on education (1991), (1998), Law on higher education (1995), Laws on Secondary and Vocational education (1999), Law on innovations fund in the field of education (2002); but Laws on the education of adults have not been carried and the national conception of lifelong education has not been created so far.

The Government of Latvia has taken a rather passive position in the respect to the validation of other kinds of education. Attention is mainly paid to the questions of formal education regulating and standardising. Some direct initiatives were undertaken at the level of Ministry of Education and Science. Thus, for example the Cabinet of Ministers passed “The Concept of the Development of Education for 2002 – 2005”. The chapter “The enlargement of educational possibilities for adults, providing professionally oriented lifelong learning supply” testifies that Latvia moves in the direction of so-called “Modular approach” in respect of the validation of informal and non-formal education. The conception declares the following basic regulation: “To promote the inclusion of different social groups into education, it is necessary to work out the modular educational programmes for all levels of education for full-time tuition and extra-mural one, and correspondence tuition.” To realise this regulation the following practical steps should be undertaken:

1. to create a credit point system and to introduce it into the programmes mentioned, promoting its compatibility with academic system of credits transfer;
2. to work out the basic directives for the evaluation of the work of evening schools.

In accordance with “Law on education” (point 14, paragraph 15), in September 2003, the Ministry of Education and Science accepted an instruction on “The receiving of professional pedagogical education and the order of professional perfection”. According to the document workers in the educational sector (except for higher educational institutions) can receive pedagogical education by further education or self-education. The instruction precisely defines an amount of time (contact hours) an applicant should spend for the acquisition of the course of pedagogics.

This initiative is a one-year process consisting of different training modules. The process however starts off with a procedure to validate participants’ prior experience, skills and relevant activities in the field. This is done by candidates sending information through about their relevant work experience as a teacher. The candidates have to prove the length of their work experience and also have to send their teaching material, teaching methodologies and any other information about relevant courses or activities in the field. The Special Certificate Commission (which is made up of representatives of the Ministry, vocational institutes and social partners) then assesses which modular exemptions participants may get.

Participants are not likely to be exempt from all modules and they may have to do some projects or attend courses. Participants are then assessed by written exam and presentation. The Commission and the Ministry of Education have made an agreement with specific training institution to carry out relevant courses.

Those who pass the final examinations then receive a nationally recognised certificate which is signed by the Ministry of Education. This however doesn’t replace the official teacher qualification which can only be obtained by attending higher education institutes. But the certificate provides exemptions for those wanting to continue studying to become an officially qualified teacher.

The main reason of such initiative is a lack of qualified staff engaged in educational sector. Validation is called to stimulate the inflow of a new staff, to expand carrier opportunities and to raise the qualification of the working teachers. The certificate does not mean salary increase for those who obtain it, but provides them with an official certificate and thus the 'right' to work in schools. They also gain the opportunity to study further, to have some of their previous experience recognised and at the same time get exemptions for their further studies.

In September, 2000, under the patronage of Ministry of justice "the Law on the state language" was accepted rigidly regulating all the spheres, where the use of the state language is obligatory. In its turn, the resolution No 296 of the Cabinet of ministers (Regulations of the necessary extend of the state language knowledge for the performance of professional and official duties and the order of the state language skills examination) rigidly regulates the necessary level of the Latvian language knowledge, which is necessary for the performance of one or another professional and official duties, and also determines the procedure of the language knowledge examination. All the procedures, concerning the estimations of the level of the state language knowledge, are assigned to the Centre the State Language Centre (Valsts valodas centrs). The examination of the state language knowledge is divided into three parts:

1. An interview – a commission evaluates conversational skills of a person discussing the topics related to his/her work, profession or position (time period 6-7 minutes);
2. Examination of reading skills: a person does reading tasks;
3. Examination of writing skills: a person does writing tasks.

The first part of the examination is essential, because during the interview it is possible to define a possible level of the language knowledge. According to the defined level reading and writing tasks are given. In addition, during the interview listening skills are examined.

**Table 18.1 Accordance of the results of the state language attestation and the ones of the central examination at school:**

	<b>Language attestation</b>	<b>School</b>
<b>The lowest level (I)</b>	I A	F
	I B	E
<b>The middle level (II)</b>	II A	D
	II B	C
<b>The highest level (III)</b>	III A	B
	III B	A

According to the results of the examination process, a person receives a certificate of the state language knowledge, where the level of the language knowledge is designated. In accordance with one's desire this level can be improved.

In that way, if a person has not received official education in the Latvian language, then, having finished courses or learnt the language independently, s/he has a right to validate the

education received in an informal or non-formal way. In 2001 12460 men (6397 from them were unemployed) received the certificate, in 2002 this number was 10051 men (6142 from them were unemployed), in 2003 it was 10110 men (5321 from them were unemployed). Although, the basic reason of such initiative lies in political motives (the specificity of Latvia is that 21.64 % (data of the year 2003) of the inhabitants are non-citizens; the basic aim of the law is preservation and development of the Latvian language) the validation promotes social integration of the society, improvement of the situation in the labour market and stimulates the study of the state language.

Adult education is also regulated by the Law on Support for Unemployed and Job seekers, which aims to develop the support system for the unemployed and the job seekers, to help them to return to or enter the labour market.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the legislative base in the sphere of validation of informal and non-formal education has advanced poorly and the basic laws are lacking. Nevertheless, the problem has not been left to drift. For instance, the responsibility for the education of adults was assigned to local governments, in which the centres of continuing education were created. With the support of Ministry of Education and Science and the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association the NGO “Latvian Adult Education Association”, which is the basic coordinator (umbrella organization) and initiator in the questions of informal and non-formal education in Latvia, was created.

### ***18.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector***

International experience testifies that some branches needs regular investments into employees education and development more than others do. Primarily the sectors are finance, insurance, real estate, transport, services and high technologies. In the sphere of manufacture, public health services, agriculture and construction these investments are traditionally less. The situation in Latvia develops according to the similar script. Although several individual companies have set up validation procedures for employees, a systematic and comprehensive overview of industry sectors on a national level is not available yet.

Although the progress of informal and non-formal education validation on the part of public authorities has been slow, the situation in the national economy has developed more dynamically. First, due to the inclusion of the market mechanisms under the conditions of the free market the intensity of the services offered in the sphere of education regulate supply and demand.

As surveys testify enterprises use various methods in relation to training their employees. At present the most popular forms are: scheduled training, instructing and self-education. The most claimed kinds of training are different courses and seminars. Employees are more often educated in such areas as: leadership, technical knowledge and skills, work with the client and art of selling, skills to work in a team, work protection, maintenance and quality surveillance. Bookkeepers and chiefs of various levels attend seminars and courses more actively. The questions connected to legislation, taxation and finance are of the greatest interest. The global

questions also are in the sphere of interests. For example, a possibility for the Latvian enterprises in connection with joining the EU.

As a rule, the enterprises which offer courses and seminars, are ready to work on the development of individual programmes, which would correspond to the concrete wishes and requirements of a customer as much as possible. Therefore, seminar organising in most cases begins with finding-out the existing situation. Questioning (large enterprises) or individual interviews (small enterprises) are carried out for this purpose. In the case of some language courses, the level of knowledge is investigated by means of a written test.

In order to find-out the situation of the national economy, in 2003 the Central statistical bureau of the Republic of Latvia carried out an investigation of 3500 Latvian enterprises concerning their employees training. The published data testifies that only 53 % of enterprises provide training. The highest percent of the course participants was fixed in the sphere “financial intermediary” - 46 %. In its turn, entrepreneurs interrogation, carried out by the newspaper “Dienas bizness”, showed that 68 % of the enterprises participate in seminars, and only 41 % seldom attend. In turn, in 2002 the company Mercuri International carried out the interrogation of more than 100 representatives of the leading Latvian firms: chiefs, experts in personnel selection and chiefs of an average link. The interrogation showed that more often - approximately in 40 % of cases - enterprises organise their own employee training and development. Distinctive feature of Latvia is that the greatest attention is paid to the development of personnel in the companies with a foreign capital and joint ventures. These enterprises introduce traditions, which are characteristic for their native country. At the same time long time ago in the West it became an axiom that it is cheaper to train and to develop their own employees than to employ new ones.

About 16 % of the interrogated enterprises use support and experience of the head company; in this way it possible to solve one more task – to improve communication and mutual understanding among subsidiaries and branches which are in different countries. About 37 % of the experts on personnel selection use services of professional advisers that testifies growing trust and high evaluation of the activities of such firms.

Large enterprises allow themselves to create their own educational centres and programmes. Up to April 2003 “Lattelekom” Ltd. (an enterprise which was a monopolist in telecommunication services for a long time) used to have the most powerful educational centre. After having lost the status of monopolist the reconsideration of the whole policy of the enterprise followed. This affected the educational centre, which was abolished and its functions were handed to two newly created commercial structures: “Spring Valley” Ltd. (training and expert opinions in the field of management and personnel management) and “Komunikāciju grupa” (courses, programmes and expert opinions in the field of telecommunications, computers and clients service).

Banks (Hansabanka is among them) have their own educational centers as well. In 2002 93.7 % of Hansabanka employees were involved in training; each of the employees devoted at least 8 days to the training.

The officials of “Kalnozols Celtniecība” Ltd, which is intending to become a civil engineering firm of international importance, understand that it is possible to achieve such results only by means of having qualified and educated employees. With this purpose the employees at all levels have training at the enterprise: beginning with the directors and finishing with an ordinary employee. Each employee has an individual plan of training. There are three kinds of training. The first one is internal, which is carried out by the employee who has finished qualitative educational courses (for example decorating, concreting etc.): the employee carries out a seminar for the other employees. Such seminars are carried out twice a month. The second one is external, which is planned according to the results of negotiation between a firm employee and its chief, during which the necessity and kind of further training is established. Personnel departments process and generalise the information on the offered courses and seminars, and carries out their selection following the identification of the needs of the employees. When selecting the courses for employees, the experience and education of the teacher, the content of the course and the results are all taken into consideration. Such training also is carried out twice a month. When the course is finished the employee fills in an evaluation document regarding the course, evaluating the content, the teacher and any materials provided for example. The Personnel department analyses the information once more making necessary conclusions. And, finally, the third kind of training is corporate. The leading experts and the chiefs of the company attend seminars devoted to personnel management and business strategy.

The leading Latvian pharmaceutical joint-stock company “Grindex” also pays great attention to their employees’ development and training: employees, experts, chiefs. The choice of the training theme depends on the employee’s position and on the influence of the results of his/her work on the general results of the enterprise activities. The further education proposed by “Grindex” can be divided into three blocks: 1) special training connected to the performance of the official duties, its necessity is determined by the normative acts of the Republic of Latvia, 2) addition of professional skills (courses, lectures, seminars), 3) training abroad (seminars, congresses, exhibitions, experience exchange). In 2002 “Grindex” spent on an average Ls 99 for one employee training, in 2003 – Ls 108, and in 2004 it plans the investments into employees’ education at the rate of Ls 60 thousand. They also organises various sports events: Sports Festivals in summer and bowling tournaments in winter.

Unfortunately, at present, more detailed and qualitative information on industries is not available. But on the whole it is possible to conclude that the number of courses, seminars and other kinds of employee training are growing and their quality is improving. Nevertheless, at present some enterprises are forced to use the services of foreign firms, as what local firms can offer is limited. Local businessmen have started to understand the importance of investment into their employees, because in the long run it is reflected in their well-being. However, the high price of the services firms offer to organise courses and seminars is a serious problem.



#### **18.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

With legislative support on the part of the state (regulations No 321 passed by the Cabinet of Ministers on 31 October, 1995 “On the limitations of entrepreneurship” determine that beginning with 1 March, 1996, Latvian Chamber of Crafts gives the certificates, which allow to be engaged in crafts) the initiatives were undertaken by a public organisation “Latvian Chamber of Crafts”.

In crafts centres, craft education has been organised and there are possibilities to acquire several crafts. Bukulti Craft Centre made a great contribution into crafts acquisition: the centre functions both as a centre of education and one of production. In the centre it is possible to acquire Latvian ancient or disappearing crafts and to receive skills working on the newest equipment.

Having worked according to a corresponding specialty for 3 years and having listened to theoretical and practical educational courses, in the Bukulti Craft Centre it is possible to receive a diploma of an apprentice. After 5 years service and having attended the lectures on book-keeping, entrepreneurship, pedagogics, psychology and history of crafts it is possible to get a diploma of a craftsman. As well as craft education Bukulti Craft Centre is also engaged in working with disabled people, to assist them become apprentices. The centre is involved into the process of the training and the retraining the unemployed, helping them receive craft education and perfect their knowledge and skills.

As it has been already stated above a public organization “Latvian Adult Education Association” has the central place in the sphere of informal and non-formal education validation in Latvia. It was founded in 1993 with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia and the Institute of International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association. In cooperation with local governments and the Ministry of Education and Science a network of adult education centres has been established. In 2003 LAEA had 75 members: adult education centres, folk schools, folk high schools, commercial and in-service training centres, formal education institutions- universities, vocational schools and night schools.

In cooperation with local governments, different funds and European institutions LAEA fulfilled a great number of programmes and projects on informal and non-formal education validation in Latvia. Unfortunately, none of the projects has been devoted to the problem of validation of informal and non-formal education. Nevertheless, LAEA is the organization, which actively adopts European experience and informs the society, forms public opinion, stands up for the creation of a legislative basis on the state level.

### **18.5 Conclusions**

Presently, it is obvious that informal and non-formal education in Latvia should become an equal component of the whole system of education, which is determined by the needs of the socio-economic development of the state. Brief analysis of the situation shows that the development of processes, connected with validation of informal and non-formal education have entered a new phase. Although, the conception is rather new, the European experience is being comprehended, the number of enterprises and organisations is growing and personnel policies are oriented towards the introduction of validation processes.

At present the state policy regards the validation of informal and non-formal education seems to be rather passive and short-sighted. The basic initiatives are passed at the level of formal education. It seems that all these questions are not solved for several main reasons:

- 1) there are a lot of painful questions in the society, and consequently informal and non-formal education is not considered as the priority, since neither inhabitants, nor politicians do not worry about this problem;
- 2) the development of new areas in education, which lacks money for: teachers' salary, for programmes accreditation, for educational establishments repair and maintenance, being guided by the stereotype of money shortage is considered as necessary but utopian.
- 3) the conception is rather new; it is difficult to foresee its results and effect.

## **19.0 LIECHTENSTEIN**

*By Kerstin Junge (ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.)*

### **19.1 Introduction**

Validation of non-formal and informal learning does not currently play a major role in Liechtenstein politics. The country is very small and has few human resources available for developing this area. Moreover, due to its small size Liechtenstein has a strong orientation in the field of education towards Switzerland. Liechtenstein is taking over Swiss vocational training regulations and a large proportion of the Liechtenstein youth trains in Switzerland or Austria. Any methods to validate non-formal and informal learning, therefore, will tend to come from Switzerland or Austria.

### **19.2 Review of existing initiatives**

Currently there is only one method for validating non-formal and informal learning in Liechtenstein. This is laid down in Article 31 of the Liechtenstein Vocational Education Act and is based on a Swiss regulation. However, in the end of this training period the participant gets a formal diploma with the additional remark of Article 31.

Article 31 of the Liechtenstein Vocational Education Act grants access to the apprenticeship final examination to people who have not formally passed through the dual system of vocational training.<sup>148</sup> For this the individual must have worked in the occupation for which the examination is to be taken for twice the number of years as the duration of the formal training period (i.e. 6 years of work experience for a 3-year apprenticeship training in the dual system). Two sets of stakeholders are involved in granting permission to participate in the final examination:

- The *employer* must provide proof of the work experience in the form of employer issued work certificates showing the period of work with the employer and the type of activities carried out.
- The *Liechtenstein Office for Vocational Training* ([www.berufsbildung.li](http://www.berufsbildung.li)) assesses the application and decides whether the applicant needs to enrol at a vocational school before the apprenticeship final examination can be taken and how much of the schooling needs to be completed. This decision is based on whether or not the applicant has already completed a (different) training in the dual system. If this is the case, the period of schooling for the new occupation can be reduced as the “general knowledge” elements have already been completed. The school-based training for the relevant occupation needs to be completed in any case.

The Liechtenstein regulations thus follow a clear process and aim at the ex-post accreditation of informal and non-formal learning. It is a formative method.

---

<sup>148</sup> The dual system of vocational training consists of work-based training with an employer which is complemented by a few days of school-based training per week.

There is one similar initiative according to the EUROPASS on national level, launched by the “Gewerbe- und Wirtschaftskammer” (Business and economic chamber) Liechtenstein. They call their initiative “Berufspass”. All the courses/classes and knowledge training during life (education, work or leisure time) is documented in this document.

### **19.3 Conclusions**

Liechtenstein is a small country that with regard to its education system has a strong focus on neighbouring Switzerland. For the validation of non-formal and informal learning this means that not only Swiss qualifications but also Swiss methods of validation are taken over into Liechtenstein law. Currently, this is restricted to the approach outlined in Article 31 of the Liechtenstein Vocational Training Act. In future, however, this could also mean that Liechtenstein employers take on board the “qualification book” (Qualifikationsbuch) that individuals in Switzerland can use to identify and validate the skills they gained through informal means.

Furthermore, the Maastricht Communiqué and the Copenhagen Process have played a mayor role to develop and conceptualise a framework of validation of informal and non-formal learning. Within this scope the Leonardo-da-Vinci-Program and the third generation of the lifelong learning<sup>149</sup> program will strengthen the process of validation not only in Liechtenstein.

---

<sup>149</sup> COM(2004) 474 final, 2004/0153 (COD) Proposal for a DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing an integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning

---

## **20.0 LITHUANIA**

*By Giedre Beleckiene (Methodological Centre for VET, National Observatory in Lithuania)*

### **20.1 Introduction**

Lithuania is constantly moving towards a coherent national system of knowledge and competencies assessment aiming to build bridges between formal, non-formal and informal education and thus creating an “open” structure accessible to everyone. In principal legal basis is in place already. However methodologies and forms used to evaluate knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education needs further development. Lack of information does not allow any estimation regards the extent to which established procedures are being implemented. Analysis of research conducted and the results of interviews reveal the poor awareness of the population, training providers and even stakeholders on procedures adopted for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Though individuals presently lack motivation to formally certify possessed knowledge and skills interviews show the growing interest of the population on the validation of non-formal education issues. The successful implementation of recently developed strategic documents and foreseen measures should ensure the visibility and value of non-formal and informal learning experiences and would also strengthen the basis for lifelong learning.

### **20.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

#### *20.2.1 Legislation and National policies*

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is not a new idea in Lithuania. Early impetus was provided by the White Paper on VET (1998) through the principle ‘*of formal recognition of the acquired qualification, irrespective of how it has been acquired*’. Law on Non-formal Adult Education (1998) establishes the right of non-formal education participants ‘*after passing examinations in formal education, science or studies institutions, to receive an assessment of the knowledge acquired in the system of non-formal adult education as well as a state recognised document testifying to the acquisition of a certain level of formal education, stage thereof or a separate regulated part of the programme (module)*’. In 2001-2002 legal acts defining the procedures for the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal vocational education and training and prior-learning in higher non-university studies were adopted. Finally, new edition of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania passed in 2003 sets out key elements to formally certify competencies acquired through non-formal (including children’s and adult education) or informal learning. This law is an umbrella law establishing goals and principles of the educational system, the framework of institutions, activities and civil relationships as well as obligations of the State in the area of formal, non-formal and self (informal) education including validation issues. In addition, recently developed and approved strategic documents, namely Strategy on Vocational Guidance, Strategy Paper on Lifelong Learning, Strategic Guidelines for the Development of Education for 2003-2012 and Single Programming Document, aim to build bridges between formal, non-formal and informal education and foresee concrete measures for the further

development of national knowledge and competence assessment system including official validation of non-formal learning experiences.

### *20.2.2 Basis for validation*

National VET standards play a crucial role in the curriculum development and validation process. They join occupation, education and assessment elements. The VET standard is comprised of 9 parts: general occupation description, occupation purpose, areas of activity, competencies, training objectives, assessment of competencies and final assessment of qualification. The development of national VET standards started in 1997. However, the progress in the implementation of a comprehensive national qualifications framework based on competency based standards has been slow and mainly because of financial problems. The process is yet to be finished. Seeking to accelerate the standardisation process a competence approach has been introduced into all three years post-secondary education vocational studies<sup>150</sup> (further - vocational studies) and initial VET programs<sup>151</sup>. Higher non-university studies were built on the basis of vocational studies and in consequence they are competence based.

Though modularisation of curricula in vocational education and in labour market training is ongoing, the modules are not harmonized and do not allow for a flexible attendance at initial vocational education and labour market training. There is no mobility between labour market training and vocational education. The same situation is observed through all levels of education.

Seeking to ensure a unified assessment of vocational attainments, the function of qualification evaluation has been delegated to social partners (Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Craft, Chamber of Agriculture). Separating assessment from education creates good conditions to formalize the knowledge acquired in non-formal way.

### *20.2.3 Links to formal learning*

Presently children's competence acquired in the course of non-formal learning could be recognised as a part of a formal education program or a qualification according to a procedure established by schools or higher education. Practically it shows itself as simplification of entrance requirements to a certain educational institution. For example, those children having completed children's music school and applying to Lithuanian Music Academy are taking a musicology test while others should take a complex musicology exam. Statistics on the results of these initiatives have not been collected.

---

<sup>150</sup> Provided in professional colleges

<sup>151</sup> Reform of vocational studies was finished in 1999 and initial VET programs in 2002

Equivalency examination is the main method leading to legitimating of non-formal or informal learning achievements for adults. Following the Temporal Procedure<sup>152</sup> only a person over the age 18 years with at least one years work experience can apply for the recognition of competence acquired outside formal education. In September of each year he or she should register in a vocational school having license to provide and providing the programme chosen by the individual. The procedure starts with the identification of non-formal or informal learning achievements. This is done through analysis of certificates on non-formal education and other related documents provided by the individual. Then the external students and schools agree on the timetable of appointed course credit tests and consultations if they are needed. In case the results are positive, external student are allowed to take final qualification exams together with those from formal education. The Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Crafts and the Chamber of Agriculture took over full organisation of final exams. Individuals who successfully pass the exam are awarded with qualification certificates or the qualified worker diploma. Assessment and recognition services are paid by the external student themselves, by the employer in case they initiate the procedure and by the Labour Exchange in case they referred the job seeker to take examination.

The regulations for recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal learning set up in the Order of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour<sup>153</sup> are similar to those described above. The only difference concerns choice of institutions having the right to organise recognition procedures.

Quantitative information on the above described initiative is not available. Interviews have brought to light insufficient knowledge of training providers, individuals, employers and even stakeholders on issues related to validation of non-formal education. The majority of employers<sup>154</sup> presently see no need to formally certify employees' competencies acquired in non-formal or informal ways. To their opinion only the individual could benefit from this validation. However some differences in sectoral approaches could be observed. For example, interest to formalise competencies is higher in the Mechanics and Electronics sector as compared with Information Technologies. Presented assumptions are being endorsed by the preliminary results of the exploratory research conducted in the framework of Leonardo da Vinci programme project "Facilitating Access to Lifelong Learning through the Recognition Procedure of Non-formal and Informal Learning". According to interviews with both training providers and Chambers the cases when employers refer employees to take qualification exams are rare.

---

<sup>152</sup> The Temporal Procedure for Recognition of Knowledge Gained through the Non-formal Adult Education or Informal Education and for Receiving of Formal Documentation for Evidence of Graduation of Higher Level Education, Vocational Training, some Level or Module of Vocational Training and Acquisition of Qualification, 2001, Ministry of Education and Science

<sup>153</sup> Procedure for Organisation and Implementation of Labour Market Vocational Training and Regulations on Digest of Non-formal Labour Market Programmes, 2002, Ministry of Social Security and Labour

<sup>154</sup> 24 market leaders in sectors of Information Technologies, Hotels and Restaurants and Mechanics and Electronics were interviewed in the framework of ongoing PHARE project "Framework of Qualifications Standards"

Based on interview results motivation of individuals to legitimate non-formal experiences is rather low. However respondents reported the increased interest to certify certain qualifications especially in the fields of construction and agriculture. This is mainly caused by special regulations adopted in some economy sectors. As for example, according to the Law on Farmer's Farm, a person willing to register a farm must provide a copy of document evidencing his professional readiness to engage in agricultural activity (a relevant diploma or a certificate). The same requirement exists for farmers applying for loans to banks, support from EU funds or those who are purchasing the land intended for agriculture.

Graduates from *professional colleges*<sup>155</sup> who are continuing studies at colleges<sup>156</sup> have a legal possibility<sup>157</sup> to transfer credits either for subject or for overall study programme. In the latter case students go on with studies according to the individual programme drawn on the basis of the results obtained through comparison of two curricula. Statistics available show that the number of graduates from professional colleges and continuing studies in colleges is constantly increasing.

Other validation initiatives in Lithuania cover validation of non-formal and informal learning practices according to international norms. Tests of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or European Computer Driving License (ECDL) are the most popular between Lithuanians.

### **20.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector**

The courses widely recognised among employers on national level and having no link to formal validation compose a second group of validation initiatives. Based on analysis of the information available, formative assessment is the main tool for validation of learning achievements in this category and the cost of training depends on service provider. Employers most usually refer their staff to management and financial courses and pay for employees' education and training.

The third group includes training recognised only on an institutional level. In this case employees are usually trained in the work place or in training centre owned by their employer. Training provided is free of charge. Mainly observational methods are used to assess the learning of a trainee. No certificate evidencing the acquired knowledge and skills is issued.

The research conducted and the information available are insufficient to provide a detailed description of validation initiatives ongoing in the working sector.

---

<sup>155</sup> provide 3 years duration post-secondary education vocational studies

<sup>156</sup> provide higher non-university education

<sup>157</sup> Principles for organization of non-university studies for those who studied according vocational studies programme, 2002, Ministry of Education and Science



## **20.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

As it can be seen from interview results, validation initiatives are in the development stage in the voluntary sector. Presently a Social Worker's training project has been started. A number of various organisations, so called methodological centres, were selected to implement different training programmes. The type of institutions varies from NGOs to public institutions. It is foreseen after successfully completing the training course the participant will be awarded with a certificate that will be recognised by Ministry of Social Security and Labour when certifying social workers.

One example of a training programme is the Madsinga project. The Lithuanian youth organisation Kitokie Projektai was a key member of the international Madzinga project that also involved youth organizations from Belgium, Iceland and Slovakia. This project developed and ran a number of training courses for a total of 24 youth workers from 13 different countries on developing intercultural understanding via experiential learning. The training course consisted of three phases:

- Phase I - experiencing the method, deepening concepts, practical training
- Phase II - practice, coaching, networking
- Phase III - professional skills, training external clients, international project development

The course combined a number of group-based outdoor experiences followed by reflection, sharing of experiences between groups, coaching as well as preparation and running of activities by course participants. In doing so, the course aimed to familiarise participants with the theory and practice of experiential learning in order to enable them to use the method in their work with young people. After completing the course, Lithuanian participants became pioneers in applying experiential learning in the youth sector.

## **20.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities**

### **20.5.1 Government**

According to the Law on Education “The Government implements the laws regulating the field, the decrees of the President and resolutions of the Seimas (Parliament), long-term State education programs as well as the education provisions in the Government Program, and confirms the implementation programs of the Government Program”.

### **20.5.2 Ministry of Education and Science**

The *Ministry of Education and Science (MES)* shapes and implements State education policy, submits proposals and drafts resolutions to the Government, organises and co-ordinates the accreditation of secondary education, vocational training, post-secondary and higher education studies curricula. The Ministry organises *matura* examinations and confirms the Procedure for final qualification examinations including validation of non-formal and informal learning experiences. Powers of the Ministry also include determination of the equivalency of education levels attained abroad with those attained in Lithuania, confirmation of State Standards of attained education and vocational training.

### *20.5.3 Ministry of Social Security and Labour*

The *Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL)* is responsible for the management of labour market vocational training at a national level. The Ministry also appoints vocational training institutions that admit those willing to validate their knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal labour market training and implement the exams. Responsibility for organisation and implementation of labour market vocational training falls on the *Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority (LLMTA)* under MSSL.

### *20.5.4 Other Ministries*

*Other* ministries and departments, governors of counties and municipalities also may implement functions in the field of VET in the scope of their activity. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the training of farmers at a national level and has issued related legal acts, appointed training institutions, implementing farmers training and assessment of knowledge.

### *20.5.5 Vocational schools and Labour Market Vocational Training Institutions*

*Vocational schools and labour market vocational training institutions* (in case of validation of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal labour market training) have a responsibility to provide for an applicant seeking to validate knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education necessary support which leads to final qualification exams.

### *20.5.6 Higher Education Institutions*

*Higher non-university education institutions* (colleges) are responsible for the creation of individual non-university study programmes for students coming after graduating from a professional college. These programmes equate differences of curricula of studies at professional college and college. Colleges also take decisions concerning the recognition of credits for subjects studied in professional colleges.

### *20.5.7 Social Partners*

*Social partners* provide suggestions on VET standards and training programs. The responsibility for the assessment of acquired qualifications of vocational schools students is fully moved to social partners. The Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Crafts and the Chamber of Agriculture took over full organisation of final exams including the design of tasks, identification of relevant members of the commission and granting of qualification. Some regional Chambers approve requests of those willing to validate their knowledge in vocational schools.

## **20.6 Conclusions**

Analysis of the information available reveals the increasing motivation of individuals to legitimate competencies acquired outside formal education. Main factors for that are special sectoral regulations, integration into European Union and expansion of work opportunities in other countries.

Although legal and institutional work is developed, further work is needed to create a coherent national system of knowledge and competencies assessment. The main issues to be addressed are related to a low variety of methodologies used for competence assessment; absence of competencies agreed at all levels of education; lack of mobility through all levels of education and training; and, insufficient links between formal, non-formal and informal education. Additionally, poor awareness of population, training providers and stakeholders on validation developments as well as lack of appropriate qualitative and quantitative information impede implementation of related validation activities.

It is expected that national and international (ESF) funds should ensure the successful implementation of recently developed strategies. This will allow the formation of a flexible structure of comprehensive education bringing together the systems of all levels of education and creating favorable conditions for lifelong learning.

## **21.0 LUXEMBOURG**

*By James Winter (ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.)*

### **21.1 Introduction**

The system of education and training in Luxembourg has various peculiarities due to its unique contextual situation. The country's population is relatively small when compared to its European neighbours, totalling 451,600, of which the proportion of resident foreign nationals is comparatively high at around 38.6 per cent (174,200). The labour force in Luxembourg is 200,500, of which around 98,500 are foreign cross-border workers<sup>158</sup>. Until very recently, the country has not had a university (this was created by the '*loi du 12 août 2003*'). With regard to professional training it is also worth noting that Luxembourg's geographical position means that there are competing forces from border regions in neighbouring countries for recruitment of staff. The above factors combine to make the debate on education and training in Luxembourg particularly complicated.

The development and implementation of methodologies for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Luxembourg are in their early stages. The Ministry for Education does have a 'dossier' and a person responsible for the area, but so far, there has been a low level of initiative at the state level. There is certainly very little legislation in place comparable with that in France, which led to the creation of the VAE (*Validation des Acquis de l'Experience*) programme. It has been reported that the government at some point in the near future will be putting in place a strategy for lifelong learning, based on 5 pillars, one of which will be a system of validation of prior occupational learning with the aim of accessing training schemes.<sup>159</sup> The Ministry of Education and vocational training part of the government's current programme states the need to improve the access to the current system of lifelong learning by providing validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, this has not yet been implemented, and in the meantime, legislation in the area remains thin on the ground.

### **21.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

#### *21.2.1 Public Authority Initiatives at National Level*

The development of validation methodologies for non-formal and informal learning is currently very limited in Luxembourg. However, certain legislative measures recently adopted have opened the door to the potential evolution of such methodologies. Firstly, the National Action Plan for employment adopted in 1998 saw the creation of a form of skills assessment methodology which examined the competencies gained by a person via non-formal and informal means<sup>160</sup>. This process, known as the '*bilan de compétences*' or

---

<sup>158</sup> STATEC, 'Le Luxembourg en chiffres, 2004'

<sup>159</sup> Ministère du travail et de l'emploi 'Fonds social européen 2000-2006 EQUAL, Rapport d'Execution 2001'

<sup>160</sup> Loi du 12 février 1999 concernant la mise en action du plan d'action national en faveur de l'emploi

individual skills audit, is used as a tool to help people evaluate their own skills and competencies, and hence match these to appropriate jobs or training programmes. The National Action Plan for employment of 2002 saw the creation of a similar tool for assessing skills, the '*bilan d'insertion professionnelle*' (BIP)<sup>161</sup>.

There are indications that validation of non-formal and informal learning is also being introduced as a way of accessing formal learning. The legislation creating the University of Luxembourg in 2003 includes an article allowing a prospective student to request a '*validation des acquis de l'expérience*', which is effectively a validation of non-formal and informal learning of the candidate, as a substitute to certification or other proof of having undertaken the formal education required for entry to the university<sup>162</sup>. Furthermore, the '*Règlement grand-ducal*' (17 June 2000) regarding the organisation of adult learning allows in certain cases, the admission to courses for candidates who do not meet the regular requirements, providing that they have relevant previous professional experience, which can be validated<sup>163</sup>.

### ***The Current Situation***

The '*bilan de compétences*'

The '*bilan de compétences*' or personal skills audit was created via legislation drawn up in 1998, that of the National Action Plan for Employment. Several articles in the legislation refer to the '*bilan de compétences*' and the cases in which it may be used. It is only available via the ADEM (*Administration de l'emploi*), to job-seekers. The '*bilan de compétences*' is used as a tool to explore the personal and professional skills of the individual concerned, and the skills required by the labour market, and is formative in nature.

---

<sup>161</sup> Plan d'action national en faveur de l'emploi 2002

<sup>162</sup> loi du 12 août 2003 - Université de Luxembourg

<sup>163</sup> Règlement grand-ducal du 17 juin 2000 portant organisation de l'apprentissage pour adultes

### *Objectives of the ‘bilan de compétences’*

---

To establish and specify, for the individual concerned, ability and experience in the following areas:

- Knowledge – what the person knows: school and professional qualifications
- Know-how – knowledge that a person has regarding the workplace – technical skills
- Behavioural skills – self image, social interaction, communication skills, initiative, manners, motivation

With the aim of:

- Developing the individuals’ skills in self-evaluation
  - Developing a better organisation of personal career priorities
  - Improving awareness of personal skills
  - Improving management of personal potential
  - Re-motivating the individual in case of loss of employment
  - Raising personal awareness for potential for self-improvement
- 

The methodology for producing a ‘*bilan de compétences*’ is via a combination of interviews, questionnaires, and observation of the individual being assessed. The assessments are conducted by third parties on behalf of the ‘*Service d’accompagnement personnalisé des demandeurs d’emploi (SAPDE)*’ section of the ADEM.

The National Action Plan for Employment of 2003 introduced another level of this type of self-assessment, the ‘*bilan de compétences basses qualifications*’, which is an assessment method for people with very few qualifications. It is divided into two parts ‘professional skills’ and ‘social skills’, since jobs requiring very low knowledge often place a lot of importance on criteria such as hygiene, health, and behaviour in the workplace.<sup>164</sup>

### The ‘*bilan d’insertion professionnelle*’

The ‘*bilan d’insertion professionnelle*’ (BIP), is similar to the ‘*bilan de compétences*’, with the specific aim of helping job-seekers to become more autonomous in their search for employment, in addition to providing a tool for evaluating their technical and social skills as well as competencies. It was created in 2002 via the implementation of the National Action Plan for employment of 2002.

---

<sup>164</sup> Ministère du travail et de l’emploi, ‘Plan d’Action National pour l’emploi, Rapport National 2003’

***Objectives of the ‘bilan d’insertion professionnelle’***

---

- To improve the job-seeker’s responsibility and autonomy with regard to becoming employed
- To put into practice in the most optimal way the social and technical skills which the individual possesses

Outcomes:

- Increased ability of the job-seeker (via better awareness of his/her abilities, career aims)
  - Definition of a realistic occupational ‘project’ which is transposable to the labour market
  - Defence of one’s ‘project’
  - Development of an action plan
  - Management of the action plan
- 

The basis for the preparation of the BIP is via group work, in which the job-seekers are encouraged to propose and discuss their career plan, and whether it is compatible with the job market situation. At the same time, the candidate is questioned about what he/she believes are his/her personal competences, and whether they are compatible with their career plan. The BIP is prepared in the form of a ‘log book’, in which the candidate notes what he or she has drawn from each session of group work, and uses these notes to modify his or her occupational project and plan of action.

The ‘bilan’ system for evaluating competencies is used to some success in tackling unemployment in Luxembourg – according to statistics from the ADEM, 50% of those that undertook a ‘bilan de compétences’ or a ‘bilan d’insertion professionnelle’ in 2003 are still in employment. While they are not the most concrete method for validating informal and non-formal learning, they do contain an important element which involves the evaluation of one’s skills and competences, which are requisite to a job-seeker developing a suitable strategy to re-access the labour market or recognise what fields of work he or she has the ability to work in. The ‘bilans’ therefore represent what could be described as an evolutionary step towards more ‘formalised’ validation methodologies.

Unlike, for example, in the French system, the ‘bilan de compétences’ and the ‘bilan d’insertion professionnelle’ are only available for the unemployed. There is no provision in the legislation for those who are currently working to apply to undergo a ‘bilan’. This may not necessarily be because those who are currently employed would not benefit from or wish to undertake a ‘bilan’, rather it suggests that there is the possibility to expand the scope of the ‘bilan’ system in the future should policy-makers see fit to do so.

‘*Validation des acquis*’ – the summative approach

‘*Validation des acquis*’ translates as validation of prior learning, and is mentioned in the legislation creating the University of Luxembourg (la loi du 12 août 2003). The legislation allows for the validation of prior occupational learning to be substituted for formal learning qualifications in certain cases when applying to study at the university. Furthermore, the

‘*Reglement grand-ducal du 17 juin 2000*’ regarding the organisation of adult apprenticeships also contains provisions for admission to courses through a form of validation of prior occupational learning. While this does not represent a large legislative framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, it does indicate that at the national level, this method of assessing an individual’s learning experience is formalised in certain instances.

### ***Validation of prior occupational learning and the University of Luxembourg***

Art. 9 of the law of 12 August 2003 creating the University of Luxembourg specifies the circumstances under which a candidate can use the validation of prior learning to demonstrate how they meet the knowledge and aptitude levels required in order to be awarded a diploma or other certificate. The awarding of such a validation is decided by a panel (*‘jury’*), the composition of which is stipulated by the university rector according to the nature of the validation requested. The panel is primarily made up of teaching/research staff, although when assessing prior work-based learning, experts from the relevant private sector are also present.

Evidence upon which the panel bases its decision is a combination of a dossier submitted by the candidate, an interview with the candidate or, in certain circumstances, directly via observation of the candidate in their occupational setting, either real or reconstructed, if this procedure is allowed by the authority which delivers the certification. The panel also determines the scope of the validation, and in instances of partial validation, states where knowledge and skills in a certain area need to be evaluated by a complementary assessment.

### ***Admission to adult learning courses via validation of prior learning***

Legislation developed in 2000 regarding adult learning also contains provisions for the use of validation methodologies for admitting candidates onto adult apprenticeship courses. The completion of a successful adult apprenticeship in Luxembourg leads to one of the following qualifications:

- Certificat d’initiation technique et professionnelle (CITP)
- Certificat de capacité manuelle (CCM)
- Certificat d’aptitude technique et professionnelle (CATP)

Training takes place either through the Centre National de Formation Professionnelle Continue (CNFC), or in one of the technical Lycées.

Article 9 of the ‘*Reglement grand-ducal du 17 juin 2000 portant organisation de l’apprentissage pour adultes*’ allows for ‘dispensations to the normal admissions requirements for candidates who do not meet the conditions stated above, but who can demonstrate previous professional experience which can be validated’. In cases where such a validation is requested, the Admissions Commission decides whether to admit the candidate to the first, second, third or fourth year of the training scheme.

### ***Recognition of validation methodologies from external countries***



Luxembourg is unique in its size and geographical location, and it is to be expected that policy formation is influenced by policies of neighbouring countries. With regard to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, there are instances in the higher education sector in which institutions use the validation methodologies of other countries. For example, in the Centre de Recherche Public (CRP) Henri Tudor, a publicly funded science and research centre, the French system of ‘*Validation des Acquis*’ is used as a method of determining the skills which a candidate possesses in order to allow him or her to take up certain courses.

### ***European Social Fund research projects***

The CRP Henri Tudor has been leading two projects part-funded by the European Social Fund which are examining methodologies for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, particularly in the field of innovation. The first project was entitled ‘Innosertion’ and focused on the anticipative management of skills linked to innovation technology. This was followed-up by a related project called ‘Check-Up’ which focused on methodologies for the validation and development of skills bases aimed at helping the over-50s gain improved access to the information society.

### ***Sub-national Initiatives***

There are no initiatives at the sub-national public authority level in Luxembourg. The mandate of the Ministry of Education and Professional Training covers all areas of education policy, including lifelong learning. As stated above, validation of non-formal and informal learning in Luxembourg is still in its infancy, and it appears that for the time being, most initiatives are being led at the national level.

### ***21.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector***

The principle private sector actors in the training and lifelong learning sector in Luxembourg are as follows:

- Chambre de Commerce (chamber of commerce)
- Chambre des Métiers (representation group for artisans)
- Chambre de travail/Arbeiterkammer – AK (representation group for workers)
- Chambre des employés privés, Luxembourg – CEPL (representation group for all private sector employees in Luxembourg)
- Institut de Formation Bancaire, Luxembourg –IFBL (Institute for training in the banking sector)

At the moment, these organisations are not significantly advanced in the development of methodologies for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. In certain cases, they have expressed opinions on the subject and the possibilities for the future development of such methodologies.

For example, the *Chambre des employés privés* is in favour of the legislation with regard to using a system of ‘*validation des acquis*’ as part of the admissions procedure for entering higher education institutions. However, they argue that the scope for usage of this validation

does not go far enough; in their view it appears to be limited only to the first year of study. They argue that this does not dovetail with European level developments in this area, and that validation of prior occupational learning should be available at all levels.<sup>165</sup>

However, the Institut de Formation Bancaire Luxembourg (IFBL), offers the services of its 'Diagnostic Centre' for the purposes of training those working in the banking sector, part of the role of which is to assist workers in this area to assess their skills and abilities relevant to working in the sector. One of the tools used by the Diagnostic Centre to achieve this, is the drawing up of '*bilan de compétences*' similar to those described in section 2.1.2 above.

#### **21.4 Review of existing initiatives: Third Sector**

Examples of initiatives in this sector do not appear readily, and indeed the literature would suggest that there are none that exist. Again here, the only involvement regarding the development of methodologies for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are official positions expressed in reports. For example, the Christian-based NGO Caritas states that 'A recognized system for the validation of prior learning would be advantageous to business, to the individual, and also to society as a whole'.<sup>166</sup>

#### **21.5 Conclusions**

The development of tools and methodologies for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Luxembourg is clearly still in its infancy across all sectors of society. In the public field, where legislation does exist, it is very recent and its scope is narrow, making an effective assessment of its success difficult. At the national level, there are indications that a system of so-called '*validation des acquis*' is in the process of being developed, elements of which are already being applied in the higher education field. However, there is very little guidance on the subject, and minimal evidence on how the tools created in the relevant legislation are currently being used. Its principle application in the admissions procedure for entering the University of Luxembourg is difficult to evaluate given that the university has only been in existence for one year. However, the introduction in recent years of the '*bilan de compétences*' and '*bilan d'insertion professionnelle*' to assist job-seekers in auto-identification of skills indicate that the state is developing tools which form the beginnings of such validation techniques, and could indeed be seen as precursors to a wider system of validation.

In the private and third sectors, there are few initiatives being taken in the area of validation of non-formal and informal learning, with the main organisations in the private sector mostly continuing to focus on more orthodox methods of assessing skills and competencies. However, the fact that the main banking sector training institution has adopted the system of the '*bilan de compétences*' to assess the skill levels of its members suggests that other sectors may develop similar validation programmes in the future.

---

<sup>165</sup> CEPL, Université au Luxembourg (projet de loi) – Avis, 2003

<sup>166</sup> Caritas Luxembourg 'Defis sociaux 2004'

The future of validation methodologies of non-formal and informal learning in Luxembourg may depend partially on how well such methodologies are currently working. As is noted above, there has been some criticism that the current legislation concerning ‘*validation des acquis*’ is too narrow in scope. However, signals coming from the Ministry of Education that validation of non-formal and informal learning is to be used in the field of lifelong learning in the future point to a possible widening of the scope of the current legislation.

## **22.0 MALTA**

*By Anthony Azzopardy (University of Malta)*

### **22.1 Introduction**

Although the debate on the importance of non-formal and informal education/learning as complimentary to formal education is almost exhausted, the ‘fear’ that the non-formal may reduce the academic excellence of the formal is prevalent in Malta. The inherent values of voluntary participation and experiential learning associated with the non-formal and informal processes of learning are still being investigated and openly questioned. However, with the launching of a conference by the Ministry of Education on the ‘Implementation of the National Curriculum’ (June 2000) and the subsequent publication of the ‘unofficial’ Strategic Plan (March 2001) and scattered validation initiatives have now started to contribute to the ‘political’ and ‘educational’ discourse on the recognition and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning.

It needs to be stated at the outset that the term ‘non-formal’ is not in common use and it is often confused with the term ‘informal’. Over the past ten years, the Youth Studies Programme at the University of Malta and the Employment and Training Corporation in particular, and other agencies/institutions in general, have consistently strived to mould political and educational perception policies into a mode whereby additional, though different, possibilities exist for the enhancement of one’s *curriculum vitae*.

It is also imperative for the reader to understand that, in a small country the size of Malta<sup>1</sup>, the element of ‘oneness’ is very strong. This element contributes to various complimentary and conflicting issues at one and the same time. While co-ordination and amalgamation of efforts is overtly possible, individual entities tend to guard their specific domain so vigorously that fragmentation and duplication of work become inevitable.

This chapter will attempt to provide a brief description of the current state of affairs which, at the time of writing, does not include widespread accreditation processes.

Within the Maltese context, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment<sup>2</sup>, often in conjunction with the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, is the main source of impetus for drastic changes in the realm of learning. The formal education system, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, the Institute of Tourism Studies, Employment and Training, and Youth all fall under its remit. The political implications are that the Ministry is largely responsible for providing both direct and indirect financial assistance to these groups, without this assistance none of them could function effectively and efficiently.

---

<sup>1</sup> Total surface area: 315 sq.km. (including Gozo and Comino); Population: c. 400 000

<sup>2</sup> Prior to May 2004, there was a Ministry of Education and a Ministry of Youth and the Arts – a situation which was preceded by the establishment of a Parliamentary Secretariat responsible for Youth affairs within the Ministry of Education.

## **22.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

### *22.2.1 National*

- a. The Ministry has a Department of Further Studies and Adult Education. This department consists of two units: the Vocational Education and Programme Development Unit which provides post-secondary courses in subjects such as, Animal Husbandry, Hair Dressing and Beauty Therapy and Health care; and the Lifelong Education Unit which provides educational, vocational and cultural evening courses for adults of all ages and from all walks of life. ([www.education.gov.mt](http://www.education.gov.mt))
  
- b. The Ministry subsidizes heavily the University of Malta. ([www.um.edu.mt](http://www.um.edu.mt)). *In this institution, there are two initiatives directly related to the non-formal process of learning. Firstly, available for all university students, with the exception of First Years and Post-graduate candidates, an Extracurricular Credits System is in place. Briefly, under this system, students have the opportunity to engage in an activity / project which helps them manoeuvre outside of purely academic limits. On completion of the activity / project, the individual student is assessed both by his/her particular activity supervisor and by the Extracurricular Credits Board. The mark obtained will be weighted as 0.5% of the final global mark that is considered for degree classification purposes.*

*Secondly, as part-fulfilment of the course requirements, participants at the Youth Studies Programme are required to undergo 300 hours of Fieldwork placement. As prospective youth and community workers who are considered as the major providers of non-formal learning, the Placement is formally recognised, validated and accredited by the University (Council of Europe & European Commission, Youth Research Partnership (2004), Draft Papers, p. 86). (<http://cedefop.communityzero.com/youth>)*

Both these initiatives have been discussed at length with the present Minister of Education, Youth and Employment (27.01.04, 19.05.04) and the former Minister of Youth and the Arts (various dates). While there is full agreement on the purpose and validity of youth and community work in terms of non-formal learning, particularly within the formal parameters of schools, the recognition of the youth and community work profession, together with its subsequent implications, is still not possible. Financial difficulties and uncertainties seem to be the main cause of this situation.

- c. The National Minimum Curriculum envisages the development of a number of schools into Community Learning Centres. These centres are meant to cater for the education of adult members of the community and, as such, they can be seen as an extension of the Government's Adult Education Programme. Specific objectives have been proposed the foremost amongst which would be "to ensure that non-formal education is given its due consideration and is accorded the place it deserves in the national educational and cultural agenda" (Proceedings: National Curriculum on its Way,

2000:358). This is one of the few written declarations whereby the status of non-formal education is being specified in terms of recognition. In the build-up to this strategy, the Ministry, in conjunction with the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, has organised a Certificate of Attendance Course for prospective co-ordinators of the Learning Centres. The participants have been chosen from among members of the teaching staff in primary and secondary schools.

#### *22.2.2 Sub-National*

- a. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, was set up in 2001 with the aim of providing ‘universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy’ (Prospectus, 2002-3). The College provides a variety of courses of vocational educational training in, among others, Agribusiness, Art and Design, Building and Construction Engineering, Business and Commerce, Community Services, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Information and Communication Technology, Mechanical Engineering, and a Maritime Institute. The College is a major provider of the off-the-job educational training element of apprenticeship schemes. It works closely with the Employment and Training Corporation in ensuring these schemes meet the needs of local employees. ([www.mcast.edu.mt](http://www.mcast.edu.mt))
- b. The Institute of Tourism Studies, set up in 1987, provides vocational education within the tourism industry on the Maltese islands. The accelerated growth in tourism increased the pressure on the local labour market for highly qualified technical and management personnel. Apart from certificate and diploma level courses, the Institute has apprenticeship programmes that falls under the ‘Extended Skill Training Scheme’ (ESTS). These programmes offer students the possibility to equip themselves with skills for entry into the hospitality and catering industry.

*A more direct link with the concept of non-formal learning is found in the ‘Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning’ – (APEL) whereby prospective candidates with documented and related work experience in the tourism industry will be awarded credits.*([www.its.gov.mt](http://www.its.gov.mt))

- c. The Employment and Training Corporation was established in 1990 under the Employment and Training Services Act. It was set up as a corporate body with a distinct legal personality, to provide and maintain a national public employment service. In essence, this means assisting people in finding suitable employment and assisting employers to find suitable employees. It was also given the mandate to provide training courses to promote employability, and to gather the information required to establish labour market requirements in Malta.

The Organisation is based on the twin European values of solidarity and subsidiarity. Its mission is “to provide and ensure equitable access to training programmes and employment opportunities and to contribute towards the social and economic development of the community” ([www.etc.org.mt](http://www.etc.org.mt)).

Training services, Placement schemes, Apprenticeship schemes and specialist and individualised attention to disadvantaged groups are the main services that the Corporation offers (Azzopardi, A.E. (2003), '*Strategic Review of ETC Services for Young People*', Report, Employment and Training Corporation). ([www.etc.org.mt](http://www.etc.org.mt)).

- d. Trade Unions – The two main trade unions on the island are the General Workers Union (GWU – [www.gwu.org.mt](http://www.gwu.org.mt)) and the Malta Workers Union – better known as the *Union Haddiema Maghqudin* (UHM – [www.uhm.org.mt](http://www.uhm.org.mt)). While the GWU has the Reggie Miller Foundation as a branch for the organisation of courses for Youth Leaders and a number of academic and cultural study sessions (e.g. Music, Crafts, Health and Safety, and Information Technology) – for which a certificate of attendance is awarded (interview, 29.03.04) – the UHM does not include in its Activities list any form of non-formal or informal learning.

### **22.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

The Federation of Industry does not offer any courses / activities related to non-formal / informal learning ([www.foi.org.mt](http://www.foi.org.mt)). However, individual organisations are now taking the plunge and moving away from the conventional mode of production bonus systems to reward employees for learning more skills and performing using these, in their department. A particular case in point is the 'learning strand' taken by Playmobil Malta Ltd. where a multi-skilling programme was introduced in September 1995. A three-tier approach to the skills process is taken in terms of must-know, good-to-know and nice-to-know skills. The company also launched a training programme in first aid and a computer-assisted learning technique among a representative group of workers from its various departments (Borg, undated in Haugøy, G., ed., *Open Learning Environments in Adult Education: A Guide to European Models* – [www.statvoks.no/focal/](http://www.statvoks.no/focal/)).

### **22.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

The Youth Policy of Malta has been described by an international group of experts, acting as a Review Team, as 'a sound piece of work' (Evans, 2003:62). More specifically, the Team particularly welcomed the 'reference to the accreditation of the acquired experience and skills through non-formal and informal learning' (*ibid*:63). The expert team also stated that 'it is our view that investment in youth work would be money particularly well spent in Malta' (*ibid*:30) since 'youth work is, of course, the location within which non-formal education can take place very successfully' (*ibid*:40).

Articles 6.4 and 6.5 of the National Youth Policy (Youth Information Handbook, 2004:18) confirm that the State will follow a policy that complements formal education with non-formal and informal education. The policy also states that the various education and employment bodies should ensure the implementation of measures for the accreditation of prior learning and skills acquired through non-formal learning/education (author's emphasis).

The Youth Information Handbook provides a list of 112 Youth Organisations with a social, political and religious orientation (2004:118) and 45 Sport Organisations (2004:171). Among

these organisations there are a large variety of opportunities for non-formal and informal learning experiences both in Malta and abroad. In particular cases, recognition is limited to terms of sponsorship for activities, such as exchange programmes offered by established institutions. There is no record of accreditation procedures being followed although participants in the various activities have claimed that Certificates of Attendance and Reference Notes have been given some consideration by employees' interviewing Boards (interview, 06.09.04, Teuma, M., president, Malta Association of Youth Workers ([may@nextgen.net.mt](mailto:may@nextgen.net.mt)) and president ZAK<sup>3</sup> – [www.zakmalta.org](http://www.zakmalta.org)).

## **22.5 Conclusions**

The overall situation in Malta is one where, while the structures and personnel for the delivery of 'goods' are available, the final step for the implementation of validation and accreditation processes still beckons.

The main conclusions that may be drawn from the above are that:

- a. there still exists a gap between the stated and written policy and the implementation process;
- b. the prevalent concern for government and private entities is the acquisition of skills outside the formal system of education for employability purposes only;
- c. recognition of non-formal and informal education/learning is a process that is not as yet linked to validation and accreditation; and
- d. research on the subject in reference is still at the embryonic stage.

---

<sup>3</sup> ZAK (*Zghazagh Azzjoni Kattolika*), with a membership of 800, organises religious and church functions; personal & social education meetings and social gatherings (Ministry for Youth and the Arts, 2004:168).



## **23.0 NETHERLANDS**

*By Cohen Zoon (ECORYS Netherlands)*

### **23.1 Introduction**

In the previous years, there has been increased attention relating non-formal and informal learning in The Netherlands. During the 1990's the first national policy outlines were presented, following from the attention that was already given to the concept of lifelong learning. Nowadays, several branches and companies have started initiatives in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In the Netherlands, EVC (Erkenning Verworven Competenties – Recognition of Acquired Skills) is the term used for the validation of non-formal or informal learning<sup>167</sup>. Where the abbreviation EVC is used in this paper, we intend to say validation of non-formal or informal learning.

In the first paragraph, initiatives regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning in The Netherlands will be described. Most initiatives are taking place at a decentralized level. Sub-national and sectoral organisations are indeed stimulated by the national government to implement procedures, but it remains a matter of free choice for these organizations to start initiatives and to design procedures. Nevertheless, several industry branches and companies have set up initiatives to link the competences that employees have learned by doing with formal qualification structures. Also voluntary organisations gradually start working on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In the third paragraph, the responsibilities of the stakeholders of EVC are described. We'll see that sectoral organisations hold the key for stimulating EVC. The end of the paper consists of the concluding remarks.

### **23.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

While the Dutch government has decided to take a bottom-up approach regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning, there are not many direct initiatives taken by national bodies (primarily ministries). Several policy outlines have been made, but since the beginning of 2001, most responsibility has been placed in the hands of the Kenniscentrum EVC (EVC Knowledge Centre). The role of the government, ministries and the Knowledge Centre will be further described in the following chapter, which deals with stakeholders' responsibilities.

While there is a clear qualification structure on the level of lower vocational education and training (MBO), most of the EVC-initiatives have been introduced on this level. EVC is perceived as a tool for stimulating economic effects. The perspective is that it enhances

---

<sup>167</sup> Colardyn, D. & Bjørnåvold, J. , *The learning continuity*, 2004. According to this report, there are more European countries in which the concept of informal and non-formal learning has been given a different name.

transparency on the labour market and increases the efficiency of the certification of skills and competences. Long-term formal education is replaced by a quick scan of people's abilities to fulfill tasks and to formalize them. As a result, employers do not have to wait for an indication of the competences of their workers<sup>168</sup>. Because economic profits are expected from EVC, the responsibility for it is placed in the hands of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This ministry has not formulated strict rules and regulations, but a couple of preconditions instead, which sectoral organisations and employers may use as a guideline for setting up EVC procedures:

- Existence of facilities for assessment-procedures;
- Accessibility towards the procedures;
- System for quality-assurance of the procedures;
- Practical qualification standards;
- Stimulating financial and judicial framework;
- Facilitative (inter) national framework;
- Effectiveness and efficiency calculation;

The main reason for the position of the Ministry of Economic Affairs is the typical Dutch way to set up these kinds of initiatives. In the so-called *poldermodel*, social partners and other parties cooperate on a sub-national and sectoral level to arrange policy outlines. National governmental bodies are reticent towards initiatives like EVC.

An exception to the decentralized policies of EVC in The Netherlands is the *Wet Beroepen in het Onderwijs (BIO)* (the Law of Professions in Education). The law was approved by the Parliament in January 2004 and obliges workers in the educational sector to work on their employability after they've graduated and started working. On a national level, standards are going to be formulated to certify that teachers dispose of necessary qualifications<sup>169</sup>.

The main reason to set up this law is the shortage of labour the educational sector, which had to be dealt with. While there is a lack of certificated people, the government tries to make it attractive to people with certain qualifications, to start working in the sector (so-called side streamers). Qualifications learned apart from the formal pathways are recognized through an assessment procedure. If a person's competences meet the qualification structure, he or she is able to work on a job in the educational sector directly. For those who fail to meet certain competences, a training program may be offered first.

### **23.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

#### **23.3.1 Industry sectors**

Since the end of the 1990's, a number of industrial sectors (e.g. house painting industry, meat industry, construction industry, process industry and the care sector). Have set up initiatives

---

<sup>168</sup> Werkgroep EVC, *De fles is halfvol! Een brede visie op de benutting van EVC*, Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2000

<sup>169</sup> Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, The Hague

regarding EVC on their (sectoral) level. In most cases social partners, sectoral organisations and regional vocational training institutes (ROC's) are involved in setting up EVC-procedures. The Dutch government stimulates these initiatives through the EVC Knowledge Centre.

To participate in an EVC-project, an employee normally has to have around 3 to 5 years of experience in the sector they are working in. The general goal is to validate the competences that employees have learned, by doing them. In some collective labour agreements (e.g. metal industry), employees have been given the right to participate in EVC. In these cases, the employer is formally obliged to help the employee to participate. In practice though, the employee is very much dependent on the willingness of the employer to be involved<sup>170</sup>.

In most cases, an intake meeting/interview with the employee is held first. On the basis of this intake, examiners decide whether the individual is able to participate in an exam or assessment procedure directly. In case not, the individual is offered education or training for improving his or her competences. Afterwards he or she is asked to participate in an exam-procedure for certification of qualifications. In some cases the individual makes a portfolio in which experience is presented by a sum of certificates, notes and projects that have been worked on.

Often, informally acquired competences are matched with procedures, which are part of the Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs (Law on Education and Vocational Training). An examining board produces its own qualification standards<sup>171</sup> in cooperation with representatives of the sectoral organizations. In almost all EVC-procedures the examining board contains representatives of a ROC<sup>172</sup>. It's very much a summative validation process, which focuses on the recognition of competences that were learned after a certain period.

---

<sup>170</sup> This particular information was given in a short telephone interview with Mr. R. Duvekot, director of the knowledge center EVC in Houten, the Netherlands.

<sup>171</sup> EVC Kenniscentrum, *Alle hens aan EVC, de verankering van EVC in elke context, jaarplan 2004*, p. 11

<sup>172</sup> Source: Knowledge Center EVC [www.kenniscentrumevc.nl](http://www.kenniscentrumevc.nl) / Ministry of Economic Affairs, [www.minez.nl](http://www.minez.nl)

***Best practice example –Introducing EVC in the health care sector: Flexis<sup>173</sup>***

Flexis is an initiative of the Opleidings- en Ontwikkelingsfonds (Education and Development Fund) in the health care sector. The goal of the initiative is to stimulate employees on different levels in the health care sector to work on a basis of formally recognized qualifications. The initiative is a good practice example of EVC. It shows some of the possibilities for both employees and employers. The different projects around Flexis have the following aspects in common:

It focuses on specific groups who (only) dispose of competences that were learned by doing;

- Flexible routes towards learning possibilities, which means the most effective way in which EVC can be recognized;
- Intense cooperation between different regional bodies: schools, training centres, and employment exchange offices;
- A possibility for new types of recruitment: people without formal qualifications, but good competences, may be offered a job during or after following an EVC-program.

**Best practice example - Introducing EVC in the Dutch installation sector<sup>174</sup>**

Around 40% of the employees in this sector are not formally qualified for the job they have. LOB Intechnum, a sectoral interest organisation, started EVC to formalize the qualifications of employees. The strength of the project is the focus on practical competences instead of formal vocational training standards. Together with an ROC and a private training company, the practical qualifications for several jobs have been identified. Individuals have to work at least 5 years to participate in the EVC-project. After an interview, a portfolio will be made. On the basis of this and another in-depth interview, the interviewer (a representative of ROC) decides whether the employee has shown enough competences for a formalisation of their qualifications. If this is not the case, the individual is offered a training to improve competences; 27 people have been given a certificate since the project started in 2001.

---

<sup>173</sup> Education and Development Fund of the health care sector and Flexis ([www.flexis.nl](http://www.flexis.nl))

<sup>174</sup> Knowledge Center EVC

### 23.3.2 *Individual companies*

Although several individual companies have set up EVC-procedures for employees in the last couple of years, a systematic and comprehensive overview on a national level is not available yet. Some of the examples of organisations that have introduced EVC are: Shell, Corus, H.J. Heinz B.V., Auping, Rockwool and BSN Glasspack<sup>175</sup>. There is a belief in these companies that employees learn by doing and that certification helps both company and employee to indicate what competences are present (acquired in a formal, non-formal or informal way).

Like in the industry sectors, most EVC-procedures in companies start with an intake-interview, which is arranged by a representative of the human resources/education department. In some cases the individual is asked to make a portfolio. An overview of all experience and expertise of the person is made. On the basis of the portfolio, an examining board will visit the workplace where the employee is asked to fulfill some related tasks. If the employee has shown that they have the required competences, a certificate is provided. Sometimes, the manager of an employee may be involved in the process of recognizing competences. He may be asked for specific background information regarding the competences of the employee.

Another procedure is to make an indication of the competences of the individual directly during the interview. Again, a manager may offer help. If the interviewer assumes that the competences of the individual meet the necessary qualifications, an examination will take place (some weeks after the interview). In case the competences of the employee are not sufficient for a direct examination procedure, a training course is offered to increase competences.

In most EVC-procedures, the examination is executed by representatives; from the regional vocational training centre (ROC). Most companies try to follow the formal regulations, described in the Law on education and vocational training (Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs; WEB). It is valued as important, whilst employees receive a certificate with national value. EVC within companies is mostly a matter of summative assessment. Formative validation hardly takes place.

---

<sup>175</sup> Een jaar 'Passie & Rendement', Jaarverslag over 2003, EVC Kenniscentrum, 2004

**Best practice example - Introducing EVC at H.J. Heinz B.V.**<sup>176</sup>

Certificates with both a sectoral and national value have been introduced among the employees of Heinz. The new qualification structure is connected with the national regulations in the Wet Educatie Beroepsonderwijs. Heinz hopes to motivate employees to reflect in a better way and to adapt to necessary changes quicker. The employer also strives for more employability among its employees. The translation from informal to formal qualifications has been executed through cooperation with a ROC. Employees have been asked to participate by making a portfolio, which consists of a list of 80 tasks. An employee indicates which tasks he has fulfilled in the last couple of years. Afterwards a 'criteria-focused interview' will be held for a better understanding of a person's competences. An assessment follows, in which the employee executes several tasks. Both an internal and external examiner (ROC), value the employee's competences. From 2001 to 2003, 32 employees attained the EVC-procedure at H.J. Heinz B.V. Half of them were given a certificate directly. The others had to follow a short training program. Heinz B.V. won the national EVC-award in 2003.

**Best practice example - Introducing EVC at BSN Glasspack**<sup>177</sup>

EVC has been introduced to strengthen the market position of BSN Glasspack. While there is no formal education that covers the competences necessary for the production process, BSNGlasspack decided to set up its own educational program. Learning goals have been matched with the regulations, regarding the qualification structure in the Wet Educatie Beroepsonderwijs (Law on Vocational Training and Education). BSNGlasspack turned around the common EVC-procedure. First the production tasks were described, then the educational program was developed. After the program was set up, employees were able to fulfil more tasks on different levels. EVC at BSN Glasspack has become an educational program that is connected with the personal development plan of employees. Through both e-learning and the execution of practical tasks, a personal coach coordinates the process of an employee. If an employee is able to take an exam, the ROC is asked to start the procedure. Around 150 employees have participated in EVC-projects so far. The results will be presented in 2004.

### 23.3.3 General output of EVC

In the so-called EVC-monitor 2001-2002<sup>178</sup>, the output<sup>179</sup> of EVC has been measured on a national and sectoral level. While EVC is a relatively new concept, outputs are hard to measure precisely and particularly qualitative. Monitoring of indication was made in The Netherlands; around 6000 people from 500 organisations have participated in an EVC-

---

<sup>176</sup> Een jaar 'Passie & Rendement', Jaarverslag over 2003, EVC Kenniscentrum, 2004

<sup>177</sup> Knowledge Center EVC; best practices ([www.kenniscentrumevc.nl](http://www.kenniscentrumevc.nl))

<sup>178</sup> Hövels, B. & Romijn, C. *EVC-monitor 2001-2002*, kenniscentrum EVC, 2003

<sup>179</sup> See also: Verhaar, C. H. A., *Wat kan EVC opleveren?: Onderzoek naar het rendement van EVC in de Nederlandse praktijk anno 2002*, Lemma, 2002

project<sup>180</sup>. The knowledge centre EVC estimates that, because of the rising popularity with employers and a spread of the use of EVC-procedures around employment exchange and the reintegration market, the numbers have increased with 50% since 2002<sup>181</sup>. More qualitative material shows that HR-departments have started to use EVC-techniques to work on the employability of employees (sometimes through competence management<sup>182</sup>). Although most employers have not seen a strong increase in the productivity of their organization, they feel there is commitment of the personnel as well as consciousness regarding competences that are necessary for the execution of tasks. Employees have been given a certificate and say they have gained self-confidence.

#### **23.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

The knowledge centre EVC states in its work plan for 2004: *‘There are 3.000.000 volunteers in the Netherlands. These people acquire all kinds of non-formal competences during their activities. These may be relevant according to the development of their individual working lives. The development of individual working lives can be designed inside and outside voluntary organisations’*<sup>183</sup>.

It should be stressed that, as far as there are concrete initiatives to formalize non-formal learning in the voluntary sector, this takes place either within the organisations themselves or the umbrella organization for voluntary work: CIVIQ. The first developments started at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since 2001, the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport is monitoring and stimulating the process through a project in cooperation with the knowledge centre on EVC, CIVIQ and NIZW (Dutch Institute for Care and Welfare).

In the beginning, the project was aimed to analyze the feasibility of EVC in the voluntary sector. Currently, the focus is more on the development of concrete instruments and developing commitment among the voluntary organisations of CIVIQ. There already has been a general competence profile developed for the competences acquired in voluntary work. This will be officially launched in 2005.

In 2002, CINOP published the study ‘Vrijwilligers en EVC’ (Volunteers and EVC) in which the present and future role of EVC towards voluntary work is presented. Some examples of EVC and voluntary work were published. In the health care sector it seems possible to shorten the period a student is studying for his or her degree. Through an EVC-procedure he or she can show that some competences are already learned during voluntary activities. Another

---

<sup>180</sup> Duvekot, R., Kaemingk, E., Klarus, R. *Leren doe je toch, het gebruik van EVC op de arbeidsmarkt*, Opleiding en Ontwikkeling, 2003

<sup>181</sup> This particular information was given in a short telephone interview with Mr. R. Duvekot, director of the knowledge center EVC in Houten, the Netherlands.

<sup>182</sup> A good example can be found in the HR-policies at Shell. The HR-department tries to make employees conscious of the (individual) possibilities to work on their employability.

<sup>183</sup> EVC Kenniscentrum, *Alle hens aan EVC, de verankering van EVC in elke context, jaarplan 2004*.

example is the national Scout Association (Jamboree)<sup>184</sup>. The Association has developed instruments for its members to report competences that were learned during scouting activities as leaders, team leaders and group guides on curriculum vitae. Finally, some educational bodies in The Netherlands recognize competences that were learned during voluntary work. In some cases credits or exempts are given<sup>185</sup>. In most of the described cases, portfolios are used for measuring the competences that individuals have acquired during voluntary activities.

According to a study published in June 2003<sup>186</sup>, several Dutch voluntary organisations have started to introduce EVC procedures. The quality of these procedures is still quite low. It's a matter of *talking* on competences instead of *recognition* of competences. Sometimes certificates are given to volunteers or portfolio procedures are followed. Although it lacks professionalism, these are the first steps towards more mature EVC-procedures in voluntary work.

One such example is the Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare (NIZW) and CIVIQ (the national volunteer umbrella organisation) are since 2001 running a project called EVC and volunteer work: the main aim is to develop a recognition system for the voluntary sector. The Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports is financing this project. This year we developed a general competence profile for the competences acquired in volunteer work. We already did some pre-testing and it will be launched during this year.

Most voluntary organisations seem to be positive when it comes to the effects of EVC. They expect that increasing numbers of people may start working as a volunteer, particularly if competences are formalized, which strengthens the position on the labor market. In other words, voluntary organisations themselves expect to profit from the introduction of EVC.

It seems clear that in the upcoming years, more attention will be given to the validation of non-formal and informal learning in voluntary work. An important aim for CIVIQ and NIZW, EVC and the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport is to increase the quality of EVC procedures in voluntary organisations. This seems to be both in the interest of lifelong learning as well as voluntary work itself<sup>187</sup>.

In the yearbook 2004<sup>188</sup>, the knowledge centre on EVC, presents an article on the current developments with regard to EVC in voluntary work. It covers an explanation of the chances

---

<sup>184</sup> The Dutch Red Cross makes use of EVC for volunteers as well.

<sup>185</sup> Nafzger, J. *'Vrijwilligers en EVC, verkenning van het EVC-potentieel in vrijwilligerswerk*, CINOP, 2002

<sup>186</sup> Dam, E. & Frietman, J. *'Wenselijkheid en haalbaarheid van het erkennen van competenties van vrijwilligers'*, Kenniscentrum Beroepsopdracht Arbeidsmarkt, June 2003

<sup>187</sup> See also: *Vrijwilligers en EVC – een globale verkenning van de stand van zaken in een aantal Europese landen*, Nederlands Instituut voor Zorg en Welzijn (NIZW), 2002

<sup>188</sup> Duvekot, R & Brouwer, J., *Het brede perspectief van EVC, jaarboek 2004*, Kenniscentrum EVC, Utrecht, 2004 (Chapter 7 by M. van Houten & E. Hofman, *EVC in het vrijwilligerswerk*)



for voluntary work to implement an instrument like EVC. According to the authors, the conditions seem to be there to come up with a system in which competences of volunteers are recognized. It is believed that recognizing competences of volunteers may be of great value for society at large.

On the other hand, the authors also stress that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. The voluntary sector itself has to clarify the added value when it comes to EVC among volunteers. Nowadays, there is a very strong focus on the activities of voluntary organisations instead of how their goals can be achieved. Providing information to employers on selecting volunteers for jobs should be improved.

### **23.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities**

#### *23.5.1 Dutch government*

There exist hardly any laws and regulations regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning in The Netherlands. While initiatives regarding EVC are primarily placed in the hands of interest bodies, social partners and sectoral organisations, the Dutch government has chosen a bottom-up method for the stimulation and implementation of EVC<sup>189</sup>.

The appearance of the report 'Kwaliteiten Erkennen' (Recognizing Informal Skills), which was written by the Commission on the Recognition of Informally Acquired Skills in 1994, was the general start for placing the validation of non-formal and informal learning (EVC) on the Dutch policy agenda. EVC is aimed to establish a basis for life long learning and employability. 'The concept refers to the process of validation of acquired competences, by identification and validation, resulting – if appropriate – in recognition of competencies'<sup>190</sup>.

During the end of the 1990's, the Dutch government focused their attention on the recognition of EVC. The general view has been that the concept should be decentralized (to sectoral industry levels) and output-oriented<sup>191</sup>. EVC was seen as a tool for strengthening the ties between labour and education and as a solution for problems around shortages on some parts of the labour market. For EVC the government has nowadays a budget of € 3.4 million.

An EVC workgroup was set up to investigate the future possibilities of the concept. Their outline was published in 2000, under the title '*The bottle is half full!*<sup>192</sup>'. The title is based on the assumption that EVC must build further on existing knowledge and skills, instead of focusing on present lacks regarding skills and knowledge.

---

<sup>189</sup> SER, '*Het nieuwe leren: advies over een leven lang leren in de kenniseconomie*', 2002

<sup>190</sup> Colardyn, D. & Bjørnåvold, J. , *The learning continuity*, 2004. According to this report, there are more European countries in which there are no references made according to informal and non-formal learning.

<sup>191</sup> SER, '*Het nieuwe leren: advies over een leven lang leren in de kenniseconomie*', 2002

<sup>192</sup> Werkgroep EVC/ Ministerie van Economische Zaken, '*De fles is half vol!*', Den Haag, 2000

### 23.5.2 *Ministry of Economic Affairs*

Due to expected economic advantages of EVC, which were described in the overview of existing initiatives, the ministry of Economic Affairs has been given the responsibility for the implementation of EVC on the Dutch labour market. The ministry works closely with three other ministries.

### 23.5.3 *Ministry of Education, Culture and Science*

Through the *Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs (WEB)* (Law on Education and Vocational Training), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science determines and controls qualification structures. EVC-procedures often follow these structures for formally recognized certificates. Another, more specific reason for this Ministry to concentrate on EVC, is the shortage of labour in the educational sector. People with the required competences, but without formal qualifications have been given a change to start working in this sector. Tools have been developed to recognize people's non-formal and informal competences.

### 23.5.4 *Ministry of Work and Social Affairs*

A special 'SZW Agency' of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs is occupied with the coordination of subsidies from the European Social Fund (ESF). ESF-regulations try to stimulate initiatives of sectoral organisations and employers to formalize non-formal and informal learning among employees. To attend subsidies, these organisations have to write a work plan for the SZW Agency.

### 23.5.5 *Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport*

The Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport is planning to set up initiatives regarding EVC in the third sector for the following years. Matching acquired competences during voluntary work with formal qualifications. The ministry doesn't participate in the National Knowledge Centre EVC.

### 23.5.6 *Sociaal Economische Raad (SER) (Social Economic Advisory Board)*

The general role of the SER is to advise the Dutch government on social-economic trends and initiatives. In 2002, the SER published a report<sup>193</sup> in which the importance of initiatives on the field of EVC was emphasized. According to the SER, the most important goals are to make people more employable on the labour market and to establish a better match between labour market and educational initiatives.

### 23.5.7 *Kenniscentrum EVC (Knowledge Centre EVC)*

One of the recommendations of the EVC workgroup was to set up a national knowledge centre. With the financial resources of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of

---

<sup>193</sup> SER, 'Het nieuwe leren: advies over een leven lang leren in de kenniseconomie', 2002

Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the social partners, a consortium of three organisations (Cinop, CitoGroep and STOAS) was given the task to start the national knowledge centre (EVC Kenniscentrum) in 2001<sup>194</sup>. Since 2005, the Knowledge Centre has been put under management of CINOP with STOAS and the Ministry of Agriculture as members of the Steering Group. The centre works closely with COLO (Centraal Orgaan van de Landelijke Opleidingsorganen van het Bedrijfsleven).

The main goal of the centre is to stimulate the implementation of methods in all sectors of the Dutch labour market and to signalize trends and developments regarding EVC. The centre cooperates and informs network-partners (mainly interest groups of professions or industries<sup>195</sup>) about standards and good practices. In general, the national knowledge centre functions as an independent validation body for non-formal and informal learning in The Netherlands.

#### 23.5.8 *Centraal Orgaan van de Landelijke Opleidingsorganen van het Bedrijfsleven (COLO)*

COLO is a platform for sectoral knowledge centres on vocational training. The goal is to link qualifications in vocational training with necessary competences on the labour market. Because of the specific intermediary position between labour market and education, the sectoral knowledge centres develop and determine for a large part the qualifications for vocational education in The Netherlands. These qualifications often function as a guideline for EVC. Individual knowledge, skills and attitudes (competencies) of employees are matched with standards taken from the qualification structure. COLO has become the independent standard setting body<sup>196</sup> for non-formal and informal learning in The Netherlands.

#### 23.5.9 *Labour Unions*

A central role is played by the labour unions. Through collective labour agreements, these parties have introduced EVC in several sectors. The goal is to have employees work on employability, so their position becomes stronger on the labour market.

#### 23.5.10 *Employer organisations*

Most employer organisations are in favour of EVC. Certification leads to an indication and better understanding of the qualifications of employees. Through collective labour agreements, employer organisations make agreements about EVC as well.

---

<sup>194</sup> Cinop, Citogroep and STOAS are private organisations, serving educational organisations. All three have experience with EVC.

<sup>195</sup> M. van Dungen, 'Kenniscentrum EVC opgericht', *Cinoptiek*, 2001, nr. 3 ; p. 6-7

<sup>196</sup> Colardyn, D. & Bjørnåvold, J. *The learning continuity*, 2004. According to this report, there are more European countries in which there are no references made according to informal and non-formal learning. See also <http://www.colo.nl>

### 23.5.11 Opleidings & Ontwikkelingsfondsen (O&O fondsen)

The agreements about EVC are often financed by the Education & Development Funds (Opleidings- en Ontwikkelingsfondsen). Both employee's and employers pay a small amount of their incomes to these sectoral funds, which have originally been set up to support educational initiatives for employees<sup>197</sup>.

### 23.6 Conclusions

National, governmental initiatives regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning have primarily taken place during the end of the 1990's. From then on, the Dutch government has taken a bottom-up vision regarding EVC. This led to the start of the Kenniscentrum EVC (National Knowledge Centre) in 2001, which is aimed to support and coordinate the implementation of non-formal and informal learning in The Netherlands. The centre functions as the primary body for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

On both the level of industrial sectors and the individual companies, initiatives regarding EVC have been taken in the last couple of years. Labour unions, employer organisations and the Education and Development Funds have a stimulating role regarding the implementation of EVC. Employees themselves have a relative weak position in claiming access to EVC-procedures; they're dependent on the decision-making of the employer. In most cases the employer pays for the EVC-procedures. A donation from the Education and Development Funds sometimes takes place. Both employees and employers pay a small amount of their incomes to these funds.

Procedures in industry sectors and companies start in most cases with an intake interview. Following from that, a portfolio procedure or assessment is followed. A combination of these activities is a possibility as well. Summative assessment occurs more often than formative assessment.

To strive for a broad recognition of competences (sectoral and national), regulations are followed; in particular the Wet op Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs (Law on Education and Vocational Training). Representatives of ROC's (Regional Development Centres) are mostly asked to participate in the examiners board.

While we deal with a relatively new concept, the output of EVC is not that clear yet. Nevertheless, both employees and employers seem to be enthusiastic about the possibilities and first outcomes.

In the third sector, the first initiatives have been set up recently. In the last two years, several research and policy documents have been published that underline the possibilities of EVC for both the volunteers as well as the third sector itself. Volunteers may use the formalization of their competences in career-development. The voluntary sector may become more

---

<sup>197</sup> Hövels, B. en Romijn, C., *Implementatie van EVC: rendement, toegankelijkheid en knelpunten, deelrapportage bij de EVC monitor 2001-2002*. Kenniscentrum EVC.

attractive in itself as well. The Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport, the Knowledge centre on EVC, CIVIQ and NIZW monitor and stimulate the developments on EVC in the voluntary sector. They have developed a general competence profile for the competences acquired in volunteer work, which will be launched in 2005.

Currently, EVC in The Netherlands is entering a transition phase. More and more enterprises have integrated EVC in general HRM-policies. This is a sign that, in the following years, the focus is going to be much more on structural processes instead of incidental activities. After all the steps that have been taken, it is essential to emphasize the structural implementation of EVC. If a structural perspective is not going to be developed, there seems to be a chance that the validation of non-formal and informal learning becomes a one-day-fly.

Mr. Ruud Duvekot, director of the Knowledge Centre EVC mentions the following points of attention for the next couple of years:

- Structural integration of EVC at the HRM-departments of individual companies;
- Tearing down barriers. EVC is a general process that spreads across the borders of organisations, regions and qualifications.
- Increasing the responsibility of employees themselves for taking initiatives regarding EVC. It's not only the employer who should introduce EVC in an organization.
- Initiatives of social partners and local public bodies should be stimulated. The national bodies (Ministries) should give as much freedom to the validation of non-formal and informal learning on these levels as possible. EVC is a local and sectoral aspect.
- Structural financial resources for implementing EVC (not only incidental resources) have to be facilitated.
- A quality indication for EVC-procedures should be developed. Enterprises wish to know what outputs can be expected.

## **24.0 NORWAY**

*By Odd Bjørn Ure (CONSULTUR.)*

### **24.1 Introduction**

One of the aims in a lifelong learning reform, which was approved by the parliament in 1999, was to put non-formal and informal competences on a more equal footing with formal competences. This ambition was supported by stakeholders in the field of adult education, such as the trade unions and associations favouring liberal adult education. Hence, a number of economic and societal sectors were addressed, mainly by urging them to start experimental projects in the frame of the LLL reform. These projects received public subsidies and they covered three broad sectors:

- education & training system
- labour market (incl. the social partners)
- civil society (incl. voluntary organisations and NGOs)

A total of 24,000 people took part in the testing of various methods and tools during the project period. As part of the labour market, tests were carried out among 6,000 employees in 150 enterprises belonging to different organisations. In the voluntary sector, 13 organisations at local and regional level participated in the development of methods and tools. At the level of secondary education, 15,000 adults had their non-formal learning assessed. At a regional level, all county municipalities took part in the trials and 600 people underwent training to assess non-formal learning.

After five years, major achievements have been made in the educational sector and these are embedded in state legislation. Continued preparations are needed in the civil sector and with regard to the labour market before agreed competence passports can be introduced. Many local projects have been launched but less attention has been paid to how the models should be shared and to how competence passports from the three broad sectors should communicate. It might be hard to talk about any national system of validation before the exchange of competences between the three sectors is sorted out.

As a follow-up to the experimental projects launched from 1999 and onwards, the Norwegian Institute for Adult Education (abbreviated to Vox) has been asked by the Ministry of Education and Research to develop a national standard for the competence passports. This work is carried in a less compartmentalised manner than suggested in 1999 when a division was made between education, labour market and the civil society.

## **24.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

### *24.2.1 National*

The Norwegian reform for lifelong learning (the “Competence Reform”) included the decision to set up a national system for the validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning. The ultimate aim was to recognise these competencies in relation to the institutionalised education system as well as in a labour market context. This ambition can be found in previous official documents, for example in the Law on adult education from 1976. This law states a right for adults to have their knowledge and skills documented at all levels within the public education system, independently from how these competences were acquired. Already the Law on vocational training (1952) allowed individuals to pass a crafts examination, provided they had sufficient practical work experience. On an annual basis up to 14,000 candidates have used this opportunity.

During 2004, the future of the Competence reform, is to be considered by the ministries concerned. The co-ordination and overall policy formulation is done by the Ministry of Education and Research. One backdrop for the consideration of future LLL policies is how the 1999 reform has interacted with adjacent policy fields constituting “a policy of knowledge”. A cross-sectorial approach was recommended in the evaluation report on non-formal and informal learning as part of the Competence reform. Moreover, the OECD review of adult education in Norway emphasised that a “whole –of government approach” was needed if the political commitment to lifelong learning is to be realised.

### *24.2.2 Sub-national*

The role of counties in the validation of prior learning stems from a number of individual rights, which were integrated into public laws, then subsequently to the Competence reform. Some rights are geared towards the education system, others towards the labour market:

#### *Rights assuring educational opportunities:*

- adults with a right to complete education at secondary level can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed. This assessment can give access to secondary schools or can, in some cases, allow the applicant to shorten the study period.
- applicants aged 23 or older, who have at least five years of work experience and who possess competences in six key subjects, can obtain general access to studies at tertiary level (“general entry requirements”)
- adults aged 25 or older can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed in order to allow them to study a specific subject (opposed to “general entry requirements”). In some cases, the applicants should be allowed to condense their study period.

*Rights strengthening employment opportunities:*

- adults with a right to complete their secondary education can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed, even if they do not apply for enrolment in a education or training institution.
- the right to have non-formal and informal learning assessed also applies to individuals whom a public agency allowed to undergo the assessment. This applies for:
  - a public employment office wanting an assessment of unemployed job applicants
  - a social security office trying to reintegrate clients in the labour market
  - a municipal service following up immigrants who have a permission of residency but who need a job or further education

Against the background of these rights, each county is responsible for ensuring the proper implementation of the rights at the level of secondary education. For this purpose and in relation to ensuing assessment procedures of non-formal and informal learning, all counties have set up assessment offices to which citizens can direct enquiries. The county municipalities are also in charge of practical arrangements at all education levels through which individuals can exercise their right to have their non-formal learning assessed.

During the implementation at a county level there are several observations that the two perspectives of validation co-exist among the parties concerned. While enterprises assess competencies in relation to their tasks and strategic needs, schools tend to assess competencies in relation to curricula and plans of study. Broadly speaking, validation is done for enrolment in education & training or in a labour market context.

### **24.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

Recent research indicates that training and skills development in larger Norwegian firms is often organised by the human relation (HR) department. According to a survey of 600 firms, the existence of a HR department is particularly important in launching work for mapping the skill level of employees, while a high proportion of university trained staff seems to ensure sustained skill development in a firm. Of the firms covered by the survey – 60% declared to carry out systematic stocktaking of in-house skills. Very often the stocktaking categorises competences along *domain specific work activities*, such as managerial, technical and social skills.

Nine experimental projects emanating from “working life” were carried out in the frame of the Competence reform. The social partners, study associations, county administrations and a few enterprises were directly involved in these projects mainly targeting industry and service sectors.

One of the nine projects was an attempt to underpin the implementation of a new chapter on the “development of competences”, set out in the Basic Agreement between the major employers’ organisation and the trade union federation in the private sector. Similar chapters exist in other framework agreements covering commerce & services and the public sector.



Other projects also tried to develop tools that describe and account for non-formal and informal competences in a way that is useful for enterprises in their allocation and development of human resources. At the same time, these validation schemes aimed to be useful for the individual when applying for a new job or for admission to an educational institution.

Whilst some of the evaluation tools developed for the labour market received favourable evaluations from human resource managers, as well as from employees who took part in experiments, the dissemination of these tools has so far been limited. This point can be illustrated by one electro-technical company where tools are available for mapping skills, included informal and non-formal competences, and this information is gathered for HR purposes. However, the information is scarcely used when training arrangements are defined and developed. The training of the company staff is predominantly a response to changes in the markets, without any significant consideration of the skill profile and knowledge base of the entire staff. This happens despite the availability of branch specific training tools linking market needs to individual skills.

A competence and validation tool started in the electro-technical industry and was further developed as a project in the frame of Leonardo da Vinci, is geared towards internal processes in the sector. Thus, 18 skills areas/core modules have been developed and they are analysed in relation to the company, a department inside a company and to the employees. If you choose to play the role as an employee when applying the tool, there is a further breakdown of skills and each employee is asked to rate his/her own skills level. The main point is to perform a gap analysis departing from the present skill level and in relation to a desired state. With such a competence tool one challenge lies in reaching conclusions on what skills areas/core modules there are a need for training. Most of these are of a technical nature and can be related to formal vocational plans. However, the ambition is also to take account of social skills of employees (<http://komptest.prodoc.no/>).

In many respects, experimental projects on validation of prior learning were set up as “umbrellas” over individual projects. One of these was labelled DRA (Documentation of Real Competences) was a collaboration between the Federation of Norwegian Manufacturing Industries and the trade unions. Other branch organisations have been taking part in the dissemination of this tool. Particularly larger Norwegian enterprises who have experimented with in-house validation tools serving similar purposes. Some study associations working closely with individual enterprises have also presented schemes or tools with a view to identify, assess and finally validate competences that can be recognised in a formal context.

Another umbrella project, sparked off by the Competence reform, took place in the county of Nord-Trøndelag. Under the auspices of the local offices of the social partners in the private sector, a web based tool for the mapping of vocational skills was tried out in 40 pilot firms. Subsequent to positive feedback from the firms, one study association (AOF), emanating from the Norwegian labour movement, took over this competence tool and marketed it systematically under the label “2+2=5”. The tool is useful for the stocktaking of various vocational skills in a firm, it guides in conducting GAP-analyses leading to the definition of

in-house training plans. Less emphasis is put on mapping social skills of the employees (<http://komptest.prodok.no>).

#### **24.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

Associations for adult education, independent distance learning institutions, and folk high schools are providers of education outside the public education system. These players concentrate heavily on offering opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills that enhance adults' understanding of democracy, while motivating them to take more actively part in working life and the civil society.

In the frame of the Competence reform eight experimental projects were carried out in the third sector. Later, a draft "personal competence passport" was set up in order to validate experiences from work in the civil society. Compared with competence passports issued by other sectors, the one from the third sector is mainly a self-declaration with less input from assessors. During 2004 this passport is being revised in light of experiences gained so far. The challenge is to validate competences from the wide range of contexts that make up civil society. Among the activities documented is participation in courses and study circles.

According to an evaluation report, this multitude of learning contexts in the civil society has prevented a coherent approach to the validation of competencies. Some associations involved fear the unnecessary paperwork a systematic documentation and validation of competencies would entail. Given that the Norwegian branch of what can be labelled a Nordic "movement for popular enlightenment" is involved in some of the projects, it is probably no surprise that (some) members fear that documentation entails red tape. Despite the non-institutional origin of this movement, which has much in common with "popular schools" and "popular universities" elsewhere in Europe, the reluctance of individual members may underscore a general challenge to come up with simple and practical tools for validating non-formal and informal learning.

#### **24.5 Conclusion**

##### *24.5.1 Summary*

From the experimental projects on validation of prior learning we see that the two perspectives that were present at the start of the Competence reform, still structure today's efforts in the field. Validation can either be done with a view to enrol people in the institutionalised education & training system or in a labour market context. Although these perspectives are not contradictory, the validation process is measured differently: either according to a study plan within an educational institution or against training needs in enterprises (and in principle of employees). This distinction cannot be reduced to validation driven by the education & training system vs. by enterprises; but might reflect that both angles are necessary.

A number of tools for validating non-formal and informal competencies were developed in the nine experimental labour market orientated projects sparked off in 1999. Most of them

start with some sort of self-assessment, which is then subject to discussion, evaluation and ultimately validation, before the employer signs the paper (or “certificate”). Based on these experiences it was recommended that validation tools should comprise at least a CV and a competence passport signed by the employer, confirming more or less in detail the kind of tasks the employee has performed and responsibilities he or she has held in the enterprise. At present there is a multitude of tools available from the different projects, and none of the tools developed so far have materialised into a national standard.

Another reason for modest results of experiments with validation of non-formal and informal learning at the work place is that the social partners do not agree on what implications a passport of non-formal and informal learning should have on the human relation policy at the level of the firm (wage increase, promotion, prioritisation during redundancy or lay-offs). Overviews of staff competences have been set up as part of redundancy plans. However, there are divergent views on how to elaborate on these overviews as part of the ongoing staff development in firms.

An assessment of validation of competences in a labour market context should also take into account experiences with the abovementioned scheme allowing to pass a crafts examination on the basis of prior non-formal and informal competences. Given that this scheme has been quite successful, stakeholders have not necessarily experienced a need to rush into new arrangements proposed in the frame of the Competence reform. After some tug of war, it now appears that the non-scholar path to crafts examinations will survive alongside other tools for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

#### *24.5.2 Outline of national policy trends and on-going research*

The state of play is that validation of non-formal and informal learning has become further rooted among the main stakeholders. Also, the issue of validation has been flagged on the public agenda. Important achievements have been made in the educational sector and these have been incorporated into national legislation. Differences persist as to how prior learning is valued in working life and how it is valued in schools. One major difference is that enterprises are primarily interested in recording what the individual can actually accomplish in relation to its strategies and tasks, while the point of departure for education providers is to map the lack of competencies compared with a given curriculum or plan of study. Translating the competence passport issued in working life into the scheme used by the upper secondary education is therefore necessary. However, more needs to be done in developing transparent national standards of practice in both upper secondary and higher education. Also, more work is needed in the civil sector and with regard to the labour market before generally agreed competence passports can be introduced. Finally, more attention should be paid to how the evaluation methods in the education & training system, labour market and the civil society could be shared and to how competence passports from several sectors should communicate.

The Norwegian Institute for Adult Education (VOX) is trying to follow this up by a less compartmentalised implementation of future competence passport(s). This may result in proposals for a common name and standardised cover sheet, while validation tools designed for different economic sectors, occupational groups or voluntary organisations might continue

to exist as attachments to the macro framework. A basic assumption is that a future standard has to be compatible with similar tools developed in a transactional context, above all the new EUROPASS.

#### *24.5.3 Analysing the efficiency and effectiveness*

Few costs and benefits analyses of specific initiatives for validation of prior learning have been undertaken – one exception is a study by ECON Analyse carried out in 2004. So far therefore, only general assumptions about the effectiveness of systematic validation have been made. The White paper introducing the Competence reform refers to reduced costs when people can have their acquired competences assessed instead of going through formal education. In a report commissioned by the Norwegian Institute for Adult Education (VOX) similar theoretical assumptions about gains and losses are presented. No calculations based on concrete experiences and estimations for the future are made.

## **Bibliography**

E. Brandt: ”Høgskolenes erfaringer med realkompetansestudenter fra forsøksordningene i 1999 og 2000”, NIFU Skriftserie 11/2002, Oslo.

E. Døving, O.B. Ure, S.Skule: “Evaluering av Kompetanseutviklingsprogrammet. Underveisrapport 2004”, SNF-notat 36/2004 (forthcoming).

ECON; “Økonomi i dokumentasjon av realkompetanse”, rapport 61/2003, Oslo  
([http://www.econ.no/oslo/econreports.nsf/0/74363C43D3779ECFC1256D810027854C/\\$FILE/Sammendrag+R2003-61.pdf](http://www.econ.no/oslo/econreports.nsf/0/74363C43D3779ECFC1256D810027854C/$FILE/Sammendrag+R2003-61.pdf))

“Evaluering av realkompetanseprosjektet”, Final report to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research”, Agenda Utredning&Utvikling AS, Oslo 2003

K. Folkenborg: “Realkompetanse og tilpasset utdanning. Erfaringer med TBL og Fellesforbundets dokumentasjonsordning fra fire fylker”. Fafo-notat 2003: 09, Oslo:Fafo

A. Hagen, E. Svensen and K. Folkenborg: ”Dokumentasjon av realkompetanse gjennom yrkesprøving. En kartlegging av erfaringer med kompetansedokumentasjon for flyktninger og innvandrere”. Fafo-rapport 388, Oslo:Fafo 2002.

V. Haugerud et al.: ”Tallene vi søker – kunnskapen vi får. Voksnes rett til grunnskole og videregående opplæring”, VOX 2004, Oslo:VOX.

H. Helland, V. Opheim: ”Kartlegging av realkompetansereformen”, NIFU Skriftserie 6/2004.

J. H. McHenry, T.N. Mohn: “Transfine - National study Norway”, Vox, Oslo 2003.

O. Nordhaug et al: “Kompeanse i norske bedrifter: Verdiskaping, drivkrefter og behov”, Søkelys på arbeidsmarkedet 1/2004, ISF, Oslo 2004.

OECD, “Thematic review on adult learning. Norway - Country note”, Paris 2000.

A. Pape: “§20 – Fagbrev gjennom dokumentasjon av realkompetanse i Norge”, Fafo-notat 2000:6.

S. Skule and B. Andersen: Dokumentasjon av realkompetanse i teknologiindustrien. Evaluering av TBL og Fellesforbundets dokumentasjonsordning for arbeidslivet. Fafo-rapport 363, Oslo: Fafo, 2001

S. Skule, O.B. Ure: ”Lifelong learning – Norwegian experiences. Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning”. Fafo-paper 2004:21.  
(<http://www.educonf2004.no/essay2.pdf>)

St. meld. nr 42 (1997-98) ”Kompetansereformen”.

O.B. Ure: “Lifelong learning for civic employees and employable citizens?” in M. Kuhn, R. Sultana (ed.): “Homo Sapiens Europeus? Creating the European Learning Citizen”, Peter Lang, N.Y 2004 (forthcoming).

VOX 2002: “Dokumentasjon og verdsetting av realkompetanse. Realkompetanseprosjektet 1999-2002”. (<http://www.vox.no/archive/realN.pdf>.)

## **25.0 POLAND**

*By Olga Strietska-Ilina (Independent consultant)*

### **25.1 Introduction**

Although a system of validation of informal and non-formal learning doesn't exist in Poland, there are many elements of such system already in place and the preconditions are created. The legal environment is also gradually adjusting to meet changing demands. The Polish system of initial and continuing education and training has gone through a substantial reform process, which has not yet been finalised. In fact we are dealing with 'a moving target' when it comes to the situation in validation of informal and non-formal learning in Poland. Many features have been introduced very recently and thus their effectiveness and usage cannot be evaluated.

Whereas validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning *de jure* depends on the systemic and legal arrangements ensured gradually, *de facto* validation subsystems often exist in certain crafts and other sectors already. There is abundance of examples of innovative initiatives in the third sector as well as interesting analytical and development projects in the academic institutions. Many of those initiatives have been supported by EU programmes. It is important that the Polish government at the policy level and Polish society at various levels recognise the objective importance of validation of informal and non-formal learning. Though improvement of individual's situation's within the labour market and of the overall economic competitiveness of the country.

### **25.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public sector**

#### *25.2.1 Systematic and legal provisions at the national level*

Polish initial VET has undergone a comprehensive reform of a systemic character, which has not yet been fully finalised. It has been aimed at ensuring flexibility of education; linking vocational education to needs of the labour market, and ensuring quality of education and comparability of qualifications.

The reform process as well as the very transition to the free market economy had a major impact on participation in education and training patterns in Poland. There has been a shift in the interest of students from vocational to general education. Participation in general education has almost doubled since 1990 reaching 36% in 2001/2. However, vocational path still predominates and approximately 60% of the relevant age groups undergo VET at secondary level. The reform facilitated the vertical permeability of the system. The horizontal permeability, however, is still limited, as transfers between different types of schools are only possible at the initial stage of the educational cycle. The curricular reform has supported

modularisation of study programmes but putting them into full usage in practice is still very much in progress<sup>198</sup>.

As far as CVT is concerned, in spite of a number of motivating mechanisms in place, participation in CVT is still relatively low in comparison with the EU average. The participation rate in education and training of the adult population (aged 25-64) in Poland was only 5% in 2003 compared to 9% of the EU25 average<sup>199</sup>.

### ***Assessment and certification mechanisms in IVET and CVT<sup>200</sup>***

Since 1999, vocational school graduation has been separated from the acquisition of the vocational qualification. The system now allows graduates to continue their education at a higher level, whether or not they have taken a vocational examination. The title of '**qualified worker**' or worker with equivalent qualifications in a given occupation has been granted to graduates of basic VET schools, vocational lyceums and one-year post-lyceum schools who have successfully passed the relevant vocational examinations. The title of **technician** or equivalent is given to occupations, where graduates of technical secondary schools (technicum), post-lyceum and postsecondary schools. Who have successfully passed the initial VET examination. Both titles, certified with diplomas, are obtained irrespective of the form in which education took place (daytime, evening, weekend, extramural, or based on out-of-school examinations).

In the existing system, responsibility for certification, evaluation and the issuing of maturity and vocational title diplomas lies with the head teachers of the relevant types of secondary school. In the reformed system these tasks have to move to the newly introduced eight **Regional Examination Commissions** (coordinated by the Central Examination Board) appointed by the Minister of National Education. The new system will combine both internal and external assessment. In June 2002 an **external standardized competence test** on completion of primary school and an external examination at the end of the third year of the new lower secondary/gymnasium, both conducted by regional examination commissions, were introduced for the first time. Although the results of both these tests do not determine a pupil's progress, the results obtained by pupils are recorded on individual school certificates. The new maturity examination composes of a part taken internally at the school (oral examination) and an external part (written examination) is postponed until 2005. The **first external vocational examinations** was planned for 2004 and the results are not available yet. Examinations are based on the requirement standards defined for given occupations by authorised institutions (e.g. schools, enterprises). The occupational title of apprentices and foremen, are acquired through an examination committee operating with a chamber of crafts. At the end of 2001, standards for external examination requirements were developed for 73 occupations<sup>201</sup>.

---

<sup>198</sup> Zelloth, H. *Et al.* Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, p.73. Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). *Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Poland.* 2004. QCA Consortium. [Http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_Poland.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Poland.pdf)

<sup>199</sup> LFS 2003 Principle Results. Statistics in focus. Eurostat. 14/2004

<sup>200</sup> This section is mainly based on the text of the Country Monograph (Zelloth, H. *Et al.* Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002), extended/updated where applicable.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.



**The current continuing education system** encompasses public and non-public establishments functioning within and outside of the school system. External examinations confirming the acquired vocational qualifications represent one of the links between the system of initial vocational education and training and the continuing education system<sup>202</sup>. The separation of qualification examination from the fact of attaining formal education is a first step towards creation of the possibility of the standardized validation system of qualifications, achieved in formal vocational education or in non-formal learning.<sup>203</sup>

**Adult education in the regular school system**, allowing adults to continue their school education after it has been interrupted or when they are already in employment ('second-chance') is largely a copy of the formal initial vocational education system. With traditional pathways leading to the **same recognised certificates and qualifications**. The system of extramural examinations introduces the possibility of officially recognising primary school or post primary school diplomas without the requirement of attending classes in school. Apart from this, school dropouts, lacking a school certificate, may have their vocational on-the-job acquired skills certified by state committees (appointed by school headmasters) and receive the title of qualified labourer or master in the given occupation. The scope of adult education in terms of general and vocational training in schools for adults in the framework of the reform will be reduced. Instead of school-based training there will be more and more courses alongside a system of external examinations to certify vocational skills. The completion of a vocational or post secondary school is not any longer tantamount to receiving a vocational title but only skills acquisition. Skill certification is made possible by passing an examination organised by one of the regional examining boards set up in 1999 by the Ministry of National Education. In practice this means that an adult who wishes to acquire vocational qualifications does not have to finish a vocational or post-secondary school. He or she will be able to acquire these qualifications in the out-of-school system or at work. To gain formal recognition of these qualifications the candidate will have to pass an examination<sup>204</sup>.

CVT out-of-school (courses, seminars, workshops, guided self-study, on-the-job training, apprenticeships) is provided by enterprises, NGOs, and different training and education centres, but also schools. **Qualifications** attained in the out-of-school system (including qualifications acquired in the process of work) maybe **validated** by taking examinations, organised by state examination commissions. There are also examination boards appointed by employers (e.g. chamber of crafts), which certify equivalent qualifications providing for the title of journeyman or master craftsman in a profession<sup>205</sup>.

---

<sup>202</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.12.

<sup>203</sup> Modernizacja kształcenia ustawicznego i kształcenia dorosłych w Polsce, jako integralnych części uczenia się przez całe życie. Raport opracowany dla Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu. (Modernisation of vocational education and continuing training in Poland as integral part of lifelong learning. Report prepared for the Ministry of National Education and Sports). Stockholm Universitypp. Ministry of National Education and Sports, WB, p.50

<sup>204</sup> Report on VET system in Poland, 2001, National Observatory, ETF., p.72

<sup>205</sup> Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, p.53-54

An important element of the CVT system are **Centres for Continuing Education**, which are multifunctional public educational facilities offering education, further education and training to adults, in both in-school and out-of-school forms (including awarding qualification titles and the organisation of extramural examinations). The CKU's also provide training courses, commissioned by labour offices, and advisory services for teachers and trainers involved in adult education. They play an important role in preparing and implementing modern curricula and methods in adult education.<sup>206</sup>

**Act of 27 June 2003 Amending the Educational System Act and Some Other Acts** (Journal of Laws 137/2003, item 1304) has introduced the accreditation of establishments offering continuing education activities and teacher upgrading centres. The amended Educational System Act defines more strictly the organisational framework for continuing education and specifies the types of schools and establishments, which may offer this type of education. Furthermore, the Act ensures permeability between the formal school system and the out-of-school system<sup>207</sup>.

In the framework of the reform a dozen of other legislation acts concerning education were adopted recently<sup>208</sup>. The regulations directly applying to vocational education and training dealt with requirement standards for examinations confirming vocational qualifications; types, organisation and operation of public continuing education establishments (Continuing Education Centres, Practical Education Centres, further training and upgrading centres); statutes of public continuing education establishments; core curricula for particular vocations; general vocational education profiles.<sup>209</sup>

Regarding the **validation of proven work experience**, Poland introduced legal provisions and procedures by a joint ministerial decree (MoNE and MoLSP) in 1993, providing for the award of formal qualification titles through state examination commissions. This applies to persons wishing to confirm the level of qualifications they have acquired not in the course of school studies, but resulting from their professional experience<sup>210</sup>.

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.7

<sup>208</sup> *Regulation of the Minister for Education and Sport of 3 February 2003 on Requirement Standards for Examinations Confirming Vocational Qualifications* (Journal of Laws 49/2003 item 411), *Regulation of the Minister for Education and Sport of 13 June 2003 on the Types, Organisation and Operation of Public Continuing Education Establishments and Public Practical Learning Centres, Including Public Further Training Centres* (Journal of Laws 132/2003, item 1226), *Regulation of the Minister for Education and Sport of 30 July 2003 Amending the Regulation on Core Curricula in General Vocational Education* (Journal of Laws 143/2003, item 1391), *Regulation of the Minister for Education and Sport of 4 June 2003 on Core Curricula in the Following Occupations: Confectioner, Operator of Agricultural Machinery, Mechanic for Rural Facilities, Gardener, Operator of Food Industry Machines and Facilities, Baker, Farmer, Inland Fisherman, Butcher, Agro-business Technician, Horse Breeding Technician, Environmental Engineering and Land Reclamation Technician, Agriculture Mechanisation Technician, Gardening Technician, Apiculture Technician, Farming Technician, Inland Fishery Technician, Food Technology Technician and Food and Household Technician* (Journal of Laws 159/2003, item 1540).

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, p.54

There are some other long established practices of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Poland. For instance, training and examinations for craftsmen and candidates, for particular degree's in craftsmanship in accordance with the Crafts Act. The Act (1989 Dz. U. No. 17, item 92 with subsequent amendments) stipulates conditions for carrying out examinations for craftsmen for the degree of apprentice and foreman in crafts, recognised by employers and State administration at national level<sup>211</sup>.

In addition, in certain occupations (e.g. security worker, engineers and technical staff in the electrical power sector, work safety and hygiene technicians and officers), the award relates to sector entities and professional associations, to issue and deliver **state-recognised certificates** following training and examinations organised within the respective occupation or craft.<sup>212</sup> Furthermore the Regulation in the field of categories, founding principles, changes and cancellation and principles of functioning of institutions of teachers training (2000, Dz. U. No. 85), under certain conditions (e.g. number of hours, practical training) the application for recognition of the retraining vocational course of teachers as the completion of the qualification course.<sup>213</sup>

Overall there are some provisions of the validation of **non-formal and informal learning** in place. However, one cannot speak yet of a coherent and transparent system in the lifelong learning perspective.<sup>214</sup>

### **Development of Qualifications Framework**

From the point of view of some basic characteristics of qualification standards (flexibility and universality of the system, objective evaluation of learning outcomes and their comparability) numerous analyses produced so far in this field<sup>215</sup>. Indicate that the system of vocational qualifications in Poland does not yet exist. But there are elements of the system, such as centrally prepared curricula for certain professions, the system of administration of public education at the central and regional level, the system of final examination, the system of qualification examinations (extramural and separated from the actual process of education and training), works on harmonisation of the two classification system (that of vocation fields and of occupations), system of documentation of the achievements of students (though without competence-based evaluation) etc.<sup>216</sup>

---

<sup>211</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Institute for Terotechnology in Random 2002, ETF

<sup>212</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. An analysis of the first responses by the candidate countries, ETF, 2002, p.3.

<sup>213</sup> [ipe.pl/archiwum/+html/pyt/uznanie.php](http://ipe.pl/archiwum/+html/pyt/uznanie.php)

<sup>214</sup> Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, pp.60-61.

<sup>215</sup> e.g. by the Institute of Educational Research; also see Kwiatkowski, S., Sepkowska, Z. (eds.). *Budowa Standardów Kwalifikacji Zawodowych w Polsce.(Construction of qualification standards in Poland).*. ETF, MEN, MPiPS , KUP, BKKK. Warszawa – Radom 2000; also Butkiewicz, *Model Polskich Standardów Kwalifikacji Zawodowych. (A Model of Polish Vocational Qualifications).*In „Edukacja i Praca” i ITeE. Warszawa, 1995.

<sup>216</sup> Modernizacja kształcenia ustawicznego i kształcenia dorosłych w Polsce, jako integralnych części uczenia się przez całe życie. Raport opracowany dla Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu. (Modernisation of vocational education and continuing training in Poland as integral part of lifelong learning. Report prepared for

There are ongoing efforts to develop a system of standards that would facilitate comparison of qualifications, certificates and diplomas acquired in the formal as well as the non-formal system of education. In 1998 a basic methodology for the design of standards of vocational qualifications was developed as part of an ETF-initiated project<sup>217</sup>. Standards for eight professions have been designed using this methodology. In 2003, work relating to another 40 occupations has been completed<sup>218</sup>.

In 2001 unification of the two following official systems of occupations/professions have been finalised: (i) Classification of occupations and specialisations used by the Ministry of Labour and the Central Statistical Office for statistical purposes (contains over 2,400 occupations); (ii) Classification of vocational fields used by the Ministry of Education as a basis for designing vocational education for the relevant professions (contains 195 broadly conceived fields).

The state may only recognise the qualifications and certificates (skilled manual worker, technician, etc.) that fall within the classification of vocational education fields. The development of a coherent system of standards is one of the priorities of *the Strategy for the Development of Continuing Education until 2010*. The implementation of this objective is made more difficult by the fact that, in Poland, there still is not an institution responsible for the development and quality of qualification standards, or for the development of a national system of qualifications. The design of standards related to vocational examinations is the responsibility of the Central Examination Board.<sup>219</sup>

### ***Recognition of qualifications from the point of view of mobility in Europe.***

The Polish ENIC/NARIC body is the Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange (BfAR)<sup>220</sup>. It is the 'contact point' that provides general information on recognition of qualifications of foreigners for practicing regulated professions in Poland. Poland adopted the following legislation relevant to recognition professional qualifications obtained in the EU: Law of 26 April 2001 on the rules governing the recognition of the qualifications required in EU member states for the pursuit of the regulated professions (Dz.U. 2001.87.954); Law of 10 May 2002 on the rules governing the recognition of qualifications acquired in EU member states for the taking up or pursuit of some of activities (Dz.U.2002.71.655); Law of 12 September 2003 amending the law on the rules governing the recognition of qualifications acquired in EU Member States for the pursuit of a regulated profession and amending certain other laws (Dz.U. 2003.190.1864)<sup>221</sup>.

---

the Ministry of National Education and Sports). Stockholm Universitypp. Ministry of National Education and Sports, WB. Pp. 49-50

<sup>217</sup> Kwiatkowski, S.M.; Symela, K. Standardy kwalifikacji zawodowych. Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa 2001.

<sup>218</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.11

<sup>219</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Poland. QCA Consortium, 2004, pp. 25-26. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_Poland.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Poland.pdf)

<sup>220</sup> <http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl>

<sup>221</sup> [http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/eu/public/eng/leg\\_en/index.htm#relevant\\_professional](http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/eu/public/eng/leg_en/index.htm#relevant_professional)

The applications for the recognition of qualifications are submitted to BfAR. BfAR issues opinion on educational part of the qualification (level of education) and sends it to the relevant competent authority (ministries or their authorised subordinate entities or occupational self-governing bodies, sector organizations etc.). Competent authorities take a decision (recognize the qualification, suggest an adaptation period or an aptitude test) and forward it to the applicant<sup>222</sup>.

BfAR started promoting the **diploma supplement** in Polish higher education institutions in 2000. A pilot project on the use of the diploma supplement involving 69 institutions of higher education was initiated in academic year 2000/2001. The object was to specify terms and conditions for the introduction of the new document in Poland as well as the issue of the first supplements (almost 4,000). The Ministry of Education has recommended the introduction of the diploma supplement and the relevant legal act is passing through the final stage of the legislative process. From 2004/05 onwards, the diploma supplement will be compulsorily annexed to all Polish higher education qualifications. It will contain full information on studies completed and the academic and vocational qualifications acquired. Until then, supplements will be issued upon request. According to a recent poll carried out by the Ministry of Education, 40 percent of higher education institutions have declared themselves ready to adopt the diploma supplement.<sup>223</sup>

Poland ratified the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in December 2003, and the Convention came in force in this country since 1st May 2004<sup>224</sup>.

There is no legal obligation for universities to use **credits for the transfer or accumulation of study periods**. However, the participation of Polish higher education institutions in the Tempus Program from 1990 and later SOCRATES/ERASMUS has resulted in the gradual implementation of credit transfer systems based on **European Credit Transfer System** (ECTS) for mobility purposes.<sup>225</sup> ECTS is used by most, state institution's specializing in arts, business and health profile's. The implementation of ECTS is one of the conditions for study programs to be accredited at the traditional universities. These 17 traditional universities are the most advanced in implementing and using the credit system. It has been used mainly as a transfer system but often too as an accumulation system. In the 2002/03 academic year, 70 Polish higher education institutions profited from a grant given by SOCRATES/ERASMUS for the introduction of ECTS. These grants have often been implemented at faculty or departmental level and sometimes at institutional level, although mostly for mobility. Some private institutions (over 200 in Poland) have only just started implementing ECTS.<sup>226</sup>

---

<sup>222</sup> [http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/eu/public/eng/expl\\_en/doc/br\\_gen\\_EN.pdf](http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/eu/public/eng/expl_en/doc/br_gen_EN.pdf) The Database of regulated professions in Poland can be found at <http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl>.

<sup>223</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Poland. QCA Consortium, 2004, p. 26 [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_Poland.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Poland.pdf)

<sup>224</sup> Rauhvargers, A. Recognition of foreign qualifications. Guide for recognition specialists, Warsaw 2004, p. 11  
<sup>225</sup> According to a report prepared by the ministry of education for the Berlin-Bologna 2003 ministerial conference, ECTS is applied for credit transfer in 68 percent (43/63) of state institutions and 35 percent (22/63) non-state institutions.

<sup>226</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Poland. QCA Consortium, 2004, pp. 25. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_Poland.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Poland.pdf)

### **Vocational guidance and career planning.**

There has been a two-pillar system of vocational guidance and counselling in Poland:

- (i) The Ministry of National Education is in charge of overseeing activities provided for school students in career counselling and educational path choice. The network of pedagogical and psychological advisory centres was taken over by the *poviat* self-governments as of January 1999 in the framework of the decentralization reform.
- (ii) The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is in charge of career guidance and vocational counseling for adult population, especially for those unemployed and job-seekers via the network of the *poviat* labour offices as well as centres for vocational career information and planning operating at *voivodship* labour offices<sup>227</sup>. The relocation of vocational guidance and counselling services for the youth and the adult population to the regional level should provide for integration of the system<sup>228</sup>.

Some *voivodship* labour offices provide evaluation of vocational skills and experience gained in non-formal contexts, making use of the French model *bilan de competence*.<sup>229</sup>

Some pedagogical tertiary schools make various attempts to introduce subjects related to the diagnostics of vocational knowledge and skills, acquired in both formal and non-formal contexts, into the curriculum of studies in pedagogy of labour<sup>230</sup>.

#### 25.2.2 Policy development

The authorities attach great importance to continuing education. This is proved, by a document entitled Development Strategy for Continuing Education Until 2010, adopted by the Government on 8 July 2003<sup>231</sup>. The overriding aim of the Strategy is to outline the direction of development of CVT in the context of the concept of lifelong learning and to the development of a knowledge-based society. The implementation of the Strategy is intended to ensure individual development for everyone through easier access to continuing education and training and improving its quality, and to promote an active approach, increasing the employability of individuals. The Strategy outlines tasks for state administration and local governments, scientific and educational institutions and social partners, foundations, associations and other non-governmental organisations. It may also provide a basis for developing ministerial (branch) programmes for the development of continuing education in order to systematically improve the professional qualifications of human resources in view of social and economic needs.<sup>232</sup>

---

<sup>227</sup> Report on VET system in Poland, 2001, National Observatory, ETF, p.73

<sup>228</sup> The National Forum for Vocational Guidance activities have also been targeted at the integration of the system in recent years. Ibid

<sup>229</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.11.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> *Strategy for the Development of Continuous Education until the year 2010*, Ministry of National Education and Sports, adopted by Council of Ministers on 8th July 2003, pp.4-5.

<sup>232</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.12.

With regard to the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning, the Strategy targets at implementation of numerous elements vital for the system. It recognises ‘the necessity of building a more human-friendly system of access to all levels, forms and methods of gaining knowledge and developing skills. It should have the following features: **‘openness, diversity, permeability, comparability, transparency and recognition of qualifications’**. In particular it aims to develop a system of examination, confirmation and recognition of qualifications acquired in school and non-school forms and in a non-formal way, with the inclusion of self-study and experience gained in the process of work; establishment of professional qualification standards as one of the elements of ensuring quality in continuous education; creation of a system of voluntary accreditation of institutions conducting continuing education in non-school forms; modification and enrichment of offered continuous education programmes, with particular emphasis on modular programmes; creation of the bank of modular programmes for school and out-of-school training; preparation of vocational counsellors for the educational system and the labour market etc.

Some other policy documents, including earlier ones, also refer to the objective needs in establishing a system of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

*The National Employment Action Plan for 2002* included actions taken to implement the unified qualification validation system for both formal (school) and non-formal (out-of-school) system, compare the vocational achievements of pupils, develop the national list of vocational qualifications based on occupational requirements, carrying out accreditation of vocational training programmes for the labour market and accreditation of the non-formal training providers of such programmes.<sup>233</sup>

*Sectoral Operational Program for the Development of Human Resources (National Development Plan for the years 2004-2006)* targets strengthening the system of continuous education of adults by accreditation of institutions conducting CVT in the out-of-school system and by the development of distance learning.

*The National Strategy for Employment Growth and Human Resources Development for the years 2000-2006* contains new proposals for activities, of which a very important one is the creation of appropriate conditions for the operation and formation of a flexible and efficient model of continuing education.

### 25.2.3 *Academic sector*

The method of the record of achievements is discussed in the literature<sup>234</sup> as a flexible and therefore promising initiative, which allows for ‘portable’ competences. Several Polish organisations had an opportunity to join the work of a European consortium of institutions on elaboration of a competence management tool entitled ‘*The European Record of Achievement*’ (**EuroRecord**) targeted at the engineering industry<sup>235</sup>. On the Polish side, the

---

<sup>233</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Ministry of Education and Sports. 2002, ETF

<sup>234</sup> see e.g. Mrówka, B. Kształcenie ustawiczne a doskonalenie umiejętności profesjonalnych [Continuing training and improvement of vocational skills]. *Studia Europejskie* Mar-99, p. 126.  
[http://www.ce.uw.edu.pl/wydawnictwo/Kwart\\_1999\\_3/Mrowka.pdf](http://www.ce.uw.edu.pl/wydawnictwo/Kwart_1999_3/Mrowka.pdf)

<sup>235</sup> The project was coordinated by European Society for Engineering Education, [www.control.ethz.ch/eurorecord/](http://www.control.ethz.ch/eurorecord/).

work was joined by: **Kielce University of Technology, Warsaw University of Technology and Polish Association for Continuing Engineering Education.**

EuroRecord is a software-supported tool for planning and recording individual training and development needs with the support of mentoring and guidance, in a dialogue with the employer, designed to record prior learning achievements and to link it to the individual strategy for personal and professional development and advancement. The tool supports a credit system recognising continuing training courses, experiential learning and accreditation of in-company training. It is targeted at individual employees, employers, universities and professional organisations.

The EuroRecord helps individuals to manage their professional development and career providing methodology for documentation of competences, identification of the requirements for further learning and with the subsequent design of the development plan. The method records learning achievements and professional development, regardless of where and how they occurred.

**The Institute for Terotechnology in Radom** is very active in the initiation of and in the participation in project's which develop aspects of the validation of competences attained through informal and non-formal learning, such as:

- Project in the framework of the PHARE SIERRA/APPLE Programme: System Procedures and Solutions for Vocational Qualifications Recognition in the European Union Countries and in Poland,
- Pilot project PL/99/1/086604/PI/I.1.1.A/FPI of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme: Methods and Procedures of Vocational Qualifications Accreditation at the European Labour Market,
- Pilot project of the "The Jean Monnet – Poland Action" Programme: „Comparativeness of Vocational Qualifications on the Polish and European Labour Market" PL98/0071;
- Polot project PL/00/B/F/PP/140179 of the Leonardo da Vinci programme: European Bank for the Development of Modular Curricula and Educational Technologies – EMCET de Bank<sup>236</sup>

The latter project European - *Bank for the Development of Modular Curricula and Educational Technologies* - **EMCET de Bank** (2001-2003) - was developed in the European consortium of seven partner institutions. Apart from the Institute for Terotechnology in Radom several other Polish institutions were involved: Association of Technical Schools, Górnośląsk Education Centre and FESTO DIDACTIC. The project developed modular approach, which took into account the training needs of participants based on the formative assessment of their competences. The system is based in clearly identified criteria and standards, which feed into the accreditation system of training providers for young people and adults. A further element of the system is a certification model along with the certificate

---

<sup>236</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Institute for Terotechnology in Radom 2002, ETF



supplement<sup>237</sup> - the validation of qualifications attained in formal or non-formal modular training. This system is supported by the elaborated computer database; and 'Centres of Competences'. Which among others serve trainers and individuals in their exploration and development of flexible offers and paths in vocational education.<sup>238</sup>

### **25.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

The aim of the empirical **survey** of the Department of Labour Resource Management of the Warsaw School of Economics (2003); among Polish firms which have their headquarters in other European countries was to find out whether these firms use any standards (and which ones) in the provision of CVT. The results showed that qualification standards are not used by Polish firms in the provision of CVT. Enterprises use standards (profiles, descriptions) of competences. Also the standards of assessment of competences achieved by prior learning (informal and non-formal) are not widely known to Polish firms. The survey demonstrated lack of awareness and understanding of solutions, commonly applied by European companies in this field, among the Polish firms.<sup>239</sup>

In some industries, however, special standards are set and the work-based learning courses are easily recognized by other enterprises across the sector. Such an example is **banking**<sup>240</sup> with the system of qualification standards. The sector also enjoys the presence of the project *European Foundation Certificate in Banking* (EFCB), represented in Poland by the **Gdansk Academy of Banking**, WIB and MSBiF. Accredited members of the European Bank Training Network elaborated the certification system, representing 17 countries including Poland. There are minimum competence requirements set for the recognition of the qualification. . The certificate is linked to the Polish system of qualification standards in the banking sector. It is targeted at those who have a qualification 'independent employee in banking' and at those who do not possess vocational qualifications in the system of standards. Those already qualified in banking, may pass simplified examination. The certificate allows for comparability at the European labour market and supports mobility of the workforce. The first exam in Poland is scheduled for December 2004. The Polish institutions also offer training for preparation for the exam.<sup>241</sup>

The Polish literature in the field of CVT specifically pinpoints **the construction sector**<sup>242</sup> where a model of continuing vocational training of construction workers includes self-

---

<sup>237</sup> The supplement explains the scope and character of the course of the modular training.

<sup>238</sup> <http://www.itee.radom.pl/programy/emcet.htm>

<sup>239</sup> Kwiatkiewicz, A. Standardowe rozwiązania w dziedzinie ustawicznego kształcenia kadr a praktyka firm europejskich w Polsce. (Standard solutions in the field of continuing training and practice of European firms in Poland). In 'e-mentor', No. 2 (4), April 2004, pp. 24-30

<sup>240</sup> Responses of NARICs on Questionnaire ICE & PLAR.

<sup>241</sup> <http://www.gab.com.pl/efcb/>

<sup>242</sup> e.g. Francuz, Wł. M. *Budowniczowie. Zadania zawodowe, Kształcenie, Doskonalenie.* (Construction workers: professional requirements, training, upgrading of skills). Politechnika Krakowska im. Tadeusza Kościuszki. Kraków 2001.

training and training aimed at upgrading of skills in the out-of-school system of CVT.<sup>243</sup> The same sector enjoys the *Model of professional qualification structure and new methods of promotion, certification and mutual recognition of managerial skills according to EU requirements*.<sup>244</sup> The model was developed in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci project by a consortium of institutions represented in Poland by the Institute of Construction Engineering and Management at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of Warsaw University of Technology, Construction Management Education Foundation, and Polish - British Construction Partnership. The main goal of the project is to develop a system of mutual recognition of managerial skills in construction, comparison and certification of managerial qualifications in the European construction industry. The project is built on the achievement of the previous projects in the construction sector, which was aimed at recognition of needs for managerial qualifications of construction personnel, recognition of applied systems of education, certification of the personnel and accreditation of studies in European Union. The following activities occurred in the framework of the follow-up project:

- Discussion and acceptance in an extended group of partners of the project final version of areas and structure of managerial knowledge in construction, necessary for different levels of qualifications and all types of managerial function in construction, in order to certify engineers and accredit courses,
- Creation of a guidebook for a comparability of all components of certification and accreditation systems in the form of curricula-qualification modules. These modules will describe content-related qualification requirements. Selected sets of these modules will become a compendia of knowledge for different levels of qualifications and different specializations,
- Comparable analysis of curricula, education methods and certification requirements in selected countries from European Union,
- Creation of uniform certification criteria of managerial qualifications and accreditation of studies, preparing to fulfil managerial functions in various areas of construction industry and different levels of required qualifications,
- Preparation of models and organization of complementary studies (especially "distance learning" system), which are necessary to standardize qualification levels and process of specialization of construction managers in different countries, according to agreed criteria of certification and MBA postgraduate studies in Construction Management and Real Estate Management,
- Preparation of uniform and detailed conditions and procedures of managerial skills certification and accreditation of studies assuring these qualifications, which are necessary to establish an organization called "European Construction Management Club", that will conduct and coordinate process of certification and accreditation on a European scale.

---

<sup>243</sup> Modernizacja kształcenia ustawicznego i kształcenia dorosłych w Polsce, jako integralnych części uczenia się przez całe życie. Raport opracowany dla Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu. (Modenisation of vocational education and continuing training in Poland as integral part of lifelong learning. Report prepared for the Ministry of National Education and Sports). Stockholm University. Ministry of National Education and Sports, WB

<sup>244</sup> <http://www.il.pw.edu.pl/~itiopb/leonardoIII/info-eng.htm>

Another example of a sector initiative is certification system of the Polish **Welding Centre of Excellence** in Gliwice. The system is accredited; by the Polish Centre for Accreditation (PCA) in the scope of welding products, management systems as well as welding and NDT personnel certification. It is authorised by the European Federation for Welding, Joining and Cutting (EWF) in the range of qualification and certification of welding personnel as well as certification of quality systems according to series of EN 729 standards. The Centre is authorised by the International Institute of Welding (IIW) in a scope of welding personnel qualification. Among others, the Certification Centre offers qualification and certification of welding and NDT personnel, which includes:

- (i) Qualification and certification of welding personnel on the basis of the PCA accreditation and authorisation of IIW and EWF in the following categories:
  - a. International Welding Engineer/European Welding Engineer,
  - b. European Welding Inspector,
  - c. International Welding Technologist/European Welding Technologist,
  - d. International Welding Specialist/ European Welding Specialist,
  - e. International Welding Practitioner/ European Welding Practitioner,
  - f. European Welder.
- (ii) Certification of NDT personnel competence on the basis of the PCA accreditation in the following methods of testing:
  - a. visual inspection,
  - b. liquid-penetrant inspection,
  - c. magnetic particle inspection,
  - d. radiographic examination,
  - e. ultrasonic testing.

Certificates are issued in welding production, castings and forgings, production and processing of metals, pre-operation and operation testing of plants, objects and structures.<sup>245</sup>

**The Polish Psychologists Society (PPS)** provides recommendations, licences, and permissions for performance of training or consultations for the PPS members with the complete higher education studies. The certification approach takes into account previous non-formal training and practical experience, including specific case studies. Below there are some examples of certificates, licences and recommendations offered by PPS:

- therapists and supervisors in therapy (over 500 certified specialists are included on the list to date);
- PPS trainer (3 degrees; over 500 recommended trainers and supervisors are included on the list to date);
- Recommendations to psychologists who apply for provision of expertise in courts (59 recommended experts to date);
- Certificate of the consultant in the clinical child psychology (35 certified specialists included on the list to date).<sup>246</sup>

The aforementioned examples at sector level are not exhaustive and many more initiatives can be found there. It is necessary, however, to raise transparency about the rules for granting

---

<sup>245</sup> <http://www.is.gliwice.pl/en/certification.html>

<sup>246</sup> <http://www.ptp.psychologia.pl/>

certificates by various institutions and organizations – their procedures, competence requirements etc, as education authorities often decline to accept certificates recognised by the environment, like in some cases certificates of the Polish Psychological Society.<sup>247</sup>

#### **25.4 Review of existing initiative: The Third Sector**

The third sector in Poland is rather active in taking the initiative towards validation of informal and non-formal learning. One of the reasons is that many non-governmental organisations, associations and societies (e.g. Polish Red Cross, Union of Polish Scouts, Caritas, voluntary workers organisations, houses of culture, associations ‘Open doors’, ‘Semper Avanti’, ‘Tratwa’). Offer their membership and beneficiaries a possibility of learning by doing and other forms of informal and non-formal learning. Especially activities in the framework of charity, voluntary works and in other forms of practical experience grant possibilities to attain a set of entirely new competences and knowledge, and the workers are particularly interested in their validation. This and the problems linked to informal and non-formal learning in general is a subject of the conference being organised by the National Agency of the Programme Youth in December 2004<sup>248</sup>.

Presently, there are about 47,000 non-government organisations in Poland, 15,000 of which offer social help. All of these organisations employ only a limited number of paid personnel with most of the work carried by volunteers (approx. 2million). **The Volunteer Centre** is a professional operation, which matches individuals wanting to volunteer with organisations and groups who are interested in benefiting from the services offered by volunteers<sup>249</sup>. An integral part of the Volunteer Centre's programme is organising and conducting training sessions for groups of volunteers and co-ordinators. The Centre has developed a special training method for this purpose offered throughout Poland.

The Volunteer Centre in Warsaw has initiated Regional Volunteer Centre network building in Poland. Currently, the network comprises 17 Centres operating in different parts of the country. All Regional Volunteer Centres apply the same standards of work and are linked by mutual commitments<sup>250</sup>, as expressed in the ‘*Karta wolontariusza*’ (‘Volunteer’s card’).<sup>251</sup>

The project called *Assessing voluntary experiences: identifying, evaluating and validating skills and qualifications acquired through volunteering as an informal learning for a professional purpose* is supported by the programme Leonardo da Vinci (2003-2006) and involves the Volunteer Centre on the Polish side of the European consortium. Associations may be the ideal place to get accustomed and trained to novel and innovative solutions and practices, to experiment or acquire new skills. For volunteers, a voluntary experience may lead or facilitate a professional career. Identifying and evaluating the skills and qualifications

---

<sup>247</sup> Korab, K. Report at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lll/life/report/candidate/poland\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lll/life/report/candidate/poland_en.pdf). Department of Strategy and Development, Ministry of National Education, p.4

<sup>248</sup> <http://www.wiadomosci.ngo.pl/labeo/app/cms/x/89865>

<sup>249</sup> <http://www.iriv.net/>; <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl>

<sup>250</sup> <http://www.iriv.net/>; <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl>

<sup>251</sup> [http://www.fip.ngo.pl/programy/st\\_dok/4.pdf](http://www.fip.ngo.pl/programy/st_dok/4.pdf)

acquired through volunteering in the associations should be the way to recognize and validate this informal learning. It should be very useful for people who have no professional experience to face with a first activity (youngsters) and for people who have been kept away from the labour market to renew a professional activity (parents who have raised their children, sick people when they have recovered, former prisoners). The project's objectives are to:

- identify and evaluate the skills and qualifications required and acquired in volunteering;
- validate these skills and qualifications in a professional perspective<sup>252</sup>

**Non-Governmental Organisations' Trainers' Association (STOP)** implements a jointly developed certification system aimed at increasing professionalism of the occupation of trainers for NGOs. Working for non-governmental organisations STOP sometimes received signs of discontent; relations of unprofessional and even unethical activities in the training provision and thus decided to provide competence standards for NGOs' trainers supported by a certification system. STOP hopes to ensure quality of service provision by its members and by those means to increase the trust and motivation of NGOs in training<sup>253</sup>.

There is a description of competences of a trainer of STOP with a list of minimum entrance competence requirements. The certification system is prepared for STOP members. STOP trainers are expected to be able to identify training needs, prepare training and evaluate its results, apply active learning methods, and have to implement training in accordance with the specific needs and situation of the group. The system has elaborated a 3-stage procedure of certification. The concept is based on sharing competences and evaluation by supervisors on the basis of actual training delivery. It distinguishes 2 degrees of certificates, whereas the higher amount of actually taught hours (practical experience) is demanded for the higher degree. The set of required documents along with the assessment by the supervisor goes to the Certification Commission of STOP; which takes the final decision. The certificate is valid for 5 years. During first 3 months after obtaining the certificate the trainer has to provide a feedback on the experience and from clients.

## **25.5 Conclusions**

A great deal of efforts have been done in the framework of the reform process in the initial VET and - more recently – in policy development and implementation of CVT. Introduction of modular training, extramural qualification examinations and works in the field of harmonisation of vocational and occupational standards – all create good preconditions for a well functioning system where formal education can gradually become integrated with non-formal out-of-school training. From the point of view of an individual a real possibility exists in obtaining a recognised qualification without the necessity to undergo formal education in this field. Informally attained competences and experience can thus be validated and

---

<sup>252</sup> <http://www.iriv.net/>; [www.eEuropeassociations.net](http://www.eEuropeassociations.net).

<sup>253</sup> <http://free.ngo.pl/stop/>

recognised. The system, however, is still in the process of change and adaptation. Many aspects of the reform are yet to be implemented. It is therefore very difficult to give an objective evaluation to the real situation now.

The importance of the validation of informal and non-formal learning in the country is widely recognised, it is well present in the political agenda as well as in the expert discussions. A wealth of examples of initiatives in the academic circles, at sector level as well as among non-governmental organisations and public associations is accompanied by limited information and lack of awareness at a company level. The engagement of companies in provision and development of validation of informal and non-formal learning can be facilitated by enhancement of transparency and reinforcement of the systemic character of activities in this field.

## **26.0 PORTUGAL**

*By Mencia de Lemus (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

### **26.1 Introduction**

As detailed in this report, Portugal is putting forward measures to validate competences of its labour force, obtained through means other than formal education and training. These efforts are due to an important concern existing among the Portuguese public actors, with responsibilities for education and training; and employment and the labour market. Examining the low levels of formal skills within the labour force. The validation of non-formal and informal competences is seen as a tool to combat these problems. Studies reveal the importance and potential of non-formal learning, has in the country.

There are initiatives in the private sector that have proved to be beneficial at sector level. Nevertheless, as we will see, a new system for the validation of competences is being set up at national level by the public sector, which is likely to have a greater impact in the country.

### **26.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

At present, there are two different systems for validating and certifying competences acquired through non-formal or informal means:

#### *26.2.1 System for certifying basic competences of adults*

There is at present a system for recognising, validating and certifying competences obtained through informal learning which is being set up by the General Directorate for Vocational Training (former ANEFA), which will be put in place for the whole country. The system has been under construction since November 2000, and is expected to be fully operational by 2006.

This national system for recognising, validating and certifying competences is a recent initiative of the Ministry for Labour and Social Welfare and the Minister of Education. Which is being developed by; the General Directorate for Vocational Training through the creation of a network of Centres for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC). By 2006, 84 centres are expected to have been set-up throughout the mainland, at an average rate of 14 centres per year between 2002 and 2006.

The National Network of RVCC Centres is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), under Measure 4/Action 4.1- recognition, validation and certification of lifelong learned knowledge and competences, of Axis 2- Support to active life and the promotion of employability, of the Education Operational Programme (PRODEP III).

The objective's of the system is to enable the acknowledgement, by the Educational System and by the Vocational Training System. The competences obtained by adults, throughout their professional and personal careers, with a view to reducing deficits in academic and vocational

qualifications and help to eliminate under-certification<sup>254</sup>. Adults who have not completed, the 9<sup>th</sup> degree (i.e. compulsory education), can therefore gain certificates. The certification will imply an exam, and if necessary, complementary training. The validation and certification of competences is subject to a *Key-Competence Guide*, which is divided into three levels (B1, B2 and B3), which corresponds to the first, second and third cycles of basic education (CBEs). The guide is based on four areas of key competences called Language and Communication (LC); Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); Mathematics for Life (ML); and Citizenship and Employability (CE). For instance, if an adult obtains level B1 recognition and validation in the four key-competence areas, they can be given legal certification equivalent to the first CBE.

According to the final results of the 2001 censuses, about 64.8% of the resident population in Portugal have a maximum of the second CBE. Therefore, have not had the compulsory minimum of nine years education. The education issue in Portugal is not only a matter of “numbers” or the short duration of most of the population’s schooling. It is also a qualitative problem, reflected in the lowest literacy indicators reported by the OECD, which demonstrate an inadequate “ability to use the competences acquired in reading, writing and arithmetic” (Benavente et al., 1996).

The implementation of the system has proved that there are adults who have a certain recognised level of education (usually less than the current minimum compulsory schooling). Who have acquired a series of competences through lifelong personal and occupational experiences. After these competences have been assessed and compared with a key-competence guide, these adults can obtain a higher level of education.

According to the evaluation carried out by CIDECC<sup>255</sup>, the analysis of the situation proves that there is a problem of under certification in adults who have less than the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of schooling, which confirms the pertinence of the RVCC system. In view of this fact, adults are able to participate more effectively in the labour market and attend certain vocational training courses (such as IEFPP courses). Adults need to have the equivalent to the complete third CBE, the RVCC system is an alternative enabling them to obtain schooling certification. This means that they have a wider choice of possible training and vocational outlets therefore improving their employability.

According to the mentioned evaluation, this system has greatly contributed to the reinforcement of self-esteem and self-improvement of participants and having a positive effect on the definition/reconstruction of their personal and vocational plans. According to the representatives of the RVCC Centres and the certified adults who were interviewed for the evaluation. Although the effects of the RVCC process on the certified adults’ relationship

---

<sup>254</sup> *The Impact of the Recognition and Certification of Lifelong Learned Competences*, March 2004, done by CIDECC for the General- Directorate for Vocational Training of the Portuguese Ministry of Education

<sup>255</sup> *The Impact of the Recognition and Certification of Lifelong Learned Competences*, March 2004, done by CIDECC for the General- Directorate for Vocational Training of the Portuguese Ministry of Education



with the labour market were not negligible, they were less important and intense than the subjective dimensions mentioned. However, the analysis of the transition rates between the different situations in the labour market (employed, unemployed and non-active) suggests that the process does influence the users' relationship with the labour market.

A positive impact of the system has been observed with relationship between career progression and salary increase and an improvement of the contracting conditions (about 15% of the employees with a term contract at the time of registration were "permanent employees" six months after certification).

Finally, the system has also had a positive effect on further studies. The evaluation that was carried out showed that the RVCC process awakens people's interest and encourages them to take formal education or consider the possibility, as part of their personal plans.

### *26.2.2 The National System of Professional Certification*

Another initiative which has been working for several years, is the one put into place by the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity: the National System of Professional Certification. Its main objectives are to valorise the labour force and to increase the quality of the vocational training, through the recognition and certification of the professional competences and of vocational training courses. The system has a tripartite basis (public administration, trade unions and employers organisations) based upon tripartite agreements. All three actors integrate the three organisms in charge of the system: the Permanent Commission for Certification, The Specialised Technical Commissions and the Certifying Entities. These bodies are responsible for the development and to issue vocational certificates defining the scope, content and level of a specific qualification. A certificate can be achieved either through traditional school based vocational training, recognition of qualifications acquired in other systems, or through assessment and recognition of vocational experience.

Other projects that can be outlined close to the overview of public initiatives for professional certification, which imply different initiatives such as establishing a common model of information on vocational or professional certification. Establishing a methodology to identify and recognise competences obtained in informal contexts, to create European networks of key organisations to exchange information on qualifications, etc

### *26.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector*

In addition to the assessment and recognition efforts covered by the systems mentioned above, a number of initiatives have been taken outside these structured systems. In all cases, social partners and stakeholders are involved with specific responsibilities.

One example is the Network of Centres for Recognition and Validation of Lifelong Competences and Qualifications in which the Confederation of Portuguese Industry is involved. The Centres (which can be schools, Professional Training Centres, enterprises, employers associations, etc.) allow the recognition and validation of competences of workers over 18 years old who do not have diplomas in spite of having acquired competences throughout their working lives through informal or non-formal learning. The first phase was

launched in the year 2000 and allows educational certification equivalent to 4, 6 or 9 years of schooling. The second phase, which started in 2004, allows vocational certification in a number of subjects.

The plan is to integrate gradually these autonomous initiatives with social partner and stakeholder involvement into an overall framework of the national vocational certification system. Recently, sectoral commissions have been set up in a number of sectors to prepare integration into the certification system. Examples of groups covered by these initiatives are transport workers, journalists, civil aviation employees, low-voltage electricity workers, merchant seamen and hotel/restaurant and tourism workers.

The positive effects of the recognition of non-formal learning in the private sector was outlined by Carneiro et al. (1998) in an article published in which it compared two Portuguese industrial sectors: shoe-industry, which is based on a very low level of formal education, and electronic-component industry, with high formal education and training. Carneiro uses the success story of the Portuguese shoe-industry, in which the ability to renew and grow has been very strong, to emphasise the huge potential of non-formal learning.

In order to identify the initiatives performed by the private sector, it is interesting to look at the projects that have been done in the context of Socrates initiative. Although, Grundvig should be the natural option to place projects for the validation of non-formal and informal learning of adults, there are not many initiatives in which Portugal has participated. An interesting project, which can be mentioned in the context of the joint actions Socrates, Leonardo and Youth. It is a project co-ordinated by the University of Coimbra, ORACLE, which seeks to develop a methodology for a European Certificate of Informal Learning. This methodology is based on the establishment of common coding and accreditation criteria in order to elaborate, within EU and the European Economic Area, an acceptable certification system ascertaining the nature and the degree of non-formal and informal skills achievement and learning, in a manner consistent with ECTS credits.

Within the context of the Leonardo programme, two projects co-ordinated by Portuguese partners are worth mentioning:

The ACEMD project for the Accreditation of European Skills for the Docker Trade, co-ordinated by the Institute for Ports Works, is a pilot project that has the goal of adapting the existing manpower to current and future needs by creating the tools necessary to evaluate and certify dockers.

The project Competence Evaluation: towards the development of New Vocational Training Certificates, is co-ordinated by the CENFANESP (National Centre for the Training of Trainers of the ANESPO, which is the National Association of Vocational Schools), and has been developed in co-operation with training institutions, educational establishments, accreditation authorities, trade unions and business. Its aim is to encourage initiatives for validating skills/competence developed during working life as a first step towards promoting new skills in response to changing market needs.

## **26.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

The role of voluntary of youth organisations in the context of initiatives, contribute to the validation of non-formal and informal learning is not notorious as the main sources of literature consulted. Nor can we observe a curriculum of projects within the European funding programmes, that could finance actions of this type, and therefore, we can't draw a perspective of the contribution of the third sector to this topic.

## **26.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities**

### **26.5.1 System for certifying basic competences of adults**

- **Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity**  
Responsible for the creation of initiatives.
- **The Vocational Training Department of the Ministry of Education**  
Is the institution responsible for the accreditation of RVCC centres. The new Basic Law of the Ministry of Education, Decree-Law n° 208/2002 of 17<sup>th</sup> October allocated these powers to this department, which takes over the responsibility that belonged to the ANEFA (National Adult Education and Training Agency).
- **Centres for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC).**  
RVCC Centres are promoted by, both public and private organisms. With a significant implantation at local, regional or national level, duly accredited by the National System of Accreditation of Entities. They are privileged places for the mobilisation of adults and for the application of methodologies for the recognition and validation of competencies.

The RVCC have responsibilities on three areas of intervention:

- Recognition of competences
- Validation of competences
- Certification of competences

### **26.5.2 The National System of Professional Certification**

- **Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare**  
Is the public organism responsible for the certification system. It is part of the Permanent Council for Social Concertation, which signed (together with the trade unions and employers organisations) the Agreement on Vocational Training Policy; which started the setting up of the system.
- **Social partners (Trade Unions and employers organisations)**  
Is part of the Agreement on Vocational Training Policy; which was the basis for setting the system. Part of the main body responsible for the management of the

system: the Permanent Commission for Certification and the Specialised Technical Commissions

- ***Permanent Commission on Certification (CPC)***

It has a tripartite composition (8 representatives of the public administration, 4 representatives of the trade unions, 4 representatives of the employers organisations, 2 representatives of the autonomous regions and one representative of the INOFOR (Institute for Innovation in Training)). The presidency of the commission is carried out by the president, of the; Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP)

The PCC is the co-ordinating body of the whole certification system. Its functions are:

- To approve the creation of Specialised Technical Commissions
- To approve the professional profiles relative to the professions that are to be certified
- To approve the accessing rules to the Certificate of Professional Aptitude (CAP)
- To approve the conditions of homologation of the training courses.

- ***Specialised Technical Commissions***

Have also a tripartite composition (Ministry of Labour, Trade Unions and employers organisations) and are created in each sector of activity with the finality of certifying professions of the sector.

Their functions are:

- To select the professional profiles to be certified
- To give favourable opinion on the contents of the professional profiles
- To define the accessing rules to the Certificate of Professional Aptitude (CAP)

- ***Certifying entities***

Organisms that can give certification of professional aptitude and can homologate vocational training courses. There will be only one certifying entity responsible for the certification of each profession.

- ***Certification Department of the IEFP***

Is part of the IEFP and gives technical support to the whole structure of the National System of Professional Certification.

It is also responsible for issuing the Certifications of Professional Aptitude and the Homologation of courses for sectors which the IEFP is the certifying entity.

## **26.6 Conclusions**

With the overview to the existing panorama in Portugal, the following conclusions can be outlined:

- In Portugal there is a major problem concerning the low educational and certification levels of the population: recognition, validation and certification of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning can help to improve this situation as under certification is one of the components of the problem.
- The concern of public authorities in the need to upgrade the workers skills have found in the validation of non-formal and informal experience, a pathway to this upgrading.
- There is an involvement of social partners in all the public initiatives. The participation of trade unions and employer organisation's to give public initiatives a guarantee of connection with the real situation in the private sector, both from the employers and from the employee's perspective.
- Public initiatives are solid, numerous and cover all the national geography. The situation at present combines different possibilities and systems through which an adult can see his or her experience validated. A first evaluation of the system developed by the Directorate General for Vocational Training, although it is still being set up show important effects in the motivation and self esteem of participants, and also in their relation with respect of the labour market, in their careers and in an improvement of the working conditions, although it has to be said that subjective benefits are greater than objective ones.
- European funding has given great impulse to initiatives for recognising, validating and certifying non-formal and informal learning, through operative programmes (PRODEP III, which co-finances the certification of basic competences system, but also through programmes, such as Leonardo and Socrates which give impulse to new action.

## **27.0 ROMANIA**

*By Prof. Anca Dumitrescu (University of Bucharest)*

### **27.1 Introduction**

The European Commission documents outlining the action strategy for building up the European lifelong learning community have been analyzed and discussed in Romania. In order to develop a lifelong learning culture in this country and also follow the EC action guidelines, orientating the educational policies in the European space.

In the context in which Romania has adopted a national policy for lifelong learning and has taken concrete steps for its implementation, this national chapter aims at providing aspects on validation of non-formal and informal learning, thus contributing to the European Inventory extension. Within the methodological matrix a comprehensive list of national sources of information is given together with the stakeholder mapping. The paper contains references to political and practical initiatives regarding the ongoing validation process in the public sector as well as the private and voluntary ones. The initiated practices reveal the increasing awareness of the need for a global approach to foster validation of both non-formal and informal learning.

The final conclusions synthesize the issues of the previous sections, dealing with key action directions to build comprehensive strategy frameworks and the future policies, which measure's needs to properly develop non-formal and informal learning in Romania.

### **27.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

Romania is a country with a steady tradition of lifelong education, especially adult education, which has developed in different social-economic, political and cultural contexts during more than one century. If the first forms of institutional organization and social recognition occurred in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after Grundtvig's model this form of education flourished in rural and urban areas of the country, supported by outstanding intellectuals' initiatives, e.g. N. Iorga, D. Gusti and S. Haret. During the 50-year communist period, adult education was on the decline, as although it became a mass phenomenon, it had to acquire ideological connotations. To achieve mass education, a strong institutional network was built up, but the theoretical approaches and scientific research were neglected, especially in the '80s.

In the '90s in spite of considerable efforts<sup>256</sup> the educational policies in democratic Romania focused on sectoral approaches (formal education, VET system, higher education) rather than on a holistic outlook, which need the support of the systemic reform meant to tackle all the aspects of education and career progression in the lifelong learning perspective.

---

<sup>256</sup> We refer especially to the projects co-financed by the World Bank for the reform of pre-university education, of university scientific research and human resources development, as well as Phare-VET Program.

In this context, fostered by the favorable moment of Romania's starting the adherence negotiations with the European Union, the need to properly develop lifelong learning in our country became an obvious priority.

At the level of *public authorities*, a series of initiatives were introduced mainly by the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity (MLSS), Ministry of Culture and Cults (MCC), Ministry of Education and Research (MER) to create specialized institutes or departments dealing with the lifelong learning issues, including its validation. In 1998, the National Council for Lifelong Education was set up and in 1999 the National Center for Lifelong Education and Distance Education was founded. MER worked out a strategy for adult education to be implemented by lifelong learning programs run within universities. 103 such programs were funded by World Bank (1997-2002) and administrated by the National Council for Higher Education Financing.

An example of good practice: In the mid '90s, MER launched the *ROEDUNET Program* aimed at linking every educational institution in Romania to the Internet. This program together with other facilities were developed locally or based on European projects, provides a platform for implementing the eLearning initiative of the European Commission.

The new dynamics of labor market, the changes occurring in the structure of qualifications and work organization, technology evolution brought about an increase of vocational training demand and implicitly, of providing it. The National Agency for Labor Force Employment (NALFE) organizes continuing vocational training by its centers or by external training providers, accredited according to Law No.: 76/2002. For the year 2002, the National Plan of Vocational Training (NPVT) stipulated, for instance, the organization of 1070 such courses focused on 162 trades. Attended by 17,350 unemployed workers (8,339 of which were women), mostly within NALFE Centers. By Government Ordinance No.: 129/2000 and the new Labor Code, qualification by apprenticeship and job training was re-introduced. This ordinance also points out that starting in 2010 the training providers will be authorized only if they use teaching staff with specialized pedagogical studies connected to adult training.

Important educational changes were implemented in September 2003, among them the fact that existing vocational schools and apprenticeship schools will disappear and will be replaced by Arts and Trade Schools. At the end of compulsory education graduates from the Arts and Trade Schools can obtain a level 1 qualification. This enables the holder to perform relatively simple work. Level 2 and 3 qualifications, which are more in demand within the labor market, will still need an additional one to three-years of further study after compulsory education<sup>257</sup>.

The Phare 2001 VET program (RO0801), which started in April 2003 includes a proposal for a National Qualification Framework (NQF) in order to cover the provision of formal initial and continuing (vocational) education and training, as well as non-formal and informal learning. The NQF has also been addressed in a Phare 2002 twinning project on continuing

---

<sup>257</sup> Romanian vocational qualifications are based on the European five-level framework as defined in the Council Decision 85/368/EEC.

vocational training (CVT) with the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity and Family (MLSSF). This project reviewed current adult learning policies. The involvement of social partners and other stakeholders was also given special attention. The NQF was the subject under discussion during the Human Resources Development (HRD) strategy debate for 2004/06. Clear coordination mechanisms among the different programs need to be ensured in order to maximize synergies and ensure close links between initial education and training, and adult learning.

### **27.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

Participation in continuing vocational training is still rather low, due among other factors, to the very restricted CVT access for people living in rural areas.

The formation of social partnership bodies with a role in VET increased in 2002. Regional consortia have been set up with representatives from county school inspectorates, county employment agencies, regional development agencies and social partners. The regional consortia have a role in all Phare funded HRD activities, including the VET projects and the CVT Twinning project. The Local Development Committees have been active in the planning for TVET in all counties, and county employment agencies have witnessed the start of the activities of county tripartite boards. These developments give social partnership an important local and regional dimension. However, sectoral issues are not raised, because sectoral representation of social partners is still relatively weak.

More and more *private institutions* offer courses for career progression, especially in the fields of IT and telecommunications, foreign languages, management, etc. Not all of them impose a quality standard in the respective targeted area or internationally recognized certificates. A good example of a centre which does is the Center for IT Training that offers also Microsoft Certificates.

The Government Ordinance No.: 129/2000 approved by Law No.: 375/2002 stipulates the implementation of a National Authorization System of the specialized training providers, a system on whose basis the certificates issued at the end of different training programs should be recognized on labor market. This is the first step to a fair competition among all public or private providers of adult training. Government Ordinance No.: 129/2000 also stipulates the publication of the National Register of specialized training providers meant to include all programs for which providers are authorized to give qualification or graduation certificates recognized at national level. Both types of certificates have a supplement specifying the skills acquired during the respective training. This important Government Ordinance No.: 129/2000 stipulates the setting up of assessment centers (accredited by the National Council for Occupational Standards and Certification - NCOSC), where competencies acquired by non-formal or informal education are also evaluated and certified.

By Law 375/2002, the NCOSC integrated in the National Adult Training Board, which deals more with regulating the CVT provision than with policy development.

The NATB elaborated a procedure approved, by order of the minister of labour, social solidarity and family and the minister of education and research, a procedure for evaluating



and certifying the professional competencies obtained by other ways than the formal one. This procedure allows an individual to address an assessment center in order to obtain the validation of their competencies acquired by non-formal or informal ways.

The 2002 law on adult vocational training, which entered into force in 2004, is probably to most important legislation to support lifelong learning measures passed so far. It directly refers to evaluating and recognizing competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning and describes this as an important area that should be further developed. As a result of this law around 300 occupational standards are being developed that in the near future will become reference points for the validation of non-formal and informal learning through the local accreditation committees set up locally to initially accredit vocational training.

In the Romanian *individual companies*, there are stakeholders interested in developing validation methodologies. The weight of the lifelong learning training fields varies according to activity sector, company size and property type. For instance, in the public sector, a special focus is on foreign language learning, in private sector on trade and marketing issues, whereas in mixed property units the target is personal skills development. The Romanian Commercial Bank has an assessment centre for validation of the competencies specific for occupations within the banking field.

An example of good practice towards the development of validation methodology is: *ROI - Return on Investment in Training*.

Period: November 1st, 2002-November 1st, 2004.

Promoter: CECOA – Vocational Training Centre for Trade and Service Activities, Portugal.

Partnership: the project benefits of a wide network of 11 partners from Portugal, Finland, Czech Republic, Greece, Bulgaria, Austria and **Romania**. General Objectives: to conceive and develop a methodology and a set of tools allowing training providers, companies (namely small and medium-size enterprises) and other stakeholders to evaluate the return (skills, performance, turnover, organization structure) on training investment. Specific Objectives: to build a tool to calculate the connection between cost/profit of any training programme; to define a frame for the evaluation model according to the project objectives and well-adapted to each country reality.

#### **27.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

As far as the *third sector* is concerned, different NGOs have had good initiatives of non-formal and informal learning programs, however these are hard to monitor. The training courses cover a range of fields:

**a.** courses of the second chance, for those with early school drop-out, without gaining any qualification or the ones willing to get a new qualification. An example of good program for validation methodologies is:

*Euro-Child-Centre Leonardo da Vinci Programme* (2001-2004), promoter: Save the Children Foundation, Romania; coordinator: Economic Software Systems International, Romania;

partners: Universiteit Antwerpen - UIA-Centre for Language and Speech, Belgium; Soziale und Pädagogische Massnahmen, Germany; Romanian Society for Life Long Learning, Romania; Institut Régional du Travail Social de Lorraine (IRTS), France; Tulossilta Ltd, Finland; Satakunta Polytechnic/Social Services and Health Care Pori, Finland; University of Bucharest, Faculty of Social Work, Romania; University Babes-Bolyai, Cluj, Department of Social Work - Babes, Romania.

The project objective is to create family-like climate for institutionalised children, so as they may develop harmoniously both psycho-affectively and intellectually, (being able to attend and graduate school), according to the rights stipulated in the Convention for Children's Rights.

Project beneficiaries: institutionalised children

Project result: educational modules for educators; traditional and distance courses, finalised with graduation diplomas for educators and social workers taking care of school-age children; basic-computer and Internet courses for educators and children, to create the abilities they need in order to contact children of different nationalities; English and French courses for children, to acquire knowledge necessary to communicate with other children in Europe; data base including all children that are taken care of and identification of their training needs; a site for institutionalised children in Europe to include educational components (interactive games, encyclopaedias, ability tests, multimedia applications) and a chat service; dissemination of project result through 500 CDs.

**b.** courses for personal development, especially organized in the free time, where the participants come out of their own initiative, mainly for their overall culture development. In many cases, the participants' indirect aim is socialization.

The National Association of Folk Universities in Romania (NAFUR) has much contributed to the development of validation methodologies. Only in 2001, for instance, these universities as the main providers of courses in the cultural area, organized 2,467 courses attended by 42,785 participants who got different types of certificates.

**c.** courses for communitarian education development focused on topics such as: democracy, intercultural education, political culture, etc., which are part of larger projects, with mixed actions (festivals, exhibitions, conferences, etc.). In most cases, a clear-cut distinction can't be made among the different types of courses, as the participants have a mixed motivation or the organizers' target is combined (e.g.: vocational training courses also used for the participants' personal development).

A good practice in this respect is the contribution of the *Romanian Society for Lifelong Learning* to the European Project: *Animated Debate* - Computer animation workshops for dysfunctional groups with a view to foster European partnership (under Minerva -109988-CP-1-2003-1-PL-Minerva-M).

Period: November 1st, 2003-November 1st, 2005. Coordinator: Bielskie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne Teatr Grodzki, Poland. Partnership: Istituto Mediterraneo Ricerca e Comunicazione, Italy; WAC Performing Arts and Media College (Interchange Trust), United Kingdom; Niepubliczna Placowka Oswiatowa EST, Poland; *Societatea Romana de Educatie*

Permanenta, Romania. General Objectives: The main objective of the AD Project is to create a new learning environment in which dysfunctional youth can develop artistic talents in close cooperation with their European counterparts. This will be facilitated by communications technology. Specific Objectives: - encourage the use of new technologies and multimedia in institutions providing care for disadvantaged children and youth; record and disseminate the results of experiments with new forms of art based on multimedia and ICT; advocate the promotion of traditionally overlooked talents, especially those that relate to visual domain. Project results: Computer workshops already existing at each site will be adapted to become “film studios”. They will be upgraded in terms of hardware and software adequate to the students' abilities and age; Interactive project website will be created in order to establish the communication platform for the participants of the workshops and their instructors; Three animated films will be shown on the project website at the end of the first school year showing the provisional results of the first round of workshops; Animated Debate Guide for Educators; 10 seminars for arts and IT trainers from schools and therapeutic institutions in Silesia and Malopolska regions (Poland) will be organized.

In the voluntary sector, a very good, efficient program is *Art for Social Change* (2000-2004) organized by European Cultural Foundation and implemented in Romania in partnership with CONCEPT Foundation. Budget: 25,500 €.

This program by its component for Eastern Europe: *Play against Violence* introduces theater as an education method for young people facing violence, in order to prevent the effects leading to quick changes of attitude or conflict situations. To achieve its main target, the program offers training courses for artists and other professionals (teachers, psychologists, social assistants, educators) who work with youth, as well as support for running local and regional projects carried out by the persons already trained in this respect.

Another target is to contribute to social change by providing for the young generation instruments that can help them to participate in the (re)construction of civil society. The beneficiaries in 2002, for instance, were about 200 young people (12-21 years old) from 16 institutions of Constanta and Targu Mures and also over 30 artists, psychologists, social assistants from Bucharest, Constanta and Targu Mures, who got trained in the respective field. In 2003 two resource centers for the youth facing violence were set up to help them.

This section looks at qualitative and quantitative information on validation of non-formal and informal learning in Romania. Further efforts should be made to bring added value to this ongoing work at local, sectoral, regional and national level, as validation is a question of sound methodologies and transparent institutional arrangements, but it represents also a question of making political choices on how to value knowledge and experiences. As Romania is heading for the EU integration its endeavors to contribute to the development of a set of common European principles on validation are more visible.

## **27.5 Conclusions**

The long tradition of adult education in Romania has pointed out its synchronism in time, and more important, also at the conceptual level, with the European concerns and developments in this field. In the context of the EU accession strategy the efforts of this country have been focused on harmonizing lifelong learning with today's standards in the member states.

As key action points in this area, priority has to be given to:

- Support for non-formal and informal learning by social and managerial recognition, extension and diversification of learning provision;
- Promotion of training and education incentives within economic, social and regional programs;
- Provision of an increased and diversified number of training opportunities to stimulate a greater demand;

In spite of the general efforts and obvious progress made in Romania for implementing the EU Memorandum on lifelong learning, there are still many drawbacks, difficulties and constraints, which have to be tackled and solved in time appropriately.

This national chapter has tried to identify good practices and promising validations initiatives, which it is interesting to report on, as they significantly illustrate the process of reasoning and also the state of progress in particular filed in Romania.

For instance, the project linked to key message 4 (valuing learning): the Romanian Council for Occupational Standards and Certification was set up with the World Bank financial support to ensure the recognition of professional competences based on occupational standards.

An example of efficient regional validation approach is the *Regional Program for Art and Culture* coordinated by the Institute for an Open Society in Budapest and implemented in Romania by *CONCEPT Foundation*. Target: to support artistic cooperation and stimulate the structural changes process in the field of cultural policies in Central-Eastern Europe. Main focus: to help the process of cultural structures changes and to guide towards essential changes and the autonomy of artistic field. Budget: 73,101 USD.

In the near future further policies and measures are necessary to breakdown the existing divisions between formal initial and continuing (vocational) education and training, as well as non-formal and informal learning. One of the locally accepted tools to achieve this goal is a common *National Qualification Framework (NQF)*. Although the conceptualization of the NQF is incorporated in existing Phare Projects under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research or the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity and Family, there is a risk that implementation will be fragmented. It is anticipated that progress will be slow without a common endeavor in which these two ministers and the social partners are equal participants<sup>258</sup>.

---

<sup>258</sup> *Review of Progress in Vocational education and Training Reform in Romania*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2003.

In order to ensure the labor market value of the NQF, the development needs to be facilitated through a social dialogue taking into account sectoral interests. This implies measures to strengthen sectoral representation of social partners<sup>259</sup>.

A much needed policy to enforce is to increase accessibility of guidance and counseling services for adults and members of the local community, as well as the need for these services to extend beyond the strictly vocational and educational dimension and to include also more and more social and citizenship aspects.

---

<sup>259</sup> Idem.

## **28.0 SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

*By Olga Strietska-Ilina (Independent Consultant)*

### **28.1 Introduction**

In Slovakia validation of informal and non-formal learning is **a new issue on the policy agenda**. At present there are no systemic or legal provisions for identification, assessment and recognition of skills and competencies acquired through informal and non-formal learning or through the work experience in Slovakia. Although certification of completion of continuing training courses is regulated by legislation, the real weight of such certificates on the labour market cannot be compared to the qualifications attained in the formal system of education. At the level of policy innovation, a number of important strategic and programming documents have been adopted recently. Implementation of these decisions may create real preconditions for setting up a system of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

Some examples of good practice of conceptual and methodological elaboration of approaches in validation of informal and non-formal learning, as well as its application, exist at the level of individual initiatives. Such initiatives have so far mostly been pushed by the need to comply with European policies and are supported by the European Union (EU). The main approach thus has so far been **EU-driven**.

### **28.2 Rebview of existing initiatives: Public sector**

#### *28.2.1 Legal provisions*

Continuing vocational training (CVT) is regulated by the **Act No. 386/1997** as amended (No.567/2001)<sup>260</sup>. The Act recognises CVT as a legitimate part of the education system of the Slovak Republic and defines it as a part of lifelong learning. The Act sets conditions for establishment of CVT institutions, accreditation of programmes and issuance of certificates.

The CVT Act and its amendment only codify the current stage of development and do not create preconditions for further development in such fields as quality assurance and recognition of learning and competences. Moreover, there are no sufficient preconditions for integration of formal and non-formal learning, meaning in particular the content and organisation of education and training, its validation and recognition of certificates as well as horizontal permeability and openness of the subsystems. This has been recognised in *the Concept of Lifelong Learning in the Slovak Republic* (2004). The document stipulates incorporation of integrating mechanisms in the school acts and laws, ultimately a new ‘integrating’ CVT Act.

Vocational education and training (VET) for performance of specific vocational activities require the prescribed competency is covered by regulations of state administration for

---

<sup>260</sup> [http://www.education.gov.sk/DVZ/ODV/AK/386\\_1997.pdf](http://www.education.gov.sk/DVZ/ODV/AK/386_1997.pdf)

individual fields of activities. **Act No. 455/1991 on Small Business as amended**<sup>261</sup> stipulates special qualification requirements for doing business in handicraft industry or in selected crafts (e.g. blacksmiths, construction workers, food production etc.). The requirements may be fulfilled by the presence of a certificate of a formal vocational qualification in the relevant field or a certificate of completion of general education along with the prove of at least three years of experience in the given profession. These documents can be substituted by other certificates of a relevant or a 'kin' vocational qualification from other upper secondary, post-secondary or higher education and by documents certifying certain years of practical experience in the relevant or 'kin' occupation, whereas the number of years of experience stipulated in the law depends on the type of prior education. The certificate of completion of a training course in one of the accredited continuing training providers according to Act No. 386/1997 is not sufficient and has to be accompanied by a qualification examination. Such examination is regulated by the **Decree No. 323/2001**<sup>262</sup>.

The purpose of the qualification examination is to verify theoretical knowledge (professional terminology, characteristics of materials and technology procedures) and practical skills (working procedures, mechanisms, machines, instruments, equipment, technology processes, etc.) used in the process of execution of the appropriate professional activity. The examination consists of the written, verbal and practical parts and is evaluated by the Examination Commission designated by the Regional Governmental Office. The proposals on the composition of the Commission come from the Slovak Small Business Chamber, which organises qualification examinations. Successful passing qualification examination grants the individual the same rights for execution of professions as to those who obtained their qualification in the formal education system. We cannot, speak here of a large-scale practice: according to the results of the questionnaire answered by NARIC<sup>263</sup>, only 87 individuals passed the qualification examination by 2002, of which 48 were cosmeticians. Other professions were hairdressers, waiters, bakers, bricklayers, etc. The success rate was quite high with the drop out at around 10%.

The Act on Small Businesses in its later amendments on the one hand, introduces a real possibility to obtain qualification in a much shorter period of time by means of completion of a (re)training course (the length is not specified) and passing the qualification examination. On the other hand, the Act's later amendments (2001), restricted the earlier possibility given by the law to go through examination without any prior training or education, to get recognised practical experience or non-formal training<sup>264</sup> and to substitute formal

---

<sup>261</sup> <http://www.madeinslovakia.sk/zakony/zivz.pdf>

<sup>262</sup> Decree No. 323/2001 on Details of the contents of the theoretical knowledge and practical skills which are required for the execution of certain regulated professional activities, about the mode of the completion of qualification examination and issuing the certificate, Ministry of Interior.  
[http://www.szk.sk/ako\\_zacat/vyhlaska.pdf](http://www.szk.sk/ako_zacat/vyhlaska.pdf)

<sup>263</sup> *Finding the synergy between International Credential Evaluation (ICE) and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)*, Questionnaire to NARICs, 2002, Results published at <http://www.nuffic.nl/ice-plar/pdf/NARICsonQuestionnaire.pdf>

<sup>264</sup> According to NARIC's questionnaire until 2001, about 30 people managed to receive recognition of their prior informal/non-formal learning as a substitute to a formal qualification in accordance with the Small Business Act before its amendment. *Finding the synergy between International Credential Evaluation (ICE) and*

qualifications by the prove of inventions, patents or patterns in the relevant trade<sup>265</sup>. From this point of view the current version of the law is more restrictive and gives less space for manoeuvre for older workers who might be very experienced in their performed trade but do not hold a formal qualification in the relevant field and do not wish to go into training. Such arrangement, may become a good stimulation for workers' participation in CVT but needs to be linked to an efficient system of counselling and guidance.

The Ministry of Education and Science issued the **Decree No. 41/1996 on Professional and Pedagogical Competence of Educational Staff**<sup>266</sup> on 26 January 1996 as amended later, which stipulates the qualification requirements and organization, contents and procedure for qualification examination for teachers in kindergartens, special, basic and secondary schools. Professional capacity is understood by the Decree as a set of vocational knowledge, skills and competences gained through the studies in higher education, secondary education and in professional experience. The decree stipulates that after 5 years of teaching experience certain conditions can be recognised as a substitute to the 1<sup>st</sup> qualification examination, fulfilment of which gives a right to obtain higher teaching positions and incorporation to a higher salary scale. Among others such substitute conditions could be:

- Completion of two-years specialised innovative course or two-years specialised qualification course accredited by the Ministry of Education;
- Taking the first to the third place in the national competition of independently developed, accredited and patented teaching tools submitted to the mass production,
- Authorship of textbooks and syllabi, approved by the Ministry of Education and published;
- Taking the first to the third place in the national competition in pedagogical reading.

Act No. 279/1993 on School Establishments regulates certain types of non-formal training, for instance, at state language schools, where learners can undergo preparatory training for the state language exam and/or pass the examination (with or without a preparatory course). Non-formal training: is also regulated by other laws (e.g. Employment Act<sup>267</sup>, Labour Code<sup>268</sup>), without specific reference to validation of competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning.

An important legislative change was introduction of **8 self-governing regions** and the transition of some competencies from state administration to self-government, including those in the field of education and its establishments (Act No. 302/2001 on self-government of

---

*Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)*, Questionnaire to NARICs, 2002, Results published at <http://www.nuffic.nl/ice-plar/pdf/NARICsonQuestionnaire.pdf>

<sup>265</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Slovakia, ETF, 2002.

<sup>266</sup> [http://www.education.gov.sk/VZPP/VYHLASKY/1996\\_41.pdf](http://www.education.gov.sk/VZPP/VYHLASKY/1996_41.pdf)

<sup>267</sup> No. 397/1996

<sup>268</sup> No. 311/2001



higher territorial units, Act No. 416/2001 on transition of competences, and Act No. 596/2003 on state administration and school self-government)<sup>269</sup>.

Although the process of decentralisation and the administration reform has been criticised for insufficient transfer of responsibility to the regions and preservation of ‘corporativism’ in public administration. The decentralisation reform is associated with high aspirations in terms of (i) granting greater role for the social dialogue in training and human resource development, (ii) bringing training provision closer to local needs, (iii) better targeting and integration of various policies in the implementation at regional level. The weak role of social partners in lifelong learning is expected to be boosted by interaction with regional actors. The Regional VET Councils, whose creation is in progress, are expected to incorporate the dialogue on lifelong learning<sup>270</sup>. These can become important players in the development of the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning at regional level.

Slovakia adopted **legislation necessary to harmonise with EU requirements** in the field of recognition of qualifications<sup>271</sup>. The adopted **Act No 477/2002** deals with recognition of certification of vocational qualifications issued in the EU Member States for the execution of regulated professions on the territory of Slovakia. It stipulates different means of recognising qualifications. In those professions where there is co-ordination of minimum educational requirements among EU Member States, there is automatic recognition (e.g. medical professions, architects) or special regime of recognition, which is practically automatic but under certain circumstances may involve an aptitude test (e.g. lawyers). Semi-automatic recognition involves a comparison of the length and content of the applicant's education with the host country's professional requirements. Substantial differences in length can be compensated by the proof of the work experience and major content discrepancies by aptitude test or an adaptation period. In some regulated professions like masonry, hairdressing, massage, and tourist guide services, qualification can also be recognised through work experience<sup>272</sup>. Although the law does not deal directly with the provisions for validation of non-formal and informal learning for the Slovak citizens, it stipulates important legal, institutional and procedural arrangements, which can be applied for the validation in the future.

**The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)** was effectively introduced in 2002 under the **new Higher Education Act** and the following **Decree on the Credit System** (No.

---

<sup>269</sup> Vantuch, J., Jelínková, D. *Current Status of Vocational Education and Training in Slovakia (Vocational Education and Training on the Verge of the Millennium)*. Slovak National Observatory of Vocational Education and Training, State Institute of Vocational Education and Training, Bratislava, 2002, p.57. See also: Vantuch, J., Pauk, J., Jelínková, D. *Recent developments in vocational education, Training and employment policy in Slovakia (2003 Short Country Report for ETF)*. Slovak National Observatory of Vocational Education and Training, State Institute of Vocational Education and Training, Bratislava, 2003, p.6.

<sup>270</sup> Implementing Lifelong Learning Strategies in Europe: Progress report on the follow-up to the 2002 Council resolution. Reply to the Commission Questionnaire, December 2003.

<sup>271</sup> Act on recognition of vocational qualifications No 477/2002 reflecting European directives No 89/48 and No 92/51

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.; also see interview with Mária Hrabinská, Head of the Slovak Ministry of Education's Centre for the Equivalence of Diplomas, in ‘Spectator’ periodical, 3/1/2004

614/2002<sup>273</sup>). Prior to 2002, several higher education institutions used a credit system but there was no standard model. According to the new law, all higher education institutions are required to introduce a credit system based on the ECTS by September 2005. Currently, ECTS or other credit point systems are largely used in the first two cycles of the tertiary education and to a lesser degree at the PhD level<sup>274</sup>.

Slovakia has signed and ratified **the Lisbon Convention** on the Recognition of Qualifications. The Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education is the Slovak ENIC/NARIC body, responsible for the recognition and evaluation of foreign credentials. Europass National Reference Point was established in 2004. There is discussion underway on whether it should remain to be part of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, or whether it should be transferred to the Ministry of Education. Currently higher education institutions are issuing a **diploma supplement** upon request from students. Secondary school certification supplement was also issued<sup>275</sup>.

Although there is no credit transfer system and the linked system of recognition at secondary and post-secondary levels or in the non-formal training, **the Slovak NARIC** is involved in a number of activities to recognize partial qualifications and courses especially those received abroad. For instance it issues authorized statements about the level of language knowledge and skills for employers with the view of *de facto* recognition of various certificates about command of foreign languages issued in the Slovak Republic as well as abroad. The statement is linked to formal education and distinguishes four levels of qualifications in foreign languages. About 150 statements of such type were issued by 2002. NARIC also reports on issuing recommendations to competent authorities on recognition of in-service teacher training courses and examinations attended abroad for the purpose of insertion of teachers to a higher salary scale. These are mostly teachers of foreign languages, music and visual arts at basic and high schools. About 20 of such recommendations were reported in 2002. Finally, NARIC also reports on limited number of cases of the academic recognition of parts of education and training (e.g. examinations, credits), attended abroad with the purpose of continuation of education and training, including (but not limited to) higher education. Such recommendations are provided to individual schools, including universities, in such study fields as ICT, foreign languages, arts<sup>276</sup>.

### 28.2.2 *The context of the system*

Over 85% of the Slovak working age population achieved at least ISCED 3 level of education – a mark well above the EU average<sup>277</sup>. The share of enrolments to technical and vocational

---

<sup>273</sup> [http://www.education.gov.sk/VZPP/VYHLASKY/2002\\_614.pdf](http://www.education.gov.sk/VZPP/VYHLASKY/2002_614.pdf)

<sup>274</sup> Realising the European Higher Education Area. National Report. Berlin Summit 2003, pp. 3-4, [http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Slovak\\_Republic.pdf](http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Slovak_Republic.pdf); also Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.), p.25

<sup>275</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Slovak Republic, QCA Consortium, 2004, p. 25. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Reports\\_Slovakia.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Reports_Slovakia.pdf), p.26

<sup>276</sup> *Finding the synergy between International Credential Evaluation (ICE) and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)*, Questionnaire to NARICs, 2002, Results published at <http://www.nuffic.nl/ice-plar/pdf/NARICsonQuestionnaire.pdf>

<sup>277</sup> Eurostat, LFS, 2001.

paths of initial education is almost 80% as compared to enrolments to general education<sup>278</sup>. Initial VET has a longstanding tradition in the country. Participation in CVT among adult population is also relatively high<sup>279</sup>. CVT is provided by various education and training institutions, including basic, secondary and higher education schools, enterprise training establishments, sectoral administration training providers, private institutions etc. The third sector plays an additional or supplementary role in the CVT provision, especially in the fields, where state and private training providers are not too active<sup>280</sup>.

**Quality assurance** system remains a problematic area in non-formal training. In the non-formal system, training providers function on the supply-demand basis. The quality criterion is accreditation of the study programme, which however is compulsory only in case of retraining courses for labour offices, training of civil servants and other types of training supported by the state budget<sup>281</sup>. The Accreditation Commission Accreditation is carried out by, which is a consultative body of the Ministry of Education<sup>282</sup>.

The graduates of the accredited courses receive a **certificate of completion** with the national non-limited validity<sup>283</sup>. However, certificates obtained in the formal education system (“maturita” certificates, final examination certificates, diplomas) are fully accepted by employers, whereas certificates obtained in the non-formal education system, even in the accredited courses, (certificates of completion) are not comparable to formal qualifications. It is up to the employer what weight to assign to the given certificate<sup>284</sup>. The framework standards, which could define minimum competence requirements for specific activities are absent. The content of non-formal training is not linked to a specific standard or objective of a specific learning outcome and therefore the certificates cannot be validated in the same way as qualifications with regard to certain occupations or activities.

There is **no national qualification framework** in Slovakia, which could embrace outcomes of IVET and CVT. However, various steps have been taken towards the development of qualification standards. In 1996 a government resolution stipulated the task of “preparing qualification standards and educational standards derived from these”. Since then, the Ministry of Labour has supported an analysis of 470 occupations and over 300 of

---

<sup>278</sup> Masson, J.-R. *Thirteen years of cooperation and reforms in vocational education and training in the acceding and candidate countries*, ETF, 2003

<sup>279</sup> The data of the Eurostat LFS 2002 is 9% of 25-54 year olds participating in education and training in 4 weeks prior to the survey. The data for 2003 was however much lower due to break in series (Masson, J.-R., *Thirteen years of cooperation and reforms in vocational education and training in the acceding and candidate countries: Addendum*, ETF 2004, p. 48).

<sup>280</sup> *Koncepcia celoživotného vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike* (Concept of lifelong learning in the Slovak Republic); Background Report, Bratislava, 2004.

<sup>281</sup> Between 1991 and 2001, 1 452 training institutions were given accreditation to offer 12 000 training programmes.

<sup>282</sup> Act No. 386/1997 as amended No.567/2001

<sup>283</sup> Act No. 386/1997 as amended No.567/2001

<sup>284</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). *Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Slovak Republic*, QCA Consortium, 2004, p. 17. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Reports\\_Slovakia.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Reports_Slovakia.pdf)

occupational characteristics have been presented to the State Institute of Vocational and Technical Education (SIOV) to be used in the development of educational standards.<sup>285</sup> Since 1999 expert commissions (EC's) have been set up on a tripartite principle<sup>286</sup>, which play a consultative and co-ordinating role in the development of the standards. In 2002 these EC's were replaced by 14 new EC's<sup>287</sup> responsible for the whole secondary VET. The main task of EC is to deal with the content of VET, and conceptual and methodological issues of VET. Activities of EC's are co-ordinated by Coordinating Council created in 2002 and create basis for the decision-making with regard to VET in Slovakia<sup>288</sup>.

**Counselling and guidance services** are based on a three-pillar system. The first subsystem is based on the traditional guidance system at schools. The second subsystem is based on institutions in the employment sector and represented by the network of psychological counselling centres providing career guidance and counselling as a sub-component of family counselling. The third sub-system covered by the network of regional and district labour offices focused on serving adults, in particular those who are unemployed<sup>289</sup>.

The provision of information and counselling with regard to learning possibilities for adult population is felt being a deficit. Partial information systems are not integrated with each other and with the information on training opportunities not only for the unemployed but also for those who would like to learn further or to find an alternative path for self-fulfilment. The complex counselling and guidance system, which could interlink career choice guidance, information provision on employment opportunities and on education and training is missing<sup>290</sup>. Since 2004 individual employment action plans must be elaborated for each unemployed by employment services through their regional and local offices<sup>291</sup>. This may provide good grounds for integration of the formative assessment in the counselling and guidance system and linking its results to subsequent training. The approach however is only limited to those in unemployment.

Although the current three-pillar system of counselling and guidance does not create preconditions for formative assessment of competences attained in non-formal/informal learning and through work experience, the presence of the infrastructure and certain elements of the system can provide for future developments in this area.

---

<sup>285</sup> Ibid. , p.25.

<sup>286</sup> 16 expert commissions are led by an expert who represents the relevant ministry, and 18 commissions are led by an expert of the State Institute of Technical and Vocational Education.

<sup>287</sup> EC include representatives of SIOV, respective sectors, labour market institutions, professional chambers, employers' associations and federations, companies, secondary schools, HEI, regional offices, institutions, etc. Over 200 professionals are expected to serve on the EC, with additional professionals participating in sub-commissions.

<sup>288</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). *Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Slovak Republic*, QCA Consortium, 2004, p. 25. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Reports\\_Slovakia.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Reports_Slovakia.pdf)

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>290</sup> *Koncepcia celoživotného vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike (Concept of lifelong learning in the Slovak Republic)*, approved by the Government 25 February 2004 by the Resolution 157/2004.

<sup>291</sup> Vantuch, J., Pauk, J., Jelínková, D. *Recent developments in vocational education, Training and employment policy in Slovakia (2003 Short Country Report for ETF)*. Slovak National Observatory of Vocational Education and Training, State Institute of Vocational Education and Training, Bratislava, 2003, p.18.

### 28.2.3 Policy development

Although no specific measures to integrate systems of formal and non-formal learning with the provision for the validation mechanisms have been implemented, the whole policy area of lifelong learning has been undergoing an intensive debate and conceptual innovation. The debate was pushed forward; by the national consultation process the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (EC, 2000) in 2001. It resulted in several important conceptual and strategic documents.

Lifelong learning was proclaimed one of the priorities in *the Programme Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic* (2002). For the school system *the National Programme for Education and Training in the Slovak Republic for the Forthcoming 15-20 Years* ('Millennium' programme) suggested the reform strategy for initial education as an integral part of lifelong learning<sup>292</sup>. *The Concept of Continuing Training in the Slovak Republic* was prepared and approved by the Government in 2002. It characterized the current situation and discussed major preconditions for development until 2010.

Lastly, in February 2004 the Government approved *the Concept of Lifelong Learning in the Slovak Republic*.<sup>293</sup> The latter acknowledged the importance of certification of training outcomes for employers and the necessity to reconsider the system of recognition of certificates outside formal education. The document recognised that as the result of the economic transformation and greater demands for adaptability of the labour force, the number of the population who attain competences and skills outside the formal system of education has grown. Thus, the specific steps towards elaboration of the system of validation and recognition of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning have to result in the attainment of formal documents (e.g. certificates, attestations, confirmations).

The Concept also recognised that the absence of the system of recognition of informal and non-formal learning results in 'dead ends' between the school and outside-school subsystems. One of the solutions suggested is the development of a modular structure of education and training and the corresponding system of the credit-based validation of learning outcomes, but also in diversification of other forms of education and training.

The Concept put forward specific proposals and measures to assist implementation of the strategic goals set by the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. A number of suggestions would create preconditions for implementation of the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>294</sup>.

- In the field of innovation in education and training:

---

<sup>292</sup> National Programme for Education and Training in the Slovak Republic. (*Národný program výchovy a vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike*), Bratislava, Ministry of Education  
<http://www.education.gov.sk/main/dokument/konproj/krvv/npvv.rtf>

<sup>293</sup> Koncepcia celoživotného vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike (Concept of lifelong learning in the Slovak Republic), approved by the Government 25 February 2004 by the Resolution 157/2004.

<sup>294</sup> Here only some of relevant measures are mentioned.

- to support open/ modular/ credit system in education and training,
- to define key learning outcomes of the support/ supplementary programmes of the so called 'second chance' education,
- to complete the system of occupational and educational standards in mutual correspondence and reflecting the relevant key competences.

- In the field of valuing learning outcomes:

- to create preconditions for recognition of modules' completion in different types of formal and non-formal education and by those means to ensure permeability of the system and the necessary certification for the labour market (the responsibility assigned to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family);
- to create legal preconditions for recognition of the outcomes of learning outside of the formal system of education; to support recognition 'de facto', organised by the bodies that already have the experience with validation 'de jure' such as NARIC (the responsibility assigned to the Ministry of Education (MoE));
- to support international cooperation in modular development of non-formal training and their harmonisation with ECTS and recognition of competences acquired through practical experience (MoE);
- to involve social partners in the development of modules for formal and non-formal education and training, and in the sphere of recognition of learning outcomes (MoE).

- In the field of information and counselling:

- to integrate various components of the counselling and guidance in education, training and the labour market, and to make accessible complex information segments on occupations, labour market opportunities, education and training;
- to complete construction of the information and counselling centres at the local offices of labour, social affairs and family and to expand their services for a broader public.

*The Concept of Lifelong Learning* also proposed a number of concrete institution building measures, some of which are relevant for the development of the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning, such as:

- to stimulate the creation of the regional councils for lifelong learning,
- to support development and work of the information and counselling centres and other services for lifelong learning in municipalities,
- to support the development of the multifunctional training centres at municipal and regional levels as the centres of lifelong learning for all citizens, where the training and counselling functions will be combined.

Two other important programming documents were adopted: *National Employment Action Plan* (2003) and *the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources* (2004). The former stipulates elaboration of the commonly applicable system of national classification of occupations and, subsequently, of educational standards, in cooperation between state bodies,

employers and education and training institutions. The latter puts the stress on the need to improve the quality of CVT, and on the validation and recognition of its outcomes.

In the policy document *Millennium Development Goals: Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion* (2004)<sup>295</sup> special attention is paid to the illiteracy levels, particularly among the population of segregated Roma settlements. Such situation leads to the inability to efficiently participate in social and economic life putting these people at risk of social exclusion. To address this problem, it is suggested in the document to differentiate the education offer at the primary school level and to increase supply of alternative education programmes in non-state schools in order to provide vocational education also on the ISCED 2B level. This would enable students to achieve the minimal qualification for entering the labour market either by the subsequent follow-up of courses at a secondary school or by completion of second-chance education, or by recognition of prior learning and on-the-job experience. The latter is recognised as an important mechanism in improving qualification situation of the low skilled.

In spite of many useful suggestions expressed in *the Concept of Lifelong Learning* and in other important conceptual and strategic documents, most of recommendations so far remain on paper. In *the Reply to the Commission Questionnaire on Implementing Lifelong Strategies in Europe* (December 2003) it was stated that in the field of accreditation of prior learning, methodologies and systems for assessment and validation of competences, ‘the debates dominate over effective actions. Accreditation of prior learning is considered a priority under the influence of European players rather than as the result of the reflection of national needs. There is some experience gained from international projects, however, there is little experience from the relevant methodologies and there are no legislative provisions backing APEL type activities’<sup>296</sup>.

#### 28.2.4 *Overview of existing initiatives*

Despite scarce legislative and systemic provisions, there are a number of initiatives in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

First, such initiatives are often supported **through EU programmes and networks** (mostly Leonardo da Vinci). The National Agency of the Leonardo da Vinci programme itself contributed to the development and understanding of the concept of recognition of learning outcomes in Slovakia by the dissemination of information on various approaches and examples of good practice<sup>297</sup>. Training of Trainers Network (TTNET), another EU initiative coordinated by Cedefop, proposed establishing a working group on the issue of recognition of non-formal and informal learning<sup>298</sup>. TTNET-Slovakia, coordinated by the National

---

<sup>295</sup> Blaho, A. et al. Millennium Development Goals: Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion. UNDP2004. [http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG\\_Regions.pdf](http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG_Regions.pdf)

<sup>296</sup> Implementing Lifelong Learning Strategies in Europe: Progress report on the follow-up to the 2002 Council resolution. Reply to the Commission Questionnaire, December 2003.

APEL stands for ‘Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning’ [author’s note].

<sup>297</sup> e.g. presentation of Krempasky, P., the National Agency of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, 25.06.2003 Bratislava.

<sup>298</sup> [http://www.siov.sk/siov/dokhtm/7sno/ttnet/ttnet\\_prez/a\\_vantuch.ppt#14](http://www.siov.sk/siov/dokhtm/7sno/ttnet/ttnet_prez/a_vantuch.ppt#14)

Observatory of Vocational Education and Training which is part of the State Institute of Vocational Education and Training, intends ‘to boost the issue of accreditation of prior and experiential learning’ in Slovakia<sup>299</sup>.

Second, **the academic sector** has been particularly active in the participation in and in the coordination of the EU funded projects in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning in Slovakia.

Third, **enterprises**, particularly those with the share of a foreign capital, sometimes apply certain elements of the formative assessment, validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

### **Projects in the academic sector**

So far universities have been the most active in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning in Slovakia taking the initiative in exploring approaches, developing and applying new methods and tools.

**The Institute of Lifelong Education of the Technical University of Košice**<sup>300</sup> was created in 1996. It coordinates the activities in the field of open and distance learning in the region and it is a part of the Slovak Distance Education Network. The Institute aims at widening the existing cooperation with Košice institutions of higher education, private education institutes, local government, and education institutes of industrial enterprises. It provides continuing education and training, guidance, information and consulting services in the framework of university services for the region, contributes to the development of the systems of lifelong learning in cooperation with the local firms and industrial enterprises.

Among others the Institute of Lifelong Education of the Technical University of Košice in cooperation with the VSŽ Vzdelávacie a poradenské centrum (Educational, Training and Consulting Centre) and with a consortium of European partner institutions implemented a Leonardo da Vinci project **EDUCRATOS** (1998-2001)<sup>301</sup>. The project’s aim was the creation of the centre of educational advisory and consultation services for vocational training, design of the methodology for identification and anticipation of training needs, development of educational standards and of the methodology for accreditation of prior experience and learning. The project’s target group were consultants, trainers, training officers, training experts, manager training programs and human resource directors. The project elaborated *Methodology for identification of training needs*<sup>302</sup> at the organisation, group and individual levels. It also developed methodology for accreditation of prior experience and learning<sup>303</sup>,

---

<sup>299</sup> Vantuch, J., Pauk, J., Jelínková, D. *Recent developments in vocational education, Training and employment policy in Slovakia (2003 Short Country Report for ETF)*. Slovak National Observatory of Vocational Education and Training, State Institute of Vocational Education and Training, Bratislava, 2003, p.9.

<sup>300</sup> <http://www.tuke.sk/icv/en/index-en.php>

<sup>301</sup> [http://www.tuke.sk/icv/educratos/Web\\_Educra.htm](http://www.tuke.sk/icv/educratos/Web_Educra.htm)

<sup>302</sup> *Methodology for identification of training needs*, 2000, 30 pp., English and Slovak versions.

<sup>303</sup> *Manual Accreditation of prior experience and learning (APEL)*, 2000, 92 pp;  
[http://www.tuke.sk/icv/educratos/Web\\_Educra.htm](http://www.tuke.sk/icv/educratos/Web_Educra.htm)



and for the development/adaptation of educational standards<sup>304</sup>, and ran a pilot course on APEL.

The Institute of Lifelong Education of the Technical University of Košice offers now a modular course of distance education combined with computer-supported and attendance-course training '**Person APEL**' (168 hours, 10 modules)<sup>305</sup>. The course is targeted at personnel managers in enterprises, employees in higher education, training providers and counselling and guidance services with a minimum of complete upper secondary education. The course provides information on the approach and principles of accreditation of prior and experiential learning, instructs on how it can be used for the development and management of human resources. The main principles of APEL's application at various stages, including assessment of competences and identification of strong and weak points of employees and methods of the subsequent skills development of employees.

In cooperation with the European partners **the Technical University of Kosice and the University of Zilina** worked on elaboration of a competence management tool entitled '*The European Record of Achievement*' (**EuroRecord**) targeted at **the engineering industry**<sup>306</sup>. The EuroRecord is a software-supported tool for planning and recording individual training and development needs with the support of mentoring and guidance, in a dialogue with the employer, designed to record prior learning achievements and to link it to the individual strategy for personal and professional development and advancement. The tool supports a credit system recognising continuing training courses, experiential learning and accreditation of the in-company training. It is targeted at individual employees, employers, universities and professional organisations.

The EuroRecord helps individuals to manage their professional development and career providing methodology for documentation of competences, identification of the requirements for further learning and with the subsequent design of the development plan. The method records learning achievements and professional development, regardless of where and how they occurred. The EuroRecord was developed by a consortium of companies, professional organisations, trade unions, universities and other training providers in seven countries, along with a number of European networks and organisations. The project was completed in 2001. The information on the actual application of its results in the Slovak engineering industry is not available.

### **28.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector**

There is hardly any information available about the initiatives in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning in the private sector in Slovakia. The scarce examples of identification and the formative assessment of acquired competences among employees. Provided by private international training and consulting companies who offer similar services, in a number of countries. Such companies transfer the international know-how via

---

<sup>304</sup> *Educational standards*, 42 pp; [http://www.tuke.sk/icv/educratos/Web\\_Educra.htm](http://www.tuke.sk/icv/educratos/Web_Educra.htm)

<sup>305</sup> [http://www.tuke.sk/icv/kurzy/kurz\\_person-apel.php](http://www.tuke.sk/icv/kurzy/kurz_person-apel.php)

<sup>306</sup> The project was coordinated by European Society for Engineering Education, [www.control.ethz.ch/eurorecord/](http://www.control.ethz.ch/eurorecord/).

their national branches to Slovakia. Therefore such initiatives are not ones of the Slovak private sector *stricto sensu* but rather a reaction to the demand in this field emerging in Slovakia. Some examples are mentioned below.

**Accor Services** – the Accor Group's second largest international line of business – aspires to improve the performance of companies and local authorities by fostering the well being of their employees and citizens.<sup>307</sup> Accor Services designs, develops and manages innovative solutions that enable businesses and local authorities to create new sources of motivation and loyalty for their employees. Among others, Accor Services offers a management tool enabling companies to meet their employees' needs in terms of information, psychological support and coaching, formative skills assessment and subsequent training of employees.

**Ibis partner Ltd.** is a German-Slovak private training and counselling company. It was established in Slovakia in 1992. The company transfers modern international trends and know-how in the field of enterprise development, training and development of top management and human resources in enterprises. Ibis partners Ltd. provides assessment, training and counselling to enterprises, personal counselling and coaching also in specific cases of career change and development, new assignments for employees etc.<sup>308</sup>

**PricewaterhouseCoopers** in the Slovak Republic provides human resource consulting to enterprises<sup>309</sup> The service *Training and Development Systems* includes an assessment of employees' potential, an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, and preparation of personal development plans. The company also performs a special evaluation method *Individual and Group Psychological Evaluation (Assessment Centre)*: evaluation of abilities, skills and qualities, using proven standardized psycho-diagnostic tests and questionnaires, together with a structured interview conducted by a qualified psychologist. The *Outplacement Program* provides advice and effective support to employees who are forced to leave their jobs due to company downsizing, organisational changes, etc. It provides an individual approach to employees in all working positions, an in-depth assessment of their professional opportunities and training in the skills necessary for gaining an appropriate working position.

There is no record of sectors' participation in the development of the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Slovakia. One of the reasons for such situation is an overall weak interest of social partners to debate on lifelong learning. Social dialogue in this field is formally established at the top level but is very weak when it comes to sector and enterprise level. Trade unions concentrate on the 'traditional' agenda of wages and working conditions bargaining. Analysis of collective agreements for the period of 1999-2003 indicated that social dialogue very rarely touched lifelong learning issues and is limited to indirect general proclamations<sup>310</sup>.

---

<sup>307</sup> <http://www.accorservices.sk/sk/abouttheorganization/anex/anex.asp>

<sup>308</sup> <http://www.ibispartner.sk/>

<sup>309</sup> <http://www.pwc.com/sk/slk/about/svcs/ghrs.html>

<sup>310</sup> Implementing Lifelong Learning Strategies in Europe: Progress report on the follow-up to the 2002 Council resolution. Reply to the Commission Questionnaire, December 2003, p.8.

One of 'active' sector actors in education and training issues in general is the Guild of Motor Vehicle Dealers and Services. The Guild contributed to a major VET curricula innovation for **the rapidly growing automotive industry** in Slovakia<sup>311</sup>. The industry's demand for qualified workers is growing and the industry may be well interested in exploring the potential for validation of informal and non-formal learning of its workforce.

#### **28.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

There is very little information available about the initiatives of the third sector in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning. The sector, including social partner organisations, is not in the forefront of the development of the system or in taking individual initiatives in the field (see above).

Tradesmen and entrepreneurs are organised in civil societies according to the law on Citizens' Association in various forms such as communities, guilds, associations etc., which operate on regional level or as professional associations. The **Slovak Small Business Chamber** was established to support development of small and medium sized enterprises (SME). It organises education and training, counselling and guidance for SME, cooperates with the education sector on curriculum development, practical training and final examination at secondary vocational schools, issues an opinion on certain businesses' execution, and organises qualification examination which test specific skills and competences for execution of business in handicraft industry or in selected crafts according to the Small Business Act (No.455/1991). For the latter it nominates the examination board members and prepares documentation for qualification tests to check professional theoretical knowledge and on-the-job training of technical or technological processes<sup>312</sup>.

Some organisations within the education and training sector have a non-governmental status. In certain cases apply elements of formative or summative assessment of prior learning. Such an example is **the Academy of Education** – an independent non-profit public association, it is an oldest institute in the field of training of adults in Slovakia with 37 branches throughout Slovakia. The Academy trains over 80 000 students each year. Over 14 000 students obtained accredited certificates valid in Slovakia<sup>313</sup>. It provides language courses and prepares for tests for internationally recognised certificates. It also holds the exclusive licence for the European Language Certificates. Most of language testing can be passed after a consultation with or without undergoing training.

The Academy of Education was also a partner on the Slovak side in the Leonardo da Vinci project ***Defining and assessing language skills for the workplace*** (2000-2002) coordinated by International Certificate Conference<sup>314</sup>. The project consortium developed a European

---

<sup>311</sup> Cedefop Info 3/2003.

<sup>312</sup> [http://www.szk.sk/menu\\_aj/activities.htm](http://www.szk.sk/menu_aj/activities.htm)

<sup>313</sup> <http://www.aveducation.sk/onas.php?id=1>; also see <http://www.gemeinsamlernen.de/euconet/Projects/Bratislava/academy?language=en>

<sup>314</sup> [www.saaic.sk/leonardo](http://www.saaic.sk/leonardo)

Inventory of work-related language skills applying the concept of portfolio and competence-based assessment in Slovakia and Romania based on the UK experience. The resulting materials are targeted at trainers as a training package on assessment of workers' competences in foreign languages.

The examination for the International Management Award run by the Academy of Education can be undertaken with or without prior training in the modular combined distance-attendance training course for low and middle management. The Academy also applies few elements of formative assessment in the training provision for groups at risk aimed at the improvement of their situation on the labour market.

### **28.5 Conclusions**

Although there are no systemic and legislative provisions for assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning in Slovakia, many efforts have been found in policy development. Recent policy documents suggest concrete steps in implementation of the system and assign responsibilities to relevant ministries.

The existing initiatives are mostly concentrated in the academic sector. Universities have been in the forefront of projects' implementation in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning. These projects were initiated in the framework of EU-funded programmes. Enterprises and sectors have not been active in this field so far. The record on implementation of the validation of informal and non-formal learning in the private sector is very scarce. The existing initiatives demonstrate only some aspects of the implementation as a result of transfer of the international know-how. The non-governmental sector, although takes an active part in discussion of lifelong learning policies, has not tackled the issue of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

No serious progress could be achieved without active involvement of social partners in the process. Social dialogue at all levels, especially at sector and enterprise level, needs to take the initiative in discussing with other actors implementation of the system. The process of decentralisation in Slovakia certainly opens a space for more active debate and actions at regional and local level in a joint effort of all relevant players.

The so far scarce efforts in implementing validation of informal and non-formal learning in Slovakia have been pushed by the policy debate and activities initiated from the European Union. It is crucial that actors at all levels in Slovakia verify the advantages of various approaches and recognize the actual needs of the country.

## **29.0 SLOVENIA**

*By Nataša Cvetek (BBJ Consult Inc. – Slovenia)*

### **29.1 Introduction**

The Slovenian education system has gone through many changes in the last 15 years, in particular following the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (1996). The reform of VET has taken into account life-long principle and established legal grounds for adult education, as well as for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

A new **National Vocational Qualification Act** introducing a certification system was passed in 2000. Preparation of the act including consensus building, among stakeholders and piloting of methodologies have been facilitated by support from the EU Phare programme. The Act enables the assessment and verification of vocation-related knowledge, skills and experiences acquired out of school. It makes it possible for individuals to obtain a vocational qualification in ways other than through formal schooling. Candidates undergo a knowledge assessment procedure by a special commission to obtain a state-approved certificate assessing their competence in performing certain vocational tasks. Vocational qualifications obtained in this way can be used by holders to find a job or, move into further training, demonstrating that part of an education programme has already been completed.

Several institutions and firms started implementing the certification system, which is already successful, even if still new. Along government initiatives, institutional participation in international projects and involvement of private sector in implementing certification, the third sector has already developed many ways of non-formal and informal education, but no system of validation of certification is available at this level.

As a new member of the European Union from the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2004, Slovenia aims to fully implement the Lisbon strategy, namely the objective of Life Long Learning. Therefore, in the framework of the European Social Fund, it will continue to develop the certification of non-formal and informal knowledge as a strategic tool for adult education, improved employability and better adaptability to labour market trends.

### **29.2 Review of existing initiatives : Public Sector**

This section describes national public sector initiatives on validation of non-formal and informal learning in Slovenia. Due to the small size of Slovenia, all initiatives by the public authorities in that field are decided and implemented at a national level. Sub-national public authorities don't have separate initiatives.

#### **29.2.1 Existing methods and instruments**

There is currently only one national and official system of recognition in place. The National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) is a working vocational or professional qualification, required for an occupation or an individual set of tasks within an occupation.

It can be obtained by achieving:

- vocational or professional education, or
- completing parts of educational programmes, or
- completing vocational training and advanced training programmes, or
- meeting the standards of professional knowledge and skills.

The basis for NVQ is the elaboration of occupational profiles and meeting relevant occupational standards.

### ***Assessment procedures***

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MoLFSA) is responsible for assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning and work experiences, in order to provide national recognised certificate.

The first step is the submission of a personal application to an authorised and registered organisation by MoLFSA.

On the job assessment and certification of individual is then carried out by a nominated commission (whose members must obtain a special licence from the National Examination Centre).

NVQ may be reached a) by certification - direct assessment of professional knowledge, skills and abilities determined in the catalogue or b) in school - on the basis of documents acquired in educational programmes.

The forms, duration of assessment and the composition of commission may be adapted to the persons with special needs.

#### *29.2.2 Legal framework*

The Adult Education Act regulates the normative basis of the adult education system, including the verification of non-formal and informal knowledge.

The National Vocational Qualification Act adopted in 2000<sup>315</sup> and the accompanying regulations<sup>316</sup> provide a legislative basis and framework for links between formal and informal education, one of the pre-conditions for implementing the concept of life-long learning. It introduces a certification system, which provides access to nationally recognised certificates for specific NVQ, enabling recognition of prior learning and experiences of adults. The text itself generally regulates the procedure, bodies and organisations competent for approving standards for selected qualifications as the basis for assessing and recognising prior and non-formal learning.

---

<sup>315</sup> *Official Journal of RS, No. 81/3708/2000*. It was amended in 2003.

<sup>316</sup> such as *The Regulation on Method and Procedure of Assessment and Certification of NVQ* (Official Journal of RS, No. 97-4339/2003) and *The Regulation on Procedure on Acquiring NVQ* (Official Journal of RS, No. 017-01-015/99-005), some of them currently revised

### 29.2.3 *Norms / standards setting*

Occupational standards, leading to NVQ, defines the code and the name of occupation, level of difficulty of work, competence, and field of work, main tasks, knowledge and skills. Qualification standards are prepared for the following levels: Lower vocational qualification/education (ISCED level 3C) / Middle vocational qualification/education (ISCED level 3C) / Middle technical qualification/education (ISCED level 3B) / Higher non-university technical qualification/education (ISCED level 5B).

The initiative for the new occupational standard may be given by anybody to the CPI, starting the preparation of the proposal. They must meet the following requirements: stability, long-lasting, widespread, appearance in different work situations, employability of significant number of people, comparability with occupations on foreign labour markets.

Development and modernisation of occupational standards in respective fields is the main task of nominated “field committee”, composed of the representatives of chambers, ministries and trade unions. It may also propose modification or development of new job profile, occupational standard or catalogue to the responsible chamber or ministry, who nominates expert group, responsible for statement on adjustment of proposal with national and EU legislation and with labour market demands.

After the positive opinion on the proposal by the expert board, the SSPIU submits it to the MoLFSA for approval.

The knowledge and skills required for acquiring NVQ are determined by a catalogue of standards for professional knowledge and skills. These catalogues, are needed for certification of NVQ, and are developed on the basis of the occupational standard.

The proposal for a catalogue is developed by the responsible chamber (or ministry for activities for which the chambers are not organised) or by CPI in close cooperation with professional and vocational associations and trade unions.

The initiative for the adaptation of catalogue of professional knowledge and skills may be proposed by anyone to the CPI, who decides on relevance of initiative.

Expert board, nominated by SSPIU, is responsible for coordination of the proposed catalogue in line with the established needs for vocational qualification, international comparability and compliance with the Slovene legal system and EU regulations. The proposed catalogue is then determined and published by the MoLFSA.

### 29.2.4 *Outputs and outcomes*

As of May 2004, based on the number of catalogues of professional knowledge and skills available, non-formal and informal knowledge could be validated for about 65 qualifications. Other data available (May 2004) show that:

- The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education has trained 180 assessors and 58 counsellors for APL (assessment of prior learning).
- More than 500 candidates went through this system (i.e. built up a portfolio containing evidence of non-formal and informal knowledge and skills) and successfully acquired a certificate.

Approaches, which take account of prior learning of learners, are promoted as part of the reform of the formal system, yet especially on secondary level there is little evidence of the impact of this in the classroom. Education institutions are still rather rigid in their behaviour and tend to rely on formal evidence when learners pass between the systems of work and learning, between different education systems or between different paths within the system. They seem to be reluctant to leave the responsibility to learners rather than take it on themselves.

Adopting the national law on vocational qualifications, requires education and training institutions to take certified qualifications in account when people undertake formal education and training paths. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning systems in Slovenia, is been recognised. This requirement is also taken into account in the most recent guidelines for the preparation of vocational education and training programmes; entering the programme is facilitated on the one hand for those with working experience and on the other hand for those who for some reason have left the system before achieving formal recognition and have acquired some certified marketable skill/qualification and thus increasing their employability.

#### *29.2.5 Limits*

- There is still a lack of connection between the system of NVQ and higher / further vocational education
- The NVQ are not included in the official Occupational Nomenclature (Nomenklatura poklicev) which is the basis for the official salary scale, as are other degrees and certificates gained through formal education.
- The system of marks / transferable credits is still missing, and therefore not in line with Europass, as it should be in the future.
- The role of trade unions should be increased for more transparency.



29.2.6 *Other interesting initiatives by the government for the validation of non-formal and informal learning*

It can be interesting to mention that public institutions are involved in initiatives aiming at recognising non-formal and informal learning, but only in some specific sectors.

1. The CPI (Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education) is taking part in a 2-year project financed by the EU programme Leonardo da Vinci and entitled “*Facilitating access to lifelong learning through the development of recognition procedure of non-formal and informal learning*”.

The project objective is to develop a package of tools, which would ensure an independent valuing of non-formal and informal learning in the target sector of retail trade, in order to recognise persons’ competencies, acquired during non-formal and informal learning in their working life.

2. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education is also involved in a project “*Assessment and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)*”.

This development project was established in order to set up a network for the accreditation of non-formal (prior) learning (APL). Namely, diverse types of knowledge which are acquired in non-formal ways; - either as a hobby (by self-education), or based on working experiences.

Owing to the fact that the drop-out rate from the Slovenian formal education system is fairly high, the APL system is expected to serve well. Until now certificates issued in a particular work organisation have not been transferable to new work environments - not even in the case of college degrees from higher education institutes.

The main APL project tasks will include evaluation of prior (non-formal) learning; preparation of standards of knowledge; non-formal knowledge/qualification; criteria for accreditation of evidence; training of advisors and assessors/evaluators.

### **29.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector**

#### *29.3.1 Industry sectors*

##### The example of the firm Krka and of the pharmaceutical sector

Along with in-house training, courses and workshops and training on the job, the firm KRKA was the first company to develop and start implementing 3 standards of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), i.e. certification of non-formal and informal learning valid at the national level:

- production of final products (in the pharmaceutical sector)
- production of raw products (in the pharmaceutical sector)
- logistics

The second pharmaceuticals company in Slovenia, the trade union confederation, the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI), the chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs were involved in developing the system.

These qualifications have been officially accepted by the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI), Trade Union Confederation, Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. As a result, NVQ's at Krka can not only be obtained by completing in-house training or attending in-house lectures (some 150-200) but crucially also by carrying out practical on the job training and then meeting the official standards in written and practical tests. About 100 workers have finished the in-house trainings on the job and lectures and haven been tested and verified by the special national group of evaluators.

Having built a strong network with the other Slovene firms from the pharmaceutical sector, Krka has been designated as the only institution habilitated to check and certify the NVQ for these 3 standards.

In 2005 the company is working (again, with other major Slovene pharmaceutical production company) to develop further three qualifications for production workers (level 1 employees). This training is dealing with automatic processing and IT. Krka is also thinking about expanding this system to staff working for Krka in branches abroad.

*The example of the Slovene Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GZS)*

The GZS has elaborated a system of "Chamber exams" for the validation and certification of non-formal and informal learning.

Standards for certification are prepared by the different professional associations that are organised within the GZS. However, there is only a control of the final knowledge, and not of the learning path.

These chamber exams are available for all qualifications / knowledge that cannot be included in the NVQ, for example:

- if the qualification is very limited/narrow and specific (e.g. safety in the work place)
- if the occupation is new for Slovenia and therefore only a limited number of people have acquired knowledge in that fields through non-formal and informal learning (real estate, accountancy for small companies...)

However, at the end of the procedure, the individual receives a letter of reference (and not an official certificate). This letter (and the qualifications indicated inside) can be recognised by all the firms that are members of the GZS (basically all firms working in Slovenia since the registration is compulsory). There is no automatic recognition and no official regulation. It means that a firm can also refuse to recognise this validation.

*The example of the Chamber of Craft*

The Chamber of Craft has started preparing 2 profiles of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), i.e. certification of non-formal and informal learning valid at the national level:

- for truck drivers
- for the people responsible for logistics in international freight / international truck traffic.

So far the Chamber has prepared information seminars, formal procedure of recognition, standards to be achieved and has proposed names for the Commission in charge of recognition. Implementation will start in the first half of 2004.

These 2 certificates were developed to certify the knowledge of people already working in that field for many years, but who didn't have any official recognition. In fact, to be line with an EU directive in this field, Slovenia, as a new member state, needed to establish a system of certificates in the field of international truck drivers.

*Common initiative by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Craft*

Alongside with their initiatives within the framework of NVQ, the two Chambers have developed another scheme for the recognition of non-formal and informal knowledge in the field of small catering (cooking, service, food safety...).

This certificate is needed if people wish to start an independent small catering business. Even though it has existed for more than 15 years, it is not yet recognised officially at the national level (it is not an NVQ). However, the two Chambers are planning to have it included in the NVQ system in the near future.

*The example of the Social Chamber*

This Chamber is responsible for all actors active in the field of social affairs. In 2000, it started implementing the certification of non-formal and informal knowledge for the qualification of "Social home carer". After a 2-year preparation phase, the first certificates were issues in 2003.

### *29.3.2 Individual companies*

Alongside with the activities undertaken by Krka (see 3.2.1. Industry sectors), the Ministry of Labour recorded, as from May 2004, 27 firms/institutions implementing this certification system in Slovenia.

These firms are mostly located in the capital town, Ljubljana, but also in other big towns such as Maribor, Celje, Novo Mesto, Nova Gorica (where the main actor is the Technical school centre) and Murska Sobota.

All fields of activities are represented. The two biggest companies are Krka (pharmaceuticals) and Elektro Slovenija –Eles (the only electric power transmission company in Slovenia). Additionally, 30 more firms / institutions are waiting for accreditation to become certification centre.

### **29.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector**

Several other initiatives were developed by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education together with local actors in the field of non-formal and informal learning, but even though they receive financial support from the Slovene state (Ministry of Education, National employment Agency...), the knowledge acquired is not officially recognised nor validated:

- Centres for self-directed learning are active (*središča za samostojno učenje*).
- The Learning Exchange (*borza znanja*).
- Study Circles (*študijski krožki*).
- Folk universities
- Project Learning for Young Adults (*Projektno učenje za mlade*) who dropped out of school;
- A literacy programme Training for Life Efficiency (*Usposabljanje za življensko uspešnost*).
- Programmes developed within the University of the Third Age.

### **29.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities**

In the last 15 years, the Slovene government has undertaken an in-depth reform of the Slovenian education system, in particular following the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (1996).

This reform of VET has established legal grounds for adult education, as well as for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

A new **National Vocational Qualification Act** introducing a certification system was passed in 2000, enabling the assessment and verification of vocation-related knowledge, skills and experiences acquired out of school.

As a new member of the European Union and in the framework of the European Social Fund, it will continue to develop the certification of non-formal and informal knowledge as a strategic tool for adult education, improved employability and better adaptability to labour market trends.

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is responsible for defining national policy on education, science and sport.
- The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MoLFSA) is responsible for the certification system. It prepares relevant legislation, methodologies, approves occupational standards, nominates the commissions for certification of NVQs, etc.
- The National Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (Strokovni svet RS za poklicno izobraževanje - SSPIU) is mainly responsible for proposing the catalogues of standards for professional knowledge and skills to the MoLFSA, adopting the methodology of these catalogues, offering expert assistance and proposing training programmes for obtaining licence for assessors.
- The 2 Chambers (Chamber of Commerce and Industry / Chamber of Craft ) and responsible ministries (for activities for which chambers are not organised) are responsible for drafting the proposals for catalogues of standards for professional knowledge and skills, proposing the members of assessment and certification commissions, providing the conditions for the assessment and certification, and proposing necessary changes to the catalogues.
- The Center for Vocational Education (CPI – Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje) is responsible for advisory and expert work in the development of NVQ standards and in the formation of catalogues of professional knowledge and skills. It has established the National Information Centre for Vocational Qualifications, which offers information on vocational and professional education, certification system, education programmes, occupational standards, catalogues of professional knowledge and skills, etc. It operates in close cooperation with the Employment Service of Slovenia, Statistical Office of Slovenia, Slovenian Adult Education Centre and other expert national and international organisations.
- The National Examination Centre (Državni izpitni center) is responsible for developing methodologies for assessment and certification of standards for professional knowledge and skills, organising the training for assessors and members of certification commissions, awarding licences and monitoring the work of members of assessment and certification commissions.
- The organisation of assessment and certification of NVQ is carried out by registered institutions as chambers, schools, enterprise education centres, and other types of organisation, determined by the catalogue of knowledge and skills.
- The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (Andragoški Center Republike Slovenije ) and the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (Center Republike Slovenije za poklicno izobraževanje) have been set up by the government to provide expertise for decisions taken by the National Councils (respectively National Council of Experts for VET and for Adult Education), monitor pilot projects, offer consulting services, organise the in-service training of teachers and design methodologies for writing books.

- For the time being, the Slovene Labour Unions have not been much involved in the certification process, which has been presented as one of the most important weaknesses of the system. Aware of this gap, the government aims at improving the situation in the future, while at the same time, the labour unions will also increase their expertise in the field, so as to be able to express their right of opinion and orientation in this specific field.
- Most employer organisations are in favour of the certification system, which is seen as a benefit for both the employers (evaluation of the skills of their work force) and of the employees (improvement in employability and self-esteem through validation of knowledge). In some sectors (for example pharmaceuticals), employers organisations have been leaders in implementing the certification system, which they see as a new important tool to manage human resources through increased employability, adaptability and flexibility of the work force.

## **29.6 Conclusions**

The procedure for standards setting and assessment of prior learning is now in place since 2000, several standards have already been established for more than 60 National Vocational Qualifications and about 500 workers have already been certified through this new procedure.

The certification of prior informal and non-formal learning has not yet been widely applied in Slovenia. A major obstacle is formed by the formal regulations that govern access to education and jobs. Further development of assessment and recognition of prior learning therefore will be largely dependent on overall educational and labour market reforms.

However, increasingly, public institutions, companies, public researchers and other relevant institutions have been concerned with the need to unveil the hidden knowledge many workers have acquired in the course of their work experience. So far, employer organisations, adult education institutions and the MoLFSA have been the main protagonists of certification of prior informal learning. While currently this interest is mainly driven by cost and efficiency concerns, the ongoing debates about lifelong learning for all may provide additional incentives to make further progress. The Ministry of Education will have to secure equality of access to education and the implementation of the Lisbon objectives. There is an increased readiness to be informed about developments in other member states, yet recognition of prior learning is perhaps not among the first priorities of educational reform policies.

In view of the current situation, no radical changes are to be expected. There will be gradual development, building on what has been achieved so far. In the next years, the focus will be put on widening the number of qualifications for which non-formal and informal knowledge can be certified, as well as on finding solutions to overcome some limits that already appear in the current system, such as:

- *the lack of connection with higher / further vocational education*
- *the non-inclusion of the NVQ in the official salary scale.*
- *The non-transferability at the European level.*
- *The weak role of trade unions*

## **30.0 SPAIN**

*By Mencia de Lemus (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

### **30.1 Introduction**

Spain, as the other EU Mediterranean countries, has a positive attitude towards the introduction of systems and methodologies to validate informal learning. This favourable attitude is observed both at a public and private level, which are aware of how this type of learning is positive and valuable for the professional potential of a certain worker.

During the past years, Spain has given impulse to initiatives that seek the recognition or even the validation of informal and non-formal learning. EU encouragement has been very positive, and, the Leonardo and Grundvning actions, within the Socrates programme, has stimulated partnerships and ideas that are gradually being established in Spain.

From the public administration side, the reform of the vocational training system is giving impulse in general to all that concerns professional skills and workers. The inclusion of the social actors in the public initiatives, which is an automatic practice at present, either fixed by law, as in the case of the Law on Qualifications and Vocational Training, or by Convention, such as the Tripartite Agreements for Continuing Training, is very positive, as it guarantees a social acceptance of this initiatives, which will also be more likely to be closer to the employment market.

In the following document, we will synthesise the different initiatives coming from the different sectors, on recognition and validation of non formal and informal learning<sup>317</sup>. As we will see in this section, there are a number of initiatives towards establishing methodologies for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning in Spain. Although there are most probably a number of initiatives that are put in place in the private sector, it is extremely difficult to gather information about them, as there is no visible effort to disseminate these experiences. We will therefore base our brief report on those initiatives that have gone through an effort of publicity. These are the initiatives which are encouraged or financed by the public sector. This encouragement takes place in three different contexts:

- Initiatives done at a central administration level, among which the system that is being established based on the Law for Qualifications and Vocational Training, opens the possibility of obtaining a recognition of this type of learning at a national, official level.
- Initiatives done within the context of the EU Socrates Programme (Leonardo and Grundtvig).

---

<sup>317</sup> We are grateful for INCUAL's contributions to this chapter.

- Initiatives undertaken within the calls for proposals for complementary and accompanying measures to training, which are financed by the Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs.

We will describe the existing initiatives from the public, private and third sectors below.

## **30.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public Sector**

### *30.2.1 National System of Qualifications*

The Law on Qualifications and Vocational Training (Ley Orgánica 5/2002 de 19 de junio, de las Cualificaciones y la Formación Profesional), of 19<sup>th</sup> June 2002, has, as main objective, to create a National System for Qualifications and Vocational Training that will give unity, coherence and effectiveness to the planning, systematisation and administration of the qualifications and vocational training. This way, the different ways of accreditation and certification of competencies and professional qualifications, obtained through formal, non formal or informal ways, will be integrated. This law, therefore, opens the way to set a system that will lead to the official recognition of non formal and informal learning.

The system designed by the Law will therefore assess and officially accredit professional skills, obtained by any means, through a process of identification, evaluation, accreditation and register of professional qualifications. This will be done with the creation of the National Catalogue for Vocational Qualifications.

The National Catalogue for Vocational Qualifications is the tool that systematises the qualifications that have been identified in the productive system and establishes, through a catalogue of modules, the training that is associated to those qualifications, attending to the requirements for employment.

The Catalogue, therefore, establishes the framework for the professional certificates and titulations that will form the training offer, and establishes the framework for the assessment, recognition and accreditation of the professional skills obtained through the professional experience or non formal learning. This accreditation will be valid for the whole of Spain.

The organisation of the qualifications in the catalogue is done by dividing them in professional families, attending to affinity criteria of the professional skills and adopting the model used in the initial vocational training and the continuing vocational training, in order to organise the certificates of vocational training and the certificates of professionalism.

Qualifications are structured in the Catalogue as units of competency, which are the minimal units that can be recognised and accredited and that relate both to the specific skills that are needed for a certain profession, and those needed for a correct professional performance.

The National Institute for Qualifications is the organism responsible for the elaboration and updating of the catalogue. It will count on the participation of the different levels of the administration and social actors (trade unions and employers associations), as well as



stakeholders of the different productive sectors, that will give their input for the elaboration of the modules that concern the professional families related to the professions developed on their sectors.

Following the mandate established in the Law, the Royal Decree 1128/2003 of 5/September/2003, regulates the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications, and finally, the Royal Decree 295/2004 of 20/February/2003 establishes the first set of professional qualifications to be included in the Catalogue, and their correspondent training modules which are also included in the Catalogue.

The evaluation and accreditation of professional competences obtained through professional experience or non formal learning will have the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications as point of reference and will be done taking into account a criteria that will guarantee:

- Reliability
- Objectivity
- Technical rigour of the assessment.

The recognition of professional competences assessed through this means, when they do not complete the qualifications that are included in a vocational training title or professional certificate, will be done through a partial accumulable accreditation, with the objective of completing the training that is needed to obtain a certain certificate or title.

Works on establishing a system of validation on non formal and informal learning within this context are ongoing. At present, the National Institute for Qualifications has developed a working document which is considered as the basis for the validation system.

The main characteristics of the recognition of competencies have been pointed out in this working document, such as the necessity of a framework which allows to identify the content of the competencies to be recognised, to guarantee the legitimacy and credibility of the actors participating in this process, to recognise what the person already knows and to complete the competencies still not acquired and to promote the ongoing learning.

According to this working document, the procedure for assessment, recognition, validation and registration, which is directly linked to the development of the National Qualification Catalogue, is based on some principles, such as: the recognition of the valuable diversity of significant learning experience and its achievements; the improvement of the employability from a perspective of promoting the values of lifelong learning; the prioritisation of the development of support and guiding systems to candidates; the flexibility in the use of assessment methods and its instruments; and the accumulation and assessment of learning acquired through vocational training.

The main objectives of this procedure are: to improve the quality and therefore the opportunities of employment of people; to develop the most effective competencies of workers and companies to adapt to technological and organisational changes; to promote ongoing learning; to capitalise the knowledge and competencies acquired in society; to

improve the effectiveness of vocational training subsystems; to improve the labour market transparency; to constitute itself as a professional scheme to validate professional competencies; and to provide a relevant information about the quality of validation criteria.

There are some pillars that have supported the elaboration of this procedure. Among these pillars, the following aspects can be highlighted:

- The evidence of competencies and its evaluation, defined as information that allows to witness the acquisition of professional competencies and to evaluate them in order to probe that these competencies are accorded to the requirements established for the correspondent professional qualification.
- The quality principles (validity, reliability, equity, impartiality, independence, integrity and accessibility), which must be present during all the procedure, aim to guarantee the credibility of this procedure.
- This procedure must recognise the importance of the equivalence between formal, non-formal and informal learning.
- The information, orientation and preparation services of this procedure are essential to overtake the obstacles and traditional barriers to the recognition of non formal and informal learning.
- This procedure must adopt a social construction approach in order to integrate the different interests, perceptions, motivations and attitudes of the different actors.

As the system is still in its initial phase, is it too soon to give any assessment on its effectiveness.

### *30.2.2 ERA Pilot Project*

The ERA project is a pilot project that has tested the assessment, recognition and accreditation of competencies gained through professional experience, or through non formal and informal ways of learning. This project is interesting as it is a pilot that has used for the first time, the units of competency that form the different certificates of formal vocational training, and professional certificates, while the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications was being created.

The project was undertaken in 2003 by the Minister of Education, Culture and Sports, with the participation of the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, through the National Institute for Employment, Social actors and Autonomous Communities.

Beneficiaries of this project are workers that have professional competencies that are not officially accredited and that have a correspondence with some of the aforementioned Units of Competencies (Unidades de Competencia).

Professional experience must be demonstrable through documents.

In order to ease the follow up of the project, it has been concentrated on a limited number of Autonomous Regions, in each of them doing the pilot accreditation experience of one or two occupations each.

The most significant results obtained with the application of the ERA Projects are the following:

- The project was correctly applied in all the Autonomous Regions
- The project was accessible for most of the candidates that took part in the process. In this sense, 90% of the candidates obtained a positive result (77% of them obtained a complete qualification while 12% a partial qualification).
- Due to the ERA Project, the importance of the welcomed and orientation mechanisms and instruments has been recognised.
- The project has marked the importance of taking into account evaluation groups, integrated by members from all the learning areas.
- The project has shown the acceptance of “translating” the competitive references to the evaluation process, contextualising the criteria of professional realisation.
- The project has also pointed out the importance of mechanisms used by candidates, guides and evaluators.
- The project has finally contributed to the creation of the framework for effective cooperation between Autonomous Regions and the National Administration.

However, some measures have been proposed in order to improve the ERA Project:

- To boost the diffusion of the advantages of the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.
- To create an incentive framework that may allow a better participation of small and medium size enterprises.
- To use the validation as a means to promote lifelong learning
- To increase the level of qualifications for guides and evaluators.
- To solve the problem of co-ordination between the time of orientation and evaluation with the time of production of companies and workers.
- To improve the framework of collaboration and cooperation established in the Autonomous Regions and to integrate into it the social agents.

### *30.2.3 Other public initiatives*

Although we have just seen the most notorious initiatives coming from the central public administration, there are also other initiatives that work towards the recognition and validation of non formal and informal learning. In this sense, and from a regional perspective, some regions are developing validation practices while the National Catalogue for Vocational Qualifications is elaborated. Based on the principles and method of the ERA Project, they are implementing the validation practices on an experimental basis for certain titles. Today, six regions (País Vasco, Cataluña, Madrid, Navarra, Castilla la Mancha y Comunidad Valenciana) have already set up such mechanisms which have a temporary character, until the Law on Qualifications and Vocational Training will be developed.

From a wider perspective, we can also outline the co-ordinated effort that the different EU countries are doing within the context of the CEDEFOP, on an ambitious project on the issue.

Some regions are developing validation practices, based on the principles and method of the ERA project, implementing them on an experimental basis, for certain titles. Today three regions have already set up such mechanisms which have a temporary character, until the Law on Qualifications and V.T. (see above) will be developed in the next regions: País Vasco, Cataluña, Comunidad Valenciana, Castilla la Mancha, Navarra and Madrid.

### **30.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

As mentioned before, efforts of the private sector to recognise competencies acquired through non formal or informal learning are difficult to spot, as they are not given publicity. It could be due to an idea that it is the administration, through its National System of Qualifications who is responsible for doing an official system. Nevertheless, multiple informal practices can be noticed in the management policies and methods of managing the workforce (in particular at the time of recruiting workers<sup>318</sup>).

Examining the initiatives from the private sector that have been undertaken in the context of the call for proposals for complementary and accompanying measures to training or within the Leonardo or Grundtvig actions (Socrates Programme), we can find sectoral initiatives at national level, e.g. from the Spanish Association for welding and union technologies, from the National Federation of Food, Beverage and Tobacco, and from the Spanish Confederation of Young entrepreneurs, initiatives at regional level e.g. from the Federation of Chemical companies from Aragón, or on a more individual basis, such as the Institute of Theatre of Barcelona (Institut del Teatre de la Diputació de Barcelona), the Technological Institute of Castilla y León, among others. These initiatives are done towards the validation of skills obtained through different means, and have different levels of development of methodologies to do so.

It is also worth mentioning in this context the CAST project, put in place by the Hotel sector of Playa de Palma, in Mallorca. This project is an effort to homogenise competences in the sector, at European and International level, and to combat the problem of lack of formal competences of workers of a certain age, which have obtained their competences throughout their professional life and need to see them validated. One of the outcomes of the project is a guide for the validation of non-formal and informal competences in the hotel sector.

As mentioned before, Trade Unions and Employers Organisations are also present in the process of elaboration of the National Catalogue of Qualifications.

Apart from this important role, these social actors have also had a number of initiatives towards the validation of informal and non formal learning, such as elaboration of guides for the accreditation of professional competencies, undertaken by UGT (trade Union), and a project, also done by UGT that designs, tests and gives feedback to a model for the accreditation of professional competencies within a company.

---

<sup>318</sup> “Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Spain”, CEDEFOP 2000

The employer organisation of Cataluña (SEFES has a pilot experience on validation of the system in the electronic sector in 4 regions.

Other experiences exist in different associations such as the Association for the Lifelong Learning of Adults, and the Research Centre on the Education of Adults, of the University of Barcelona, who are partners in the Grundtvig project APEL (Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning), the Fondo Formación Fondo Empleo, who co-ordinates a Grundtvig project on the development of tools for the valorisation, development and mobility of competencies gained through informal learning, or the Fundación General of the University of Valladolid, that has developed tools for the Validation of competencies, in a project financed by the INEM in the context of the accompanying and complementary measures to training. Other and associations have also different experiences related to the issue we are analysing e.g. Galician Foundation for Training and Employment.

All of these initiatives can be placed, in relation to the Law on Qualifications and Vocational Training, as parallel efforts, towards the validation of formal and informal learning. Nevertheless, it has to be said that these projects have a minor role as a contribution to the official system that is being established in Spain for the recognition of informal and non formal learning, although sometimes the procedures establishes in them are very similar to the ones established with the Law.

We can outline that there are some common aspects in these projects: mainly there are three key efforts:

- An effort towards the recognition or analysis of the new skills or new training needs that are being needed in some sectors of the economy;
- An effort towards a validation, at European level, of certain trainings or certain skills as valid to undertake certain professions
- An effort to draw guides or methodologies for recognising and validating informal learning within a sector of the economy.

Several of these projects are very interesting as they develop a know-how in the field of recognition and assessment of non formal and informal learning which is a relatively new field for Spain. Among the projects we can mention several Grundtvig projects on the accreditation or assessment of Prior Experiential Learning, and a Leonardo project that seeks validation of previously acquired business skills,

### ***30.4 Review of existing initiatives: The Third Sector***

Although the Leonardo Programme is mainly oriented towards youth, there are not many initiatives regarding validation of informal and non formal learning coming from the youth or voluntary sector.

On the first phase of the Leonardo Programme, the project VALIDE developed a method on validating previously acquired business skills at European level. This project had as co-ordinator, the Spanish Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs (CEAJE).

Different institutions (technological institutes, entrepreneurs' associations, trade unions) have presented several projects in the period 2000-2004 within the framework of the Leonardo Programme. These projects have aimed to prepare procedures and systems to recognise, evaluate and certify the competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. For the present year 2005, new initiatives have given priority to the certification of non-formal and informal learning.

The INJUVE (Youth Institute), which is the organism that centralises actions or policies undertaken on the youth sector, does not consider the validation issue in any of its programmes. However, it authorises some organisations to issue certificates for trainers for leisure time. These organisations issue a non formal certificate, which allows trainers, for instance, to work with children. As the Youth Institute is aware that these certificates are not enough, they have contacted the INCUAL (Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones) to ask for a definition of this qualifications so that they can be validated within the new Law. The Youth Council (Consejo de la Juventud) does not have any line either.

Apart from some initiatives that would come from Universities (Fundación General of the University of Valladolid, Research Centre on Adult Education of the University of Barcelona, Deusto University, Granada University), but that does not necessarily imply that there is an implication of the youth sector, and the mentioned VALIDE project, there are no initiatives to be outlined.

#### *30.4.1 Public/private/third sector partnership initiatives*

These initiatives are financed by FORCEM, the Foundation for the Continuing Training. These Accompanying Measures to Training are studies that help some industrial sectors in which learning has a great importance, especially in those areas where it is very hard to find accredited workers. These experiences ask for, within the framework of the National System for Qualifications and Vocational Training, the development of a credible procedure of recognition and certification of professional competences acquired through professional experience.

#### *30.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities*

As the National System for Certifications is both for the recognition and validation of non formal and informal learning and certification of vocational training, responsibilities on the system refer to both of them:

##### *30.5.1 Central administration*

The Central administration is responsible for the regulation and co-ordination of the National System for Qualifications and Vocational Training, without prejudice of the competences that correspond to the Autonomous Communities (regions) and social actors.

The government, after consultation with the General Council for Vocational Training, will establish the procedures and requisites for the evaluation and accreditation of competencies, and their effects.

#### *30.5.2 General Council for Vocational Training*

Is a consultative institution with institutional representation of both the public administration and social actors. It assesses the government on vocational training affairs, without prejudice of the competences of the School State Council. It belongs to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

#### *30.5.3 National Institute for Qualifications*

Is the technical institution that supports the General Council for Vocational Training and is responsible for the definition, elaboration and updating of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications and its correspondent Catalogue of Vocational Training Modules.

#### *30.5.4 Public companies, Chambers of Commerce, Universities and private companies*

These stakeholders are asked to help in the elaboration of the system by identifying and updating the needs of qualifications, as well as their definitions and the required training to obtain them. There will be established procedures for collaboration and consultation with the different productive sectors and with social actors.

### **30.6 Conclusions**

In Spain, according to all the previous studies undertaken on the issue, there is an enormous potential for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. At present, the main initiative is the one undertaken within the context of the Law on Qualifications and Vocational Training. The development of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications is being done at present so we will still have to wait to be able to assess the experience.

The conclusions of the ERA Project have been already highlighted. However, some reflection deserves to be done concerning this subject. ERA represents an initial step that has made available, for the first time, relevant data to justify empirically the development of a procedure to recognise and evaluate non-formal and informal learning, including working experience. However, more research is needed in order to:

- To determine capacities parameters in the administration of the evaluation, recognition and certification of informal and non-formal learning procedure.
- To study and analysis the professional orientation of guides and evaluators.
- To analysis the affected actors.
- To create a confident scenario that can facilitate the validation of the results achieved through informal and non-formal means.
- To elaborate sectorial evaluation studies of the impact of the recognition of competences in enterprises and workers, identifying priority sectors for action.

As mentioned, this great experience of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications represents the great official public initiative. This leaves the rest of the initiatives as less important in impact and number of beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the initiatives done in the private sector are important as they outline an increasing interest of Spain in recognising skills that have been obtained through informal and non formal means. This growing interest could be influenced by the growing importance that is given at European policy level, to lifelong learning, and the existence, in Spain of an important group of population that would benefit from the recognition of competencies that have not been obtained through the traditional formal way.

It is difficult to find information on private experiences, which reveals a lack of interest of disseminating different practices (be them formal or informal), which are developed in the private or third sector. This, could be seen as a situation in which, in the private sector, a knowledge of the importance of this type of learning but there is no real interest on institutionalising official practices to validate it. Or, the private sector, relies on the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications Project, as being the official system to validate informal and non formal learning. On the other hand, and although the public sector has financed, through the resources devoted to the development of complementary and accompanying measures to training, some experiences on the field, the main action in the political agenda of the government, regarding the validation of skills obtained through non formal and informal learning, is the development with the National Catalogue of Qualifications.



## 31.0 SWEDEN

By Vasilios Nikitas (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)

### 31.1 Introduction

In the same way as in the other Nordic countries (Cedefop, 2000) policies are aimed at the development of methods and systems for validation of competences, form part an overall lifelong learning strategy. *Kunskapslyftet* (1997) was the first major initiative in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning paving the way for many of the projects we are seeing today. A survey in 2001 showed that 67% of Sweden's municipalities had been involved in validation projects.<sup>319</sup>

In a government report validation is defined as, “a process of structured judgement, valuation, documentation and acknowledgement of knowledge and competence that a person possesses no matter how these were acquired”.<sup>320</sup> In the same report it is advised that the educational sphere (public) together with the industrial relations partners (social partners), should share the responsibility for developing a solid validation methodology. Considering the limited resources of the municipalities the report continues by recommending stronger regional co-operation, where the responsibility should be shared between different actors<sup>321</sup>.

According to the Ministry of Education (2003), almost 8000 individuals (300 with foreign background) were “validated” in 2000. The total time spent in validation process is estimated to match around 70 000 weeks of study corresponding roughly to a mean of 9 weeks per head.<sup>322</sup>

### 31.2 Existing Initiatives: Public Sector

#### 31.2.1 National

In line with recommendations included in the Communication by the Ministry of Education<sup>323</sup> the Government post 2004 created a “Validation delegation” (*Valideringsdelegationen*<sup>324</sup>) to initiate and organise different actions, aimed at increasing the credibility of the validation process for the adult population.

---

<sup>319</sup> RTP Stockholms Län ([www2.ab.lst.se/tillvaxtavtal/pdf/RTP\\_jan\\_2004.pdf](http://www2.ab.lst.se/tillvaxtavtal/pdf/RTP_jan_2004.pdf))

<sup>320</sup> “Validering m.m. – fortsatt utveckling av vuxnas lärande”, Ministry of Education (Ds. 2003:23)

<sup>321</sup> For instance Business Sector Organisations, Universities and Municipalities.

<sup>322</sup> “National policies and practices in validation of non-formal and informal learning”, D. Colardyn and J. Bjornavold (2004)

<sup>323</sup> DSs. 2003:23, [http://utbildning.regeringen.se/propositionermm/ds/2003/ds\\_2003\\_23.pdf](http://utbildning.regeringen.se/propositionermm/ds/2003/ds_2003_23.pdf)

<sup>324</sup> [www.valideringsdelegationen.se](http://www.valideringsdelegationen.se)

The key task of the Delegation will be to create a more coherent and adaptable methodology when using the validation instrument, no matter whether the actor is from the public, private or “third” sector. The Delegation’s task will run until 2007 and will have SEK 60 million (€6.6 million) at their disposal for fulfilling its aims.

### 31.2.2 *Sub-national*

“The Validation Centre of Gothenburg”<sup>325</sup>; which is part of GR<sup>326</sup>. Has been developing validation methodologies and offering “validation processes”. The Centre is currently offering validation in the following sectors and occupations:

- **Health:** nurse assistant (*undersköterska*),
- **Construction:** bricklayer, site worker, wood/concrete construction skills,
- **Technology and Production:** workshop engineering, welder and electrician,
- **Business:** business administration.

The validation process includes three steps: i) review of work experiences, ii) during a week the person’s knowledge and competences are assessed by an adviser, who ‘shadows’ the person at work and iii) the person executes the task that he/she has chosen to be “validated” on under the supervision of the adviser and the vocational teacher. The duration of the validation process varies from 1 to 8 weeks depending on the sector.

"The Validation Project" (*Valideringsprojektet*) from Stockholm is another example of a regional project, which in this case is aimed at validating prior knowledge and skills of unemployed people. The project started in February 2004 and covers 30 municipalities in Stockholm and Södertälje. The project is led by Botkyrka municipality which has been providing validation services to unemployed people, as one of their active labour market policies, since 2001.

The Project has helped 500 unemployed people to get their skills and prior learning recognised. The project is a two-step process for the participants. At first they enter a three week initial assessment period during which the participants will;

- with the help of the project assistants, carry out a self-assessment of their own skills, experiences and prior learning;
- identify the line of work they would like to do;
- assess the skills they require to obtain a job in that field<sup>327</sup>; and
- spend one or two days in a local vocational school to help analyse whether they have made a realistic assessment of their skills.

---

<sup>325</sup> *Valideringscentrum i Göteborg*, [www.validering.goteborg.se/](http://www.validering.goteborg.se/)

<sup>326</sup> Co-operation between 13 municipalities in West Sweden (860 000 inhabitants)

<sup>327</sup> This assessment is enabled through the project's close co-operation with 30 different (bipartite) sectoral organisations who have outlined the skills required to acquire a job in their sector.

The second phase of the project includes a one-month work placement during which the skills of the participants are assessed in practice. At the end of the placement, the participants receive a diploma outlining their relevant skills and another diploma summarising the skills they are still lacking. The former diploma is aimed at potential employers, and the latter at jobcentres and vocational schools. A project evaluation is due to be ready in the beginning of 2006, but the mid-term results indicate just over 50 per cent of the project participants have found sustainable employment fairly soon after the project. The project differs from the majority of validation projects in the country with its close links to sectoral organisations

Furthermore, the Utbildingscentrum Tjön has developed a methodology to validate non-formal learning taking place in the workplace. Starting from the realisation that not all students learn equally well in a school environment. Many subjects required for the high school leaving diploma can be learned while working. The Utbildingscentrum Tjön developed the “Workplace education” system (FSG-System) which allows pupils to spend 3 days working – unpaid – in a business in order to accumulate the necessary credits, to be awarded the high school leaving diploma. Only the core subjects Swedish, Mathematics and English are taken in school. Under the supervision of a “hand leader”, the pupil learns the required skills at the most suitable individual speed. While competences are set, methods and succession of learning is flexible. The assessment takes place externally by the so-called pedagogical leader from the local Utbildingscentrum who is an expert in the educational standards to be achieved. The assessment of the student’s achievements relies on the hand leader. Grades and credits to be awarded are discussed between the hand leader, the pedagogical leader and the student. Once the necessary number of credits has been accumulated, the pupil is awarded the high school diploma. Due to the flexibility of the Swedish school system, the pedagogical leader can award credits for a wide range of competences acquired in a variety of settings, as long as verification of these skills is being done by a third party (i.e. not the student or their parents).

### *31.2.3 Higher Education*

One university that has experimented with various approaches to validation of *reell kompetens* (“real competences”) is the University of Malmö. Currently a project is targeting nursery assistants (*barnskötare*) with previous university experience, is in its second year and will continue until 2006.

The requirement is that the person will have been credited with at least 40 credits (*poäng*) at higher education level, and then also credited with 40 further credits due to their previous work experience within a nursery. Ensuring, the person fulfils the requirement of 80 credits, needed for acceptance onto *Särskild Lärarutbildning* (“Special teacher programme”).<sup>328</sup> The programme (60 credits) leads to a university degree for teaching at a nursery and/or primary school.<sup>329</sup>

---

<sup>328</sup> [http://www.lut.mah.se/ruc/utv\\_2002.asp](http://www.lut.mah.se/ruc/utv_2002.asp)

<sup>329</sup> A requirement is that the person works part time at a nursery/primary school during the degree.

Malmö University has developed a specific methodology for validating the practical skills, nursery assistants have gained at work. The key issues highlighted in the validation process could be traced back to the curriculum of the introductory university courses<sup>330</sup> and their aims. The validation process includes tasks which need to be completed individually or within a group, in a report or in a seminar. By this process the examiners receive the required information to judge, value and confirm the nursery assistant's competence, in relation to the aims of the course.

A target group of 110 individuals were identified with the help of a questionnaire, this was sent to the three districts of Sweden.<sup>331</sup> The programme has so far had three rounds of admission and the last group will start this autumn. Currently, 45 of the 48 nursery assistants who have completed the whole process<sup>332</sup> have received university credits for their previous work experience.

### **31.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector**

One recent initiative that combines key actors from the industry, social partners and the public sector is *Kunskapshusen* ("The Houses of Knowledge").<sup>333</sup> This initiative includes ABB (Sweden), Skandia, *Metallindustriarbetareförbundet* ("Trade union for metal workers") and Lernia<sup>334</sup>, who all own, a similar share of the organisation. Since November 2003 they have offered welders the opportunity to participate in a one-day training course and gain a CNC Certificate. Currently, *Kunskapshusen* is offering three different types of certificates (green, blue and black) dependent on the employee's previous expertise in the field.

One of the key selling points for *Kunskapshusen* when offering their service, is the small amount of time required for the course, the organisation has put a strong emphasis on developing a strong and credible methodology. This was developed through close consultation with a network of industrial companies in the sector. The test consists of both a theoretical and a practical part, which includes answering questions on 14 different subject areas (theoretical) and the production of three details (practical).

Since the start of the programme over 160 people, have participated in the course and a further 700 are planning to attend in the near future. *Kunskapshusen* is planning to expand their services by offering certification courses in the maintenance of production equipment, as well as for plastics and moulding.

---

<sup>330</sup> *Att bli lärare* ("To become a teacher") (10 Credits) and *Utveckling och lärande* ("Development and teaching") (10 Credits)

<sup>331</sup> Skåne, Blekinge och Halland

<sup>332</sup> For further information see [www.lut.mah.se/utbildning/validering/](http://www.lut.mah.se/utbildning/validering/)

<sup>333</sup> [www.kunskapshusen.com](http://www.kunskapshusen.com)

<sup>334</sup> Lernia is a publicly owned company that is engaged in vocational learning skills ([www.lernia.se](http://www.lernia.se))

### **31.4 Conclusions**

The experiences from *Kunskapslyftet*, and in particular the importance of making the best use of resources at local and regional level, have provided important input to the validation strategy which the Ministry of Education presented in its Communication in 2003. At this stage, the Communication does not suggest the introduction of legal framework supporting and regulating validation of non-formal and informal learning. Instead, a number of practical and budgetary proposals have been made (e.g. *Valideringsdelegationen*), aimed at a systematic development of methods and systems. The lack of legal proposal conflicts with the expectations of the 2001 preparatory proposal on validation<sup>335</sup>.

Finally, those responsible for Swedish adult education, training and learning will increasingly have to consider how a synergy between the diversity of learning provisions and provider's best can be achieved. Two important conclusions are:

- Policies on adult education, training and learning must increasingly focus on how in-house and work based learning can be better co-ordinated with public adult education and training provisions; and
- How to link formal and non-formal learning closer together.

The recent assignment of *Valideringsdelegationen* and emerging validation initiatives that involves partners from different sectors (e.g. *Kunskapshusen*) indicates an increasing awareness of the benefits of cross-border co-operation and could lead to a common methodological framework being created.

### **31.5 Stakeholders' responsibilities**

In the Communication by the Ministry of Education it was outlined that the responsibility for validation in Sweden should be shared between the educational system and the industrial actors. However, the Communication accepts that the support for establishing a single comprehensive system for validation is currently lacking from the relevant actors, especially from the business community. Below follows a brief discussion on the key stakeholders and their respective roles.

#### **31.5.1 Swedish Government**

The importance the Swedish Government attaches to the concept of validation has increased since the mid-1990s, as can be seen through the various initiatives such as *Kunskapslyftet* and a plethora of projects related to the integration of foreigners. The Lisbon process, which aims to increase the employment level within Member States, has also acted as a catalyst. The added importance given to validation by the Government could also explain why the Swedish labour market does not rely to the same extent as the other Member States on formal education and/or "regulated" occupations<sup>336</sup>.

---

<sup>335</sup> "Validering av vuxnas kunskap och kompetens", SOU 2001:78

<sup>336</sup> DSs. 2003:23, [http://utbildning.regeringen.se/propositionermm/ds/2003/ds\\_2003\\_23.pdf](http://utbildning.regeringen.se/propositionermm/ds/2003/ds_2003_23.pdf)

According to the Government the concept of validation is currently at an important development phase. Higher Education has moved faster, as it already a common system for the validation of “real competences” (*reel kompetens*), whereas such a system does not currently exist within industry. Although, the Government’s aim is the establishment a common and comprehensive validation system, it will act as a facilitator between the different actors rather than impose such a system.

### *31.5.2 State Agencies*

The Validation Delegation was established in 2004, with the purpose of facilitating discussion between the different actors, implementing the development of the “merit portfolio” system. The agency is independent, but has close ties with the National Centre for Flexible Learning, which also promotes the concept of validation.

Lernia AB, a state owned company, is the market leader within the sector of skills enhancement and vocational training of adults. In 2003 Lernia educated and trained 47 000 people in more than 100 locations and currently have offices in 75 locations across Sweden. However, Lernia does not currently hold the right to issue certificates, which is exclusively held by the municipalities’ and county councils’ adult education institutions, the National Centre for Flexible Education and Liber Hermods AB. Lernia has made an application to the Government for obtaining the right to issue certificates for learning co-ordinators as well (*utbildningsamordnare*).

### *31.5.3 Regional Actors*

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities (*Svenska Kommunförbundet*) and the Federation of Swedish County Councils (*Landstingsförbundet*) represents the governmental, professional and employer-related interests of Sweden’s 290 local authorities, 18 county councils and two regions.

Both organisations share the view of the Government, that the responsibility of validation should be shared between the education system and the business community. Although, the organisations do not envisage it will play an active role in the development of the validation process, they instead put a emphasise on the importance of the employment and industry policy, which should support the validation process.

Other regional initiatives include *Valideringscentrum i Göteborg*<sup>337</sup>, which is an initiative run by the local authority, adult education, trade unions and the business community.

---

<sup>337</sup> <http://www.validering.goteborg.se/>

#### *31.5.4 Trade Unions*

The big trade unions (LO, TCO and SACO) all support the Government's initiative to strengthen the validation process, as outlined in the Government's Communication. However, SACO's position is that further analysis is required before establishing a common validation system. Whereas LO would rather see a committee established, instead of a new permanent authority. The decision by the Government to proceed with the establishment of *Valideringsdelegationen*, but restricting its life expansion to 2007, could be seen as accommodating the views expressed by the trade unions.

#### *31.5.5 Employer's Association*

The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (CFE) is a pro-business interest organisation representing close to 54,200 Swedish companies. It consists of 48 trade and employer association members, with a 1.6 million labour force covering 70% of the Swedish private sector. In contrast to the Government's initiative, CFE would rather see a more flexible validation system, where responsibility is shared between private education enterprises and other actors.

#### *31.5.6 Higher Education and Third Sector*

Higher Education institutions in Sweden have shown an increasing interest in validation and are expected to play an important role in the development of a common validation system. The University of Linköping has established an institution for adult learning. Folk High Schools (*Folkhögskolor*) around Sweden have also been involved in validation initiatives.

Finally, Encell<sup>338</sup> (the national competence centre for adult education) has put aside funds for a research initiative, which aims to explore and develop the validation concept. The different projects in this initiative are "owned" by several of the key stakeholders, such as municipalities, universities, adult education institutions and trade unions.

### **31.6 Conclusions**

The promotion of the validation process in Sweden has mainly been the responsibility of the state, complemented with regional and local initiatives. However, as the concept of validation has become increasingly important the Higher Education institutions have shown a greater interest.<sup>339</sup> The Commission on Higher Education Admission<sup>340</sup> mentions validation as one of the key tools when setting out to increase direct transition to higher education; change how the efforts of upper secondary school students are currently rewarded; reduce the incentive to retake grades in order to increase one's competitiveness; and help to broaden recruitment.

---

<sup>338</sup> [http://www.encell.se/projekt\\_validering.asp](http://www.encell.se/projekt_validering.asp)

<sup>339</sup> "Att värdera kunskap, erfarenhet och kompetens", P. Andersson, N-Å Sjösten and S-E Ahn

<sup>340</sup> "Tre vägar till den öppna högskolan", SOU 2004:29

## **32.0 UNITED KINGDOM**

*By John Konrad (Konrad Associates International)*

### **32.1 Introduction**

**Structure:** The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning in the United Kingdom is based on the national formal education systems of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales<sup>341</sup>. These systems are usually decentralised (devolved to a national level), delegated (operated within an institution by operational units within a framework of general regulation and guidelines). The three UK system's are generally based on the moderated assessment of students' learning by teachers moderated by internal or external assessors.

### **32.2 Review of existing initiatives**

#### *32.2.1 Accreditation*

The Accreditation of Prior Learning [APL] developed in the early 1990s, as a route for those with low formal qualifications to gain *access* to Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training [VET] alongside the traditional routes based on the assessment of formal learning through National examinations. The policy goal was to improve *access* to programmes of post-compulsory education leading to formal qualifications

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Implementation Plan (October 2002) details the future developments of the SCQF. One target is to develop and agree a set of guidelines on recognition of prior learning and experiential learning (APEL) which would then allow credit rating and levelling on the framework<sup>342</sup>.

In terms of lifelong learning strategy, the motivation of potential learners who are currently not participating in formal education may be significantly enhanced by the valuing of their non-formal learning. This could be achieved if these learners were to be encouraged to record their personal learning history. There is some limited evidence that appropriately structured non-accredited Adult and Continuing Education will measure the motivation of participants by supporting the development of a portfolio which records what courses they had pursued and observations on those courses. "In addition, the APEL interview method (which assesses skills such as group work, personal development and the way skills, knowledge and understanding has been developed) was a means of measuring the effect of adult learning in some contexts"<sup>343</sup>. This area is currently under development through a series of local pilot schemes run by the Learning and Skills Councils.

---

<sup>341</sup> Specific information on Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales will be available in 2005.

<sup>342</sup> Leney T (Ed) and May T (2004), *Achieving the Lisbon Goal: The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems – Country Report for UK*, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, page 22.

[http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_UK.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_UK.pdf) (last visited March 20, 2005)

<sup>343</sup> Powell R et al. (2003), *Research into Adult and Continuing Education: Final Report*, pages 74 - 75.



### 32.2.2 *Work-based Learning*

Work-based learning is an important area of non-formal learning. “Work-based learning, then, operates at both formal and non-formal levels within the workplace, and when non-formal, often relies on networks and interactions with people both within and outside the organisation to facilitate new learning. The learning itself is often goal and work orientated. It is also often problem-centred and involves experimentation and trying things out. It may require both personal reflection on the outcomes and dialogue and feedback from others including colleagues and managers. It may include the taking of formally accredited programmes of study at an institution of higher education, and may use APEL as an accreditation and learning vehicle.”<sup>344</sup>

*Higher Education* Courses or other programmes of learning may lead to the award of a *Degree* that may be a Bachelor, Master or Doctor Qualification. Credits are based on the norm that an average full-time student gains 120 UK Credits per year. Thus, two UK Credits are broadly equivalent to one ECTS Credit.

*Further Education*, Courses or other programmes of learning above the level of compulsory secondary education and below the level of Higher Education normally lead to an accredited qualification. Representatives of employers are involved at National and Sector levels in the national systems through the *curriculum* bodies [UK Sector Skills Councils]<sup>345</sup>; and the *funding* systems [National – England the Learning and Skills Council operating Regionally and locally]. In the latter case, the funding objectives for 2005-06 are likely to encourage local Learning and Skills Councils to support the funding of flexible approaches to Vocational Education and Training based on *Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning* (RARPA).

### 32.2.3 *Recognising non-accredited learning*

This development is important as it represents a different, open approach to publicly supported lifelong learning. If, as this strategy suggests, it is possible to move away from the emphasis on funding qualifications rather than learners, then the opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal learning is likely to be significantly increased.

“There will be a learner-focussed system of recognising both anticipated and unanticipated learning outcomes arising from non-accredited programmes. Quality systems in relation to RARPA will be robust, fit for purpose and meet each learner’s needs. Providers will use the

---

<sup>344</sup> Cullen J et al. (2002), “*Review of Current Pedagogic Research and Practice in the Fields of Post-Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning\**”, FINAL REPORT Revised Submitted to the Economic and Social Research Council by The Tavistock Institute, February

<sup>345</sup> For example, SEMTA [(*Science, Engineering, Manufacturing Technologies Alliance*) is the Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies] has launched a 2004 pilot Adult Apprenticeship project that makes significant use of APL. This is due for implementation in 2005. [http://www.semta.org.uk/NTOPubImages.nsf/vGraphics/apps/\\$file/apps.ppt](http://www.semta.org.uk/NTOPubImages.nsf/vGraphics/apps/$file/apps.ppt) (last visited March 20, 2005)

Approach as a tool for quality improvement and to increase recognition of learner achievement.<sup>346</sup>»

The RARPA approach consists of the application of the 'Staged Process' to non-accredited provision, plus the arrangements put in place by a provider to ensure that the Staged Process is applied consistently and effectively and can be evaluated in the provider's self-assessment.

### ***The Staged Process***

1. **Aims** appropriate to an individual learner or group of learners.
2. **Initial assessment** to establish the learner's starting point.
3. **Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives:** initial, renegotiated and revised.
4. **Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programme (formative assessment):** tutor feedback to learners, learner reflection, progress reviews.
5. **End of programme learner self-assessment; tutor summative assessment; review of overall progress and achievement.** This will be in relation to appropriately challenging learning objectives identified at the beginning/ during the programme. It may include recognition of learning outcomes not specified during the programme.

### ***'Appropriate' and 'Fit-for-Purpose'***

The application of RARPA should be proportionate and appropriate to the type and context of learning and should not intrude on learning. Recording of learners' progress and achievement is the responsibility of the provider. Many innovative and non-intrusive examples of practice have been developed and will be available to share with providers of lifelong learning.

### ***Non-bureaucratic***

One of the key themes of RARPA is to be non-bureaucratic. It was a concern in some of the pilot projects that the provider generated paper forms for learners to complete. This is an inappropriate approach, which can lead to negative reactions and experiences. Alternative methods need to be developed. Examples of effective practice can be found in the Support pages.

### ***Self-assessment***

All post-16 education and training providers are expected to produce annual self-assessment reports and continuous improvement development plans. Self-assessment should be a systematic evidence based process involving the whole learning organisation where the

---

<sup>346</sup> Learning and Skills Council (2005), *Welcome to RARPA*,  
[http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/AdultandCommunity/welcome\\_rarpa.htm](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/AdultandCommunity/welcome_rarpa.htm) (last visited March 20, 2005)

provider makes judgements about their performance against agreed goals and uses the Common Inspection Framework as a guide to the questions to be addressed<sup>347</sup>.

The above strategy indicates that Policy is seeking to ensure that the valuing of learning will have a stronger impact on the reality of learning opportunities. It will be important to monitor how this will involve employers and the voluntary sector. The forthcoming White Paper will make specific proposals<sup>348</sup>.

#### 32.2.4 *Terminology of Validation*

**Terminology** is not fully consistent across the national systems. Although not an exhaustive list, HE providers typically describe their approach to the accreditation of prior learning under one or more of the following headings:

- Accreditation<sup>349</sup> of prior learning (APL);
- Accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL);
- Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL);
- Accreditation of prior certificated and/or experiential learning (AP[E/C]L);
- Accreditation of prior learning and achievement (APL&A).

These approaches typically include policies and practices designed to accredit learning and achievement that has occurred and has been previously assessed and certificated in a work/community-based or related setting, but is not a formal part of that experience at some time, prior to the formal HE programme on which an applicant is about to embark. This may also include non-formal experience acquired during an HE programme.

This use of Accreditation in Further Education is likely to broaden out of this traditional involvement in National Vocational Qualifications [NVQs]. Good practice uses APL as part of mainstream provision.<sup>350</sup>

The accreditation of an individual's experience and critical reflection, outside a formal

---

<sup>347</sup> Learning and Skills Council (2005), *RARPA: Frequently Asked Questions*, NOTE: the Common Inspection Framework will ensure that this approach is part of [http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/AdultandCommunity/rarpa\\_faq.htm#glossary](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/AdultandCommunity/rarpa_faq.htm#glossary) (last visited March 20, 2005)

<sup>348</sup> In the longer term, the Framework for Achievement proposed by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority [QCA] will provide an important development of this strategy. For more details see <http://www.creditworks.uk.com/learnerRefdAchievement.htm>

<sup>349</sup> Accreditation is used as the English language equivalent of Validation. "The process of assessing and recognising a wide range of knowledge, know-how, skills and competences, which people develop throughout their lives within different environments, for example through education, work and leisure activities. informal / non-formal learning." Tissot P (2004), *Terminology of vocational training policy*, CEDEFOP, page 161.

<sup>350</sup> See for example: The NVQ Level 3 Management programme at [http://www.runshaw.ac.uk/pages.asp?page\\_id=369](http://www.runshaw.ac.uk/pages.asp?page_id=369) (last visited March 20, 2005)

learning programme is also a significant possibility<sup>351</sup>.

The theme common to all these accreditation activities is *the achievement of learning, or the outcomes of that learning, and not just the experience of the activities alone.*

### 32.2.5 Principles of Validation developed for Higher Education [HE]

**Principles** of Accreditation for HE have general relevance across all post-compulsory education and training.

- Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process and outcomes should be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair.
- Where limits exist on the proportion of learning that can be recognised through the accreditation process, these limits should be explicit<sup>352</sup>. The implications for progression, the award of any interim qualification and the classification or grading of a final qualification should be clear and transparent.
- Prior experiential and/or certificated learning that has been accredited by a provider should be clearly identified on students' transcripts.
- Providers should provide clear and accessible information for applicants, academic staff, examiners and stakeholders about its policies, procedures and practices for the accreditation of prior learning.
- The terminology, scope and boundaries used by a provider in its policies, procedures and practices for the accreditation of prior learning should be explicitly defined in information and guidance materials.

---

<sup>351</sup> “Assessment methods used in experiential learning are based on the notion of informal self-assessment and focused planning for improved performance. Barkatoolah (1998) articulates the learner-centred existential approach to self-growth when she discusses the French system of recognising prior learning (RPL). The approach is exceptional for its seemingly individualised approach to the recognition of learning. Coming from a similar perspective to Knowles (1984) who suggests learners have the capacity for self-growth, this methodology stresses the importance of the learning climate as something that may either enhance or hinder individual developments. The RPL approach to the assessment of prior learning begins with the learning experiences and subsequent learning of the individual, prior to formal accreditation. This is similar to Kolb and Fry’s process model of experiential learning as the basis of placing the responsibility for learning on the student (Kolb and Fry, 1975). It presents a futuristic outlook on the entire APEL process, providing the learner with the opportunity to reflect, conceptualise and develop a plan for further experiences and, subsequently, learning and self-development. Learner autonomy has also been at the centre of much debate over recent years (Fryer, 1997; Dearing, 1997), emphasising the impact of the process model of APEL, as opposed to outcome-based models of credit-exchange (Trowler, 1996). This has become the recognised idiom of distinction between experiential learning processes and traditional/idealist educational approaches (for example Kolb, 1984; Lindeman, 1926:27-65). Parallel with this, is the need to attribute formal recognition to learner skills and abilities irrespective of where they may have been acquired, in order to enhance student prospects (Dearing, 1997; Fryer, 1997; Le Goff, 1994; Kennedy, 1997; Blunkett, 1998).” Baille S and O’Hagen C, (1997), APEL and Lifelong Learning, University of Ulster, Page 18.

<sup>352</sup> Typically, these limits specify a normal maximum of 50% of the available credits for a particular qualification or, in the case of Bachelor’s Degrees, for a particular Level.

- Information and guidance materials outlining the process for the assessment of claims for the accreditation of prior experiential and/or previously certificated learning should be clear, accurate and easily understood.
- Providers should consider the range and forms of assessment appropriate to claims for the recognition of learning.
- The criteria used in judging a claim for the accreditation of prior learning should be explicit to applicants, academic staff, stakeholders, assessors and examiners.
- The assessment of learning derived from experience should generally be subject to the same internal and external quality assurance procedures as assessment of learning through more traditional routes. Assessment methods must be appropriate to the evidence provided, and the criteria used must be clear to applicants and staff.
- The locus of authority and responsibilities for making and verifying decisions about the accreditation of prior learning should be clearly specified.
- All associated with the accreditation of prior learning should have their roles clearly and explicitly defined. Full details of all roles and responsibilities should be available to all associated staff and applicants.
- Appropriate arrangements should be developed for the training and support of all staff associated with the support, guidance and assessment of claims for the accreditation of prior learning.
- Clear guidance should be given to applicants about when a claim for the accreditation of prior learning may be submitted, the timescale for considering the claim and the outcome.
- Appropriate arrangements should be in place to support applicants submitting claims for the accreditation of prior learning and to provide feedback on decisions.
- Arrangements for the regular monitoring and review of policies and procedures for the accreditation of prior learning should be clearly established. These arrangements should be set within established institutional frameworks for quality assurance, management and enhancement.

**Process:** Identification and Validation use a framework of Levels and Criteria to enable specific learning to be recognised in a reliable and valid way.

1. All four national systems are developing Credit and Qualifications Frameworks. Each of the Frameworks describes Learning Outcomes associated with Education and Vocational Training at Levels from Level 1 (Access 1) to Level 12 (Doctorate). The Guides from Bradford College<sup>353</sup> (a College of Further and Higher Education where Higher Education Courses are accredited by the University of Bradford) indicates a typical approach and uses the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework [SCQF].
2. The processes involved are those of applying for entry to programmes of learning based on a non-standard experience of learning; and/or seeking exemption from parts of a programme of learning, normally Units or Modules, without undertaking any formal learning; and in some circumstances, by demonstrating the necessary knowledge and competence in ways equivalent to those used normally used.
3. Steps followed (see Bradford College document Section 5):
  - Candidate profiling
  - Gathering the evidence

---

<sup>353</sup> Available from <http://www.materials.ac.uk/resources/library/apelintro.asp>

- Assessing the evidence
- Accreditation
- Review of progress

### 32.2.6 *Assessing individuals' claims for Credit*

**Assessments** of claims for Validation take place within the formal system of education. *In Higher Education* claim's, are assessed by the same people (lecturers, teachers, trainers, etc) who are involved in the process of formal learning, using the same regulations and procedures. See the examples in the documents from Bradford College and the University of East Anglia for typical approaches. The way in which this operates is a matter for each University, within the Guidelines of the UK Quality Assurance Agency. See *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning*, (September 2004)<sup>354</sup>

- Higher education institutions (HEIs) are able to recognise the significant knowledge, skills and understanding which can be developed as a result of learning opportunities found at work, both paid and unpaid, and through individual activities and interests.
- The accreditation of learning and achievement is one of the central functions of HE. In exercising this function, HE providers are able to assess and formally recognise non-formal and informal learning through accreditation<sup>355</sup>.
- Formal certification of this learning operates within robust and participatory quality assurance frameworks. These frameworks promote public understanding and confidence in both the quality of HE and the standard of its outcomes. A diverse range of approaches and practices for the accreditation of prior learning has evolved across the HE sector. Public confidence in the accreditation of prior learning, comparable to that for learning achieved during more traditional teaching and learning activities, is important if the practice is to be sustained and developed.

*In Further Education*, the three-stage model of Quality Assurance (Assessment, Internal Verification and External Verification) seeks to ensure the consistency of assessment. This is discussed further in Section 6 below. Evidence of previous learning is merely one aspect of evidence for competence against national standards.

**The criteria used for successful credit claims** are as follows. Claims should be:

- **Acceptable** to match the evidence presented and the learning being demonstrated.
- **Authentic** providing evidence of the individual's own efforts and achievements, with supporting statements where necessary;
- **Sufficient** to cover fully the achievement of the learning requirements of the Module/Unit;
- **Valid** to meet these requirements;
- **Reliable** to justify the granting of credit;

---

<sup>354</sup> Available from <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/apel/guidance.htm>

<sup>355</sup> For an example of this, see the structure of the BA/BSc in Early Childhood Studies with its APEL Module provision at each of the three Levels.

<http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/programmedetails/ug/earlychildhoodstudies/index.asp>

- **Record Current learning** - where professional, statutory or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification, or demonstration of learning, these should be clear and transparent.

**Specifically** the assessment process should operate according to the following principles<sup>356</sup>:

- All qualifications are rigorous, accurate. Assessment of candidate performance must be consistently conducted in accordance with published criteria and the standards specified for each accredited qualification.
- Assessment procedures and systems must be capable of establishing whether or not there is evidence to determine that candidate performance meets defined standards; assure the validity, authenticity and sufficiency of that evidence.
- Assessments guarantee the consistency and integrity of the standards of each accredited qualification.
- The chosen format and method of assessment must be appropriate to the qualification. The method) of assessment used for each qualification are the responsibility of the body responsible for the award of qualification.
- Assessments must be based on published specifications of the required skills, knowledge and understanding and, where appropriate, competence, and must provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet the full range of specified assessment requirements.
- Where qualifications offer candidates alternative routes or methods of assessment, awarding bodies must ensure that the level demanded is comparable to the normal routes or methods.
- Assessments must be manageable and cost-effective in order to operate with minimum disruption and bureaucracy. The minimum equipment and material requirements for any assessment must be specified in advance.
- Assessment materials must be presented in clear and unambiguous language. They must be free from any overt or covert discrimination against an individual, either in wording or in content<sup>357</sup>.
- Where relevant, an awarding body must ensure that adequate mechanisms are in place to guarantee the consistency of assessment decisions across the languages of English, Welsh and Irish.

---

<sup>356</sup> Based on the principles described in the NVQ Code of Practice (QCA 2001), Section B: Assessment and awarding, pages 25-26

<sup>357</sup> There is an important argument to be developed (and researched) about such concepts as impartiality, equity and comparability which are usually explained as technical concepts, rather than with regard to their social significance. See Warmington P et al. (2003), "Fair Assessment and the Discourse of Equal Opportunities: describing inter-relationships in the context of vocational qualifications," *Paper presented to the seventh annual conference of the Learning and Skills Research Network*, 9-11 December

- An awarding body must specify the knowledge, understanding, skills, and – where appropriate – competence required for assessors to be acceptable in the area being assessed, following principles established by the standards-setting body where appropriate. The awarding body must provide information, guidance and, where appropriate, training to enable assessors to meet their responsibilities in relation to standards and assessment.
- Assessment must be carried out in a manner that is demonstrably independent of anyone who might have a stake in the outcome. This may involve one or more of:
  - assessment carried out by a visiting independent assessor;
  - tasks designed by the centre according to awarding body guidance and where the materials are evaluated by individuals not involved in their development alongside associated assessment criteria or mark schemes;
  - tasks set or defined by the awarding body, taken under specified conditions (which must include details of supervision and duration) and assessed externally to check that the tasks meet the assessment requirements set out in the specification; assessment taking another equally rigorous form acceptable to the regulatory authorities.
- There are no barriers to assessment, which prevent candidates from effectively demonstrating their attainment. Arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements such as learning disabilities (special arrangements) must also ensure that such candidates are not given, or do not appear to be given, an unfair advantage. Special arrangements are generally not appropriate where the candidate's particular difficulty directly affects performance in the actual attributes that are the focus of assessment.

### **32.3 Conclusions**

**Quality Assurance** operates on a UK basis for Higher Education through the UK Quality Assurance Agency<sup>358</sup> and on a National basis for Further Education through the separate funding councils. In England, the Learning and Skills Council is responsible for funding post-compulsory education and training<sup>359</sup>, which is delivered through contracts between local Learning and Skills Council and public providers, normally colleges, and private providers which may be employers, training companies, or voluntary organisations. All these English organisations are subject to Inspection<sup>360</sup>. In the area of Skills for Life, the National Quality Initiative has one of its priorities the development of APL Guidelines during 2004-05<sup>361</sup>.

---

<sup>358</sup> See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/ukwork/default.asp>

<sup>359</sup> See <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/default.htm>

<sup>360</sup> See the Adult Learning Inspectorate <http://www.ali.gov.uk/htm/index.htm>

<sup>361</sup> Learning and Skills Council (2004), *Skills for Life Quality Initiative 2004-05*.  
[http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/llupluspdc/docs/SFLOI\\_12pp\\_Brochure\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/llupluspdc/docs/SFLOI_12pp_Brochure_FINAL.pdf)



In all cases, there are general criteria and guidelines linked to external checking of the internal Quality Assurance system of a University, College or Private Training Centre. In APL/APEL, this means that there is a systematic monitoring of the results, possibly subject to external scrutiny. International systems of Quality Assurance Certification are widely used. In the National Vocational Qualification [NVQ] system [England and Wales] a number of criteria exist to ensure the quality of assessment. These procedures are described in the NVQ Code of Practice (2001)<sup>362</sup>

There have been significant efforts to improve access to lower level of competencies at NVQ Level 2 and in Basic Skills.

However, the Evaluation of the first year of the Employer Training Pilot makes little mention of the importance of Accreditation. The report for the Tyne and Wear area provides the sole mention in its proposal for 2003-04. "The provision of training needs analysis and the accreditation of prior learning will be improved to ensure efficient provision of required training. The aim is for every participant to undergo a training-needs analysis"<sup>363</sup>.

More recently, NVQ-based Modern Apprenticeships are being extended to the over-24 age group through such pioneering schemes as TESCO providing accreditation to its internal training programme. It will be interesting to see how this scheme makes use of APL<sup>364</sup>.

---

<sup>362</sup> Published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA/02/875). This document is for awarding bodies and other organisations involved in the provision of NVQs. This document specifies the processes and procedures required to ensure high quality, consistent and rigorous standards in the assessment and awarding of NVQs.

<sup>363</sup> Hillage J and Mitchel H (2003), *Employer Training Pilots: First Year Evaluation*, Institute for Employment Studies, page 106 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/ETP1.pdf> (last visited March 20, 2005)

<sup>364</sup> "Educational first for Tesco Tesco is the first British retailer to have its in-house apprenticeship training scheme accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The retailer can now award National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) to those employees on its retail apprenticeship scheme. ... In a separate move, Tesco will be developing an apprenticeship scheme for post-24 year olds in conjunction with City & Guilds in a trial to get underway in this year. Until now, Government apprenticeships have only been available to those aged 16 to 24.

Apprenticeships at Tesco work by giving apprentices experience of working across different areas of the store - everywhere from customer service to security, to the warehouse. Candidates keep a workbook to document their progress and can attend lectures at a local college to top up their skills. Section and personnel managers check on progress, coach and assess candidates, which is then externally verified by City & Guilds."

<http://www.trainingreference.co.uk/news/gn050131a.htm> (last visited March 20, 2005)

A typical issue is the need to use APL in the process of teacher and trainer training, both for accreditation and for experiential learning. A study of one of the pioneer NVQ Level 4 programmes in Adult Learning at Oxford Brookes University found that:

"Tailoring a course to keep everyone interested has been a challenge", admits Jenny [Hankey – the course tutor]. The students have varied experience – some have the teaching experience but not the linguistic knowledge, others have the linguistic skills but not the teaching experience, and others are here to learn both. ... A modular system which could be tailored to an individual's needs, would work best", says Jenny, "but systems, such as APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning), which identifies exemptions based on a student's past experiences and learning, have resource implications as they require one-to-one assessments and ongoing reviews."<sup>365</sup>

This National Report has covered the most significant current developments relevant to the Common European Principles for Validation. Currently, the main areas of development of good practice affecting the use of APL are in the UK Higher Education Sector. There are significant innovations in process affecting Scotland and Wales. These are likely to have considerable impact in 2006.

---

<sup>365</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2003), *Update*, Summer, page 10.  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/bank/Update8.pdf> (last visited March 20, 2005)

### **33.0 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

*By Emmy Nelissen and Francesca Froy (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

#### **33.1 Scouting Gelderland (The Netherlands)**

##### *33.1.1 Introduction*

This case-study provides a description of a portfolio based model for validating informal learning gained during voluntary activity for scouting groups in Gelderland. Scouting Gelderland is one of the regional offices for the support of Scouting and Guilding in the Netherlands, based in the province of Gelderland. Overall, 30 000 volunteers work for the Scouting in the Netherlands. The portfolio receives subsidies of the Province of Gelderland and additional funding for the CITO project by the Knowledge Centre on the Valuation of Prior Learning (Kenniscentrum EVC).

The profolio model has been developed and supported by a large partnership from Public/ State bodies, private organisations and Third Sector organisations, as summarised on the Table below.

**Table 33.1 Partnership Scouting Gederland Validation initiatives**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Names of organisation</b>
Public/state bodies	Province of Gelderland, Civiq (used to be SVM), EVC Knowledge Centre, CITO (educational), OVDB (educational), CINOP, European Youth Programme
Private organisations	Institutions for vocational education
Voluntary organisations/NGOs/ other civil society organisations	Other volunteer organisations like the Red Cross, LAVA and Spectrum

##### *33.1.2 Aims and objectives*

There are four main reasons why Scouting Gelderland became involved in an initiative to validate non-formal learning:

1. Many Scouting Volunteers experience difficulties in achieving recognition for the experience they acquire during their volunteer work. Scouting Gelderland therefore wanted to recognise competences acquired by their volunteers in order to acknowledge their efforts;
2. It was felt that validation initiatives might make the volunteer work within the organisation more attractive for young people;
3. Scouting Gelderland also wanted to increase recognition not only of the work and efforts of individual volunteers, but also of the entire Scouting organisation. Because

of their validation initiative, the Scouting organisation is now taken much more seriously by education institutions for example.

4. There was a desire within the organisation to properly establish and document the skills expected from group leaders, taking into account the needs of their team members.

### *33.1.3 How was the project developed?*

In 1998, the Scouting organisation in Gelderland decided to address the issue that their many volunteers were not given adequate recognition for the experience and expertise they gained while volunteering. Consequently, Scouting Gelderland worked together with SVM (Stichting Vrijwilligers Management), a national organisation for the support of volunteer work, to identify appropriate validation mechanisms. Due to a lack of time and resources, the project developed relatively slowly until 2003 when the project received funding from the province of Gelderland to develop a set of validation instruments. The aim was to develop instruments which could be easily transferred to other volunteer organisations and recognized in other sectors. At the same time the Civiq (Instituut vrijwillige inzet, which used to be SVM) received a subsidy from the Ministry of Health and Sports to set up a parallel project examining general competency profiles together with NIZW (Innovatie partner in zorg en welzijn). The two organisations now regularly have contact with Scouting Gelderland through feedback meetings, workshops and other meetings.

### *33.1.4 Policy background*

In the Netherlands, there is a substantial amount of best practice in the area of the validation of informal and non-formal learning, but no ‘common practice’. The validation of informal learning is being more rapidly developed for people with high skills (university entry systems) and with very low skills (disadvantaged groups) and less developed for individuals with middle range skill levels. It was suggested that this policy area could benefit from greater support from the Dutch government, particularly as it was felt that the Netherlands had fallen behind in comparison to other European countries with respect to government initiatives in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

### *33.1.5 Activities*

The project of Scouting Gelderland involves the following activities:

#### **1) *Setting up of profiles***

The organisation has developed three different competency profiles for volunteers – one for ‘leaders’, one for ‘team leaders’ and one for ‘group guides’. Profiles were built up through looking at the competencies held by current leaders, and discussions with volunteers about what support they would ideally like from a leader.

#### **2) *Providing training***

Volunteers are not always aware of the extent of their skills and knowledge when building their profiles. Scouting Gelderland therefore uses training to raise awareness of these

competencies. A Swiss model ‘the CH-Q (<http://www.ch-q.ch/>)’ has been used to develop this training. Scouting Gelderland found about this model through the Knowledge-centre, and adapted it to the Dutch context. The training consists of three steps:

- what am I good in?
- how should I formulate my expertise?
- where can I actually use it?

Training methods included work with the ‘Star’ methodology (looking at Situations, Tasks, types of Action and Results), and ‘quality cards’ which help people to establish what kind of qualities they have, and what qualities are needed in various professions.

### **3) *Developing the Portfolios***

Each volunteer receives a portfolio describing the tasks and competencies required for their position, and appropriate competencies to aspire towards in the future. The portfolio gives the volunteer the opportunity to provide evidence for all the skills that they have learnt, and encourages volunteers to describe their skills using terms which will be understandable by future employers and educational institutions.

### **4) *Becoming acknowledged as a “learn firm” (Erkenning van leerbedrijf) in the Netherlands***

In the Netherlands, institutions of professional education (beroepsopleiding) are able to send their students to ‘learning firms’ (see [www.ovdb.nl](http://www.ovdb.nl)) to continue their learning in different settings. Through their involvement in the validation of learning, many scouting groups in Gelderland have now become officially registered as ‘learning firms’ for students who need to gain experience with working with youngsters. This opens many doors for Scouting Gelderland for more cooperation with educational institutions in the future.

#### **33.1.6 *How is learning assessed?***

The Scouting Gelderland initiative is centered around on a ‘portfolio based model’ which is currently being actively promoted by the Kenniscentrum EVC (Dutch Knowledge Centre on the Valuation of Prior Learning). The focus is on individuals – learners, job seekers, volunteers, citizens- as it is the Centres belief that you cannot have a dynamic field of life-long learning if individuals are not part of the process. This represents a shift from a policy focus on institutions and the relationships between them (governments, social partners, education institutes/private public learning centres) towards one based on individual needs and learning plans. The centre believes that with the right support people can develop their own learning models, and learning careers based on identifying current competencies and future competencies they would like to develop. The centre advocates the right for every individual to have a personal portfolio, and a biannual update of such a portfolio with an advisor if needed.

The centre feels that if you start with an individual based portfolio methodology, the rest of the learning process will follow automatically as individuals seek out training to build on their identified needs.

The key steps to building up a portfolio are:

- 1) Finding out what the individual would like to do with their life: identifying goals and setting ambitions
- 2) Offering competence descriptions for tasks the individual is already carrying out
- 3) Adding descriptions of competencies which are ‘in the neighborhood’ of these tasks and which relate to the individual's future aspirations. This is the phase where teachers, trainers, career guiders come in to identify the potential for development of each individual. The aim is to empower people rather than exclude them from progressing further, and sensitive assessment mechanisms are used to keep people in the learning system

Kenniscentrum EVC takes the view that assessment should be flexible, and based on criteria related interviews, tests and analysis of portfolios by third parties. They recognize however, that this can make it more difficult for portfolios to be recognized by other organisations and institutions, and that the current ‘bottom up’ development of methods of validation of informal learning in Netherlands could undermine the transferability of such forms of certification.

EVC see individual portfolios as a bridge between personal ambitions and competencies and the work floor. They feel that in many countries, training provision is perhaps adapting too much to the demands of employers rather than the demands of individuals whereas educational supply should make a match between the needs identified in individual portfolios and the demands of employers.

### *33.1.7 How was the project managed and monitored?*

The project was managed by Scouting Gelderland, with various theme groups being set up for the daily management of activities, supervised by the staff of Scouting Gelderland (of which Jo Peeters is a member). Volunteers are also highly involved in the design and implementation of the activities. The monitoring committee consists of members of the Civiq, Knowledge Centre, Province of Gelderland, Colleague volunteer organisations, and two people from the education sector (OVDB- Knowledge Centre for learning in practise in health, welfare, sports and service and professional education institute).

There is relatively little quantitative information about take-up of these initiatives as yet, however:

- Tests have been undertaken involving 10 to 20 volunteers;
- 50 of the 200 Scouting Groups in the Province of Gelderland are in the process of becoming acknowledged as ‘learning firms’;
- approximately 30 students are currently gaining experience through Scouting volunteer work in Gelderland. On a national level, many more students are making use of it and many more Scouting Groups are involved because the Scouting organisations in the provinces of Overijssel, Zuid-Holland en Limburg are also involved in similar activities.

### *33.1.8 Working in partnership*

Scouting Gelderland approached CITO (the Institute responsible for setting up exam procedures in professional/vocational education) to establish how to use ‘educational terminology’ in the setting up of the competence profile. The aim was to achieve a degree of objectivity when describing skills in order to escape ‘scouting jargon’ and ensure the transferability of competency profiles to other organisations and sectors. Funding for this cooperation was provided by the Knowledge-centre for the Acknowledgement of acquired competences (Erkenning van Verworven Competenties Kenniscentrum). Each year they subsidise programs after a selection procedure. Scouting Gelderland delivers competence documentation to CITO who in cooperation with volunteers through response groups translate the language into educational terminology. Scouting Gelderlands work with CITO has been funded by the Kenniscentrum EVC<sup>366</sup>, the Dutch Knowledge Centre on the Valuation of Prior Learning.

### *33.1.9 Drawing from other European experience*

Before developing their volunteer profile, Scouting Gederland used their existing partnerships and networks to identify good practice and transferable activities from elsewhere in Europe. For example, the original idea for the ‘competency profile’ had already been implemented in the UK, Norway and Switzerland. The CH-Q model had already been piloted in Switzerland. Learning from elsewhere in Europe has helped to save ‘reinventing the wheel’, although it has been important to adapt tools to the specific national context. It was felt, for example, that the UK model for establishing competencies and acquiring promotions was too rigid to be used in the Netherlands.

### *33.1.10 Outcomes*

- ***For the individuals***

There are many short term benefits for individuals who have done competency assessments whilst they are volunteering for Scouting Gelderland. For example, volunteers who have had their prior learning validated can be exempted from following certain formal training courses (formal training is required in particular in relation to working safely with children, dealing with disabilities, communication skills). It was also pointed out that having their skills validated had substantially increased the personal confidence of some volunteers.

When leaving Scouting, the volunteers mostly use their competency profiles to flow into education due to their overall young age profile.

We interviewed a volunteer who had had the following competencies validated through their work at Scouting Gelderland:

---

<sup>366</sup> Kenniscentrum EVC has a mission to work with government, independent and non-profit making organisations to support the development of bottom up life long learning practices through the valuation of prior learning. The centre employs 7.5 FTE people (15 people in total) in addition to extra staff funding through Leonardo and ESF projects.

- a) Seminar organisation
- b) Leadership skills for working with children
- c) Programming/planning/flexibility/being creative
- d) Budgeting

She identified that having her learning validated had increased her motivation during her volunteering and other professional activities. She had been able to transfer the competence profiling technique to her other work as a social worker. In this context, the profiling of social worker competencies had allowed them to establish new dialogue with their manager in relation to the provision of training/education.

- ***For the organisation***

The general profile of Scouting in the Netherlands has been raised, with wider recognition of the efforts made, and skills and knowledge of volunteers. The establishment of scouting groups as 'learning firms' has also given these groups a higher profile and greater recognition by educational institutions.

#### *33.1.11 Sustainability*

Once funding for the current project has finished, Scouting Gelderland will continue to disseminate and implement the project ideas. In addition, Scouting Gelderland has been approved for the pre-proposal stage of a Leonardo da Vinci (Brussels) project to continue their activities.

#### *33.1.12 Transferability*

Scouting Gelderland has successfully transferred its validation models to other organisations through cooperation with external organisations. This has been achieved through:

- cooperation with the members of the monitor committee of the project
- presentation of their project ideas to different conferences (for example educational conferences through the OVDB).
- the involvement of CINOP (Centre for the Innovation of Studies) in discussions concerning the development of the portfolios and related training
- volunteers spreading the model in other areas of their life<sup>367</sup>

---

<sup>367</sup> The volunteer we interviewed had been able to successfully transfer the competency portfolio technique to the social services organisation she works with.



### *33.1.13 Dissemination*

The Scouting Gelderland project has been particularly strong at disseminating their activities within Europe. The organisation received funding through the European Programme Youth for a seminar that took place from the 20<sup>th</sup> until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January in the Netherlands. Scouting and youth groups attended from Iceland, Norway, Hungary, Greece, Romania, Malta, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, UK, Denmark, Switzerland among others. This seminar involved sharing project results, explaining the instruments that had been developed and discussion and debate with international scouting groups. At the same time, Scouting Gelderland effectively linked up with a parallel seminar, “Bridges of Recognition” in Leuven in Belgium. The idea was developed to place a webcam and an internet access (video-conferencing) in the two seminars so that participants could communicate and build new contacts. Scouting Gelderland is also part of a European network for the exchange of experience also funded by the European Youth Programme. The countries involved are Finland, Netherlands, Belgium, Slovenia, Estonia and the UK.

Scouting Europe organises a European Conference every three years to develop a new European action plan. This conference took place last summer in Iceland and one of the priorities of the new action plan set up was the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

### *33.1.14 Success factors and barriers to be overcome*

It was felt that the following factors have led to the success of the project:

- Cooperation with external organisations
- The involvement of the volunteers
- Good PR through the organisation of seminars, attending conferences and publishing in professional booklets (vakbladen)

Whereas the following four barriers were identified as preventing people from taking up the validation on offer by Scouting Gelderland:

1. Experience gained through Scouting is often not taken seriously. However this is currently changing because of the cooperation with CITO. The CITO logo on Scouting documentation has already made an important change.
2. Scouting still has an old-fashioned image and consequently does not attract many students to gain experience. However, as students become more enthusiastic about their internship within a Scouting group, they will attract new students;
3. It was felt that the Dutch government is not pushing the validation issue high enough on their agenda.
4. Many employers look negatively at scouting experience put on a CV. It will be important in the future for more networks to be built up with employers to show them the added value of experience acquired in volunteer organisations.

33.1.15 *Looking to the future*

When looking towards the future it was felt that the following factors could help support the further development of this type of activity:

***At project level***

1. More focus should be put on cooperation with employers
2. More assistance should be given to help volunteers how to put their Scouting experience on their CV. For example, the Scouting organisation in the UK has put a CV translator on their website. Netherlands should do the same. (See <http://www.scouts.org.uk/wps/portal/.cmd/ad/.ps/X/.c/720/.ce/3307/.p/2907#3307> under Network)

***At national policy level***

1. More involvement of the Dutch government would improve dissemination.
2. Greater identification at the national level of which competencies are required in which sectors and on which levels.
3. More support for individuals to design a portfolio model to meet their own needs. Advice for portfolios, payment for external assessors etc. Advice on who should take different responsibilities.
4. It would be useful to have extra funding to support subsidies for the costs of infrastructural change which is required by companies and organizations introducing the validation of informal learning
5. More cooperation between the government and social partners in this policy area;
6. More cooperation between different educational levels within the system: there are currently barriers between different educational levels which prevent this type of activity from developing further. For example translating normal secondary school diplomas into competencies is difficult, particularly due to the lack of communication between the initial education system and the post/training system. Building communications mechanisms is a slow process, as it requires cultural change.

***At EU policy level***

1. EU policy makers should make instruments like EUROPASS more practical – an instrument that could be better adapted to national circumstances
2. There should be more support for a European knowledge network to communicate and transfer examples of practice between different learning cultures.

In conclusion, Scouting Gelderland has taken important first steps to obtain validation of the competences of their volunteers. They have organised large-scale activities and have been successful in finding appropriate partners to address the issue of validation and disseminated their work widely throughout Europe.

In the future, Scouting Gelderland is keen to continue their validation work. With respect to the issue of proportionality, it is important that Scouting Gelderland ensures that their validation activities do not only benefit a limited group of people –their volunteers- but also a wider range of people. It is too early to evaluate at this stage the overall effect of their

activities, but the scale of their activities, their success in transferring their validation model to other organisations and the large scale dissemination of their activities, does indicate in the direction that their activities will have –in the longer term- a positive effect on the whole organisation and other volunteer organisations. It is crucial that in the near future, Scouting Gelderland monitors whether their validation activities make volunteer work for Scouting Gelderland more attractive and whether the entire organisation and other volunteer organisations receive greater recognition as learning settings and in their activities in general. If this is the case, the work of Scouting Gelderland will have a long lasting effect on the validation of volunteer work.

## 33.2 Corus Group

*By James Winter and Emmy Nelissen (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

### 33.2.1 Introduction

Corus is an international steel and aluminium manufacturing and services company with an annual turnover of 11.5 billion euros and operating in over 40 countries worldwide. The Netherlands division of the company employs a workforce of 11,000 people. The Corus Training Centre, based in Ijmuiden, North West of Amsterdam, is the training arm of the company in the Netherlands, and is responsible for the development of the validation programme (or, in Dutch, ‘*Elders Werworen Competenties*’ – EVC) within Corus.

### 33.2.2 Nature of activity

A portfolio based model of validating learning which has occurred in the workplace by non-formal means. The beneficiaries are awarded nationally recognised diplomas; MBOs, or ‘middelbaar beroepsonderwijs’ (secondary vocational training), of which there are 4 levels. The validation process takes place following a request from the person’s line manager, based on the demand within the company for the recognition of the skills which the person has. The aim is to bring individual employees’ qualification levels to the appropriate level for the type of work they are doing. Corus’ training and EVC obligations are formalised through a labour agreement with the trade unions. The initiative is completely funded by the Corus Group.

### 33.2.3 Partners

The profolio initiative has been developed and supported by a partnership of Public/ State bodies, private organisations, including Corus, amongst others.

**Table 33.2 Partnership Corus validation initiatives**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Names of organisation</b>
Public/state bodies	ROC – Regional Training Centre ( <i>Regionaal Opleidingen Centrum</i> ). These regional colleges for secondary vocational training are used to provide the validation for qualifications at Level 4. For level 5 qualifications – high schools ( <i>hogescholen</i> ), which offer professional higher education, are used as partners.
Private organisations	Vigor Transitions – an organisation that provides a link between Novacollege (a regional training centre/ROC) and the Corus Training Centre. The EVC process for Corus employees has 2 parts – the technical side and the assessment of the person’s potential to learn more. Vigor Transitions is involved in the assessment of this potential.

#### *33.2.4 Aims and objectives*

The aim of the EVC (validation) activity being undertaken by Corus Training Centre is threefold:

- For a company of Corus' type, it is difficult to find and maintain the right staff. EVC is a tool by which Corus can increase the flexibility of the workforce. It also helps ensure that employees are allocated the most appropriate work to their skills and abilities. It is recognised that most employees will not be able to undertake the same type of work throughout their career; therefore EVC provides a system allowing staff to make transitions from one area of working to another.
- Cost advantages – EVC offers Corus considerable savings in terms of training staff. A cost benefit analysis (see Annex 1) undertaken by the company demonstrated that validating previously acquired staff skills via EVC was much cheaper than training staff through traditional means. Traditional methods for training imply that a given employee will be away from the workplace for a considerable length of time, which often means the company has to pay for a replacement in the meantime. On the other hand, EVC minimises the impact on the individual's productivity within the company.

#### *33.2.5 Project development*

The project started around 2 years ago, when the Corus Training Centre began looking into alternative ways of training staff. The first EVC pilot within Corus emerged at around the same time as the Dutch government began developing the basis for EVC at the national level. At the end of the first pilot, the process and results were evaluated, and it was modified and re-initiated in the form of a second pilot. After this second pilot, the board of the Training Centre was asked to approve it, and EVC became an official training programme within Corus.

#### *33.2.6 Policy background*

During the past few years, the Dutch government has been increasingly concerned about the number of younger people leaving school with few or no diplomas. They drafted a programme to bring people's qualifications up to level 2 within the national system. EVC was the tool developed to achieve this aim. As mentioned above, the development of the Corus initiatives coincided with the government's development of EVC.

#### *33.2.7 Activities*

The EVC programme run by the Corus Training Centre involves the following activities:

##### ***1) 'Intake' phase and initial assessment***

A flow chart was created (see Annex section of this report) to help manage the EVC process; the chart is the central reference point for the validation process of all individuals within Corus NL. Individual staff members cannot request EVC themselves; rather they

have to be recommended for it by their line managers. This ensures that the validation process is relevant to the company's needs. The process starts with an 'intake' of people aiming for the same qualification. Assessments are made of their educational and professional background to see if this provides a suitable platform via which they can gain the qualification. Validation is only provided for the next level up on the national qualification system – for example, if someone already has level 2 MBO qualifications, he/she can only undergo validation with a view to achieving level 3 qualifications.

## **2) *Portfolio preparation***

Following this initial assessment, the person is then shadowed at their workplace by an assessor; photographs are taken, working practices are assessed and a portfolio is created<sup>368</sup>. The work that is assessed has to be appropriate to the level of qualification that the person is aiming for. The findings of this assessment are then discussed with the line manager, a senior manager and the employee. Everyone has to agree with the assessment rating given before the process can move on to the next stage. Vigor Transitions is then asked if it can undertake an assessment of the learning potential for the individual in question. A starting date for the training process is then arranged.

## **3) *Vigor Transitions –evaluating the candidates' potential***

Vigor Transitions is a partner organisation working with Corus Training Centre in the running of their EVC programme. Created in 2001, and working with Corus for the past 2 years, their role is to assist in the portfolio development of the candidates. They evaluate the general personal competences of each candidate undergoing EVC before they proceed onto the technical assessment stage. Vigor transitions also work in collaboration with Nova College and the *Hogeschool* of Amsterdam. One of the grounding principles of Vigor Transitions is that the workplace is a richer learning environment than that of formalised education. This is why the organisation sends educational assessors to the workplace and not vice-versa. Furthermore, the concept of 'competence' as defined by Vigor Transitions is defined in terms of work that other people (managers etc.) trust you to undertake. This is why the EVC process in Corus includes consultation with the managers, peers and subordinates that work with each candidate in order to establish what their competences are.

Vigor Transitions recognise the importance of legitimacy in any assessment activity of this nature, and aim to implement standards which are in fact higher than that of the traditional routeways for qualification. They are currently working with the Ministry of Education to establish a system for accreditation to further enhance the legitimacy of their activities.

---

<sup>368</sup> In some countries this may be considered against the protection of privacy of the individuals. This case can also raise some ethical issues reflected in the European Common Principles on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

#### **4) 'Filling the gap' between competencies and qualification aimed for**

Following this, the Vigor Transitions report is then passed on to the Regional Training Centre (ROC), and they are asked to take on the technical part of the training process. The training centre then assesses the 'gap' that remains (if any) between the competences the candidate has, and the competences required in order to achieve the qualification. When a gap is identified, the school then takes on the task of completing the candidates training. This training has to take place within the candidate's workplace. Materials and equipment used are also those that the candidate uses within the workplace.

#### **5) Certification**

Finally, at the end of the process, if the candidate has been successful, the ROC provides them with a certificate stating the MBO qualification achieved.

#### **33.2.8 Project management and monitoring**

As mentioned above, the project has been developed following pilot projects, which allowed the team responsible for the EVC programme to identify weaknesses and accordingly make improvements. For example, after the first pilot, it was observed that communication for EVC was relatively poor; the communication aspects of the programme were assessed and improved, and 6 months later the pilot was restarted. A cost-benefit analysis completed relating to the EVC programme within the Corus group also demonstrated the added-value of the activities and showed how it helped the company make considerable savings on training and staff development.

#### EVC team:

Within the Corus Training Centre there are 3 members of staff responsible for the EVC programme within the company. They hire around 20 people to undertake the assessments from outside the Corus Training Centre.

#### Take-up numbers:

To date, around 400 people have been recommended to go through the EVC process developed by the Corus Training Centre. Of those, around 30% are not deemed to be suitably experienced or have suitable potential to continue with the EVC process. These employees are sent through the traditional training pathway (again, funded by Corus) for gaining higher qualifications.

#### Profiles of EVC candidates:

There is no one single job type for which EVC is applied within Corus, indeed, the model is flexible enough to be applied to any area of work within Corus NL. Job types for which EVC is applied include steelmakers, maintenance technicians, processing workers, photographers, office staff and fire safety workers.

### 33.2.9 *Outcomes*

- ***For the individuals***

From the individual's point of view, the main benefit of the EVC programme is that it allows them to gain higher level qualifications via their employer without the need to give up their job. EVC is often a vehicle for individuals to make progress within the company and gain promotions. Staff can pass through the EVC process multiple times, with a mandatory gap of 3 years between assessment periods (to allow the individual to gain enough experience on the job to pass through the next level of EVC).

It has also been observed that employees who have successfully completed an EVC cycle through Corus return to work with a greater self-esteem; which is not surprising considering that some of the candidates are people who have been on the labour market for several decades, and previously had no formal qualifications. This in turn helps improve motivation and morale in the workplace.

- ***For the organisation***

For the organisation, one of the benefits is customer satisfaction – Corus Netherlands has many high profile and prestigious customers, such as Ford, Volkswagen and Audi. These customers have exacting demands regarding quality and require that the people producing the material used in their manufacturing processes have a certain level of qualifications. For the company, the practice is aimed at maximising the potential of the workforce. The EVC process allows Corus to develop the qualifications of its staff to a higher level, while minimising the costs of so doing. Furthermore, EVC leads to the interlinked results of greater retention of staff and employee satisfaction. This saves the company having to continually look for and train staff from outside the company in order to meet production demands.

### 33.2.10 *Sustainability*

Validation of prior learning is viewed by the EVC team at the Corus Training Centre as a practice that is set to stay in the Netherlands. It is becoming an increasing normal way to train/educate people, and is likely to continue to do so.

### 33.2.11 *Transferability*

The model for EVC developed by the Corus Training Centre is highly transferable; as it can be applied to many different types of work (see above). This transferability is demonstrable by the fact that Corus asked another company, Nuon, an electricity generating company to test its model. For the individual, the validation practice utilised by Corus also has a strong transferable element – it is company policy to ensure that validation achieved for an individual in one factory is recognised in all Corus factories within the Netherlands – further enhancing the mobility of the workforce.



### *33.2.12 Dissemination and networking*

All the EVC courses provided for Corus staff are fully documented and the procedures for obtaining the diploma are fully explained. When an EVC course reaches the examination stage, the EVC unit asks the examining board to go inside the factory to obtain feedback on implementation.

Regarding networks, Corus Training Centre is well connected with validation related networks in the Netherlands. The head of the EVC unit within the organisation has been involved in various commissions dealing with the subject. There are also links with the KVC (Knowledge Centre for Validation of Competences), high schools, government and other organisations that use EVC.

### *33.2.13 Barriers to be overcome*

There are no barriers to take-up as such, although, as mentioned above, an employee can only be recommended to undertake an EVC programme by their line manager, to ensure that the validation will meet a real need within the company.

### *33.2.14 Looking to the future*

#### ***At project level***

One of the future innovations planned for the use of EVC within the Corus group is planned for employees who are unable to work due to illness/injury. EVC has been tested as a tool to enable them to return to the workplace, although not necessarily to the same type of work. Naturally, when someone is ill, it is not possible to assess their work competences, however, the compilation of their personal portfolio can be initiated. This can help start the process towards conversion from one working area to another, since the EVC programme not only assesses an individual's competences acquired, but also their *potential* for further training (the EVC team believe that all jobs have a technical component and an intellectual component – it is the latter that is dealt with when initiating EVC with people who are off work due to sickness). For example, this process has led in the case of one employee to convert from the steel production process to logistics work within the company hospital.

#### ***At national policy level***

At the national level, EVC continues to gain importance, and further changes are planned for the EVC programme. The State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science, Mark Rutte is proposing a bill to modify the first law on EVC which was initiated in 1999. The new legislation is due to come into effect in January 2006.

#### ***At EU policy level***

In spite of a number of recent encouraging developments validation at the European level is still very much in its infancy; therefore, it is a little early for Corus to make definitive

comments on developments. However, the company recognises the importance of validation at the European level, and is involved in exchange of information in this area. For example, the director of the EVC team in the Corus Training Centre will be attending and speaking at a conference on validation of informal and non-formal learning in Brussels in April 2005.

### ***33.3 Record book for young people: Slovenia***

*By Papiya Chatterjee (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

#### *33.3.1 Introduction*

The Youth Academy project in Slovenia got interested and active in the validation of non-formal and informal learning as they felt it was an important issue as they ran training and workshops but found it frustrating that there was no recognition of this.

#### *33.3.2 Description of the initiative*

Validation of non-formal learning in the organisation takes place under a project called NEFIKS, and also through the Youth Academy project. Members of the organisation are asked to keep a record book, so that the following areas of their learning can be validated:

- Getting knowledge through work (so far this has been their studies, but it can be applied to work they get with employers)
- Active citizenship and responsible work projects
- Organised non-formal education such as ICT and project management skills
- Gaining knowledge at youth camps and voluntary work
- English language communication skills gained through experience abroad
- Other ways of getting knowledge e.g. through hobbies such as learning a musical instrument

The record book is used to collect traces of activity. Also personal achievement is observed 'post hoc' by the programme leader. The non-formal learning is assessed by both internal assessors and external assessors from youth centres nationwide.

The competence levels that can be validated within the organisation are different categories of youth working progressing from volunteer to youth leader to trainer. The competence levels are linked to the National Youth Council system of non-formal learning because this organisation devised this! The validation does lead to an internal certificate but this is recognised nationally.

The barriers to recognising learning gained outside formal education, are that it is not recognised as being necessary by the influential policy makers as they themselves do not have non-formal learning competences, and value the formal learning over non-formal.

### 33.3.3 *Take-up and outcomes*

Take-up of validation initiatives has been good – 1,000 people in the last year have used the record book for non-formal parts of their learning. The benefits are two-fold: volunteers can benefit from career progression to become youth leaders, and secondly members of the organisation can learn skills that are transferable outside the NGO sector such as ICT, and project management.

The main outcomes of validating non-formal/informal learning in the organisation are more structured career progression and greater equality, increased staff motivation through more involvement in the project, better fulfilment of the skill needs of the organisation, and the organisation as a whole gets a higher profile as a training centre.

The organisation would be helped in this initiative through more EU funding, changing the mindset of national policy makers, partnering with other businesses such as Addeco or Manpower to help their growth, and more effective validation would also be achieved through having a dedicated project manager who could just focus on the NEFIKS project.

### 33.3.4 *Benefits and Outcomes*<sup>369</sup>

Alenka has been a youth volunteer with the NGO for about two years, has recently been a beneficiary of the log-book. She is currently undertaking a degree in Sociology and Pedagogy which has some relevance to the post. She has undertaken several non-formal training courses to help her deliver her work, which have included sessions on motivation, project management, and planning your career. These courses have been certified and a record is kept in the NEFIKS log book. The main benefits of validation of non-formal learning are seen to be improving access to training courses, and access to promotion. More generally, the benefits are seen as increasing motivation and commitment to work for the organisation, and also helping considerably in planning one's future career path.

She, however, was of the opinion that the certification would not necessarily have value outside the organisation as in general formal learning is prioritised above non-formal learning in most of Slovenia.

Overall, she felt that validation of non-formal learning had been most instrumental in giving a clearer idea of personal skills and future career planning. She found that it really helped in terms of gaining practical experience and was more useful than formal education in terms of finding out what her skills and abilities are which are relevant to her future career, and hence is able to plan her career path more productively. She did not find any negative aspects relating to her involvement in validation initiatives.

---

<sup>369</sup> Based on an interview with Alenka Petek, beneficiary.

### **33.4 Education and Training Service Centre, Iceland**

*By Papiya Chatterjee (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

#### **33.4.1 Introduction**

The Education and Training Services Centre became involved in the validation initiatives as the Ministry of Education designated it as a leading body to develop validation tools in Iceland. Funding of the validation initiatives takes place through the Ministry of Education.

#### **33.4.2 Description of the initiative**

The organisation works on several validation initiatives, but the best example of these initiatives is the Telecoms Project - Joint development project between Iceland Telecom, Efling Trade Union, Starfsafl (fund for the educational support of untrained workers in the greater Reykjavik area), Reykjavik Technical School and the Education and Training Service Centre. The project aims to develop methods of assessing and validating the competence of unskilled employees at Iceland Telecom for them to shorten the formal telecommunication technician study path at the Reykjavik Technical School. As a part of this project, special focus is placed on developing methods for the employer to verify the workers' job related skills.

This project focuses on work-related competencies (practical) acquired in the workplace; namely – measurement, technical, planning, material use and connections (technical). The methods of validation that are used in the project include self-evaluation, formal tests, simulation, and observation. A committee of internal assessors (in-house teachers), external assessors (careers counsellor + external teachers) and supervisors assess the non-formal learning which is validated in the project. The workers have a say in the identification of competences to be validated and the methods for validation as it is important that they are happy about what they are being assessed on and how they are being assessed, so it is very much a two-way process based on consultation with the employees about the validation methods that suit them. This method of self-evaluation followed by interviewing with the committee proved to be very successful as it has both enabled the employer to verify the employees' work related skills and abilities; and enabled the employees to achieve greater success in the formal education part of their learning as well. The next step for the committee is to formulate a plan of what to assess and how to assess it so that this guide can be used in the future with other employees.

The competence levels which can be validated within the organisations are at two levels – basic and higher. These competence levels are related to the secondary school curriculum (101 and 102). The validation does not lead to a certificate directly but the outputs of the validation process are that the individual can shorten their education by skipping formal courses, and therefore gain their formal qualification more quickly. In other words, the beneficiaries can skip parts of the formal education because their non-formal learning (on-the-job skills) can be used as credits towards their formal qualification (which leads to a certificate).

The barriers to recognising learning gained outside formal education are perceived as:

- difficulty in measurement i.e. areas of non-formal learning are more difficult to measure as they are not necessarily assessed through formal examination
- difficulty in comparison between formal learning and non-formal learning because of the measurement problems so formal learning is often perceived as being superior to non-formal learning
- attitudinal barriers which stem from the above two points and it will take time to recognise that individuals can learn outside a school/academic and in a more practical environment.

### *33.4.3 Outcomes and take-up*

This project has worked particularly well because all the partners are committed to the idea of validation of non-formal learning, and realise that it is a process which takes time to achieve success (partly due to the aforementioned barriers). The organisation does feel it could do more in this area, but will have to approach it incrementally, as changes in deep-seated attitudes take time. This is also a political issue and in order to do more about promoting non-formal learning initiatives, it needs funding and therefore needs to get buy-in from all stakeholders. The specific support that the organisation needs to get involved in validation initiatives more effectively is mainly to learn from practical examples from other countries (it has already done this partly through attending EU-level conferences). Also workers who have been through the validation process should share their success stories in order to convince funding bodies that there is a need there. Exact needs should be identified through a skills mapping process between company needs and individual skill needs to establish exactly what needs funding. The organisation needs support from businesses at a sectoral level, which again requires a more positive attitude towards non-formal learning to begin with.

There has been about 50% take-up of the validation initiatives in this project. This means that of all the employees who were offered validation methods within the framework of this project (including self-evaluation, formal tests, simulation, and observation), about half chose to take them up. The benefits that the beneficiaries have gained as a result of the validation initiatives include:

- increased motivation at work as they are happier at work through having their skills recognised
- increased job security as a result of gaining qualifications
- increased confidence
- increased motivation to study as they are part of a group and not on their own
- fairer career progression as the employees are on a more level playing field with those who have formal qualifications gained through school

The benefits for the telecoms company are:

- increased staff motivation means that they are more likely to stay with the company because they realise that the company values their contributions
- the skill needs of the organisation and the employees are more closely aligned
- the employees project a more positive image of the company to customers as a result of their more positive attitude towards working for the company.

### **33.5 E.E.D.E., Greece**

*Anne-Marie Nevala (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

#### **33.5.1 Introduction**

E.E.D.E. is a major Greek not-for-profit organisation. Organisation offers a number of different post-graduate programmes, among other shorter courses and seminars. The Association itself is partly funded by the Government and partly by the private sector partners and looks after education and training needs of the Greek business sector.

E.E.D.E. developed a self-standing validation method to validate informal and non-formal learning of those with extensive commercial work experience (mainly in management or marketing).

#### **33.5.2 Description of the initiative**

##### ***Rationale and funding***

The organisation developed the system because there was a clear market demand for it. At the end 1980s the Greek private sector complained that there was a lack of high quality training for highly positioned business executives and entrepreneurs. Many held years of managerial experience but did not have any relevant qualifications. They were keen to develop theoretical understanding of management practices as well as improving competitiveness in an increasingly competitive and changing market place.

The initiative is mainly funded by tuition fees. Development work of the programmes was co-financed by partner / member organisations of E.E.D.E.

##### **E.E.D.E.**

E.E.D.E. offers four different post-graduate certificates:

- Post-Graduate Programme on Business Administration
- Executive MBA with Bath University, UK
- Post-Graduate Certificate on Marketing from Chartered Institute of Marketing
- Quality Management

These programmes recognise prior learning, both informal and non-formal, since they are open to individuals who have a university degree *or* possess relevant work experience.

##### ***Organisation of learning***

Relevant university qualifications offer an automatic access to these courses. However, those with relevant work experience can also apply. Their informal and non-formal learning is assessed mainly through face-to-face interviews with programme managers from E.E.D.A.

### ***Assessment of prior learning***

All the promotional material clearly states who are able to apply on the courses. The assessment process is not strictly regulated, decisions are case-by-case decisions based on interviews. All applicants need to carry out an interview with two members of E.E.D.A staff who are normally either directors of studies, programme co-ordinators and/or academic advisors.

Interview is based on finding the following:

- Current job description: position and role
- Possible previous work experience
- Career aspirations
- Age (young persons can not access Executive MBA course as it is aimed at those with considerable work experience)
- Reasons for wanting to do the course
- Personal capability and motivation to complete the course
- Personal qualities
- Hobbies

Interview language depends on the language of studies. If the course will be in English, the interview will be carried out in English too. This is done to assess the language capability of applicants.

### ***Training***

Programmes last for one year and there are 4 thematic cycles which all end in examinations. Every student also needs to submit a dissertation at the end of the course.

Students may obtain some exemptions if they hold relevant qualifications. In these cases students need to provide E.E.D.A with relevant transcripts. Those who accessed the course on the basis of their work experience can not be exempted from any further courses.



### ***Certificates***

Certificates are granted for those who successfully pass all exams and dissertation. They are recognised as individuals 'possessing extraordinary management knowledge and ability'. These post-graduate diplomas are compatible with university master's degrees. But the certificates themselves do not form a part of Greek national education system but enjoy recognition from employers in Greece. E.E.D.A itself is well known institute among the private sector in Greece who have a long history providing high-quality non-formal training for the Greek business life.

Some of the certificates also enjoy social recognition internationally as the qualification frameworks of the MBA programme and marketing diploma were originally developed in the UK.

### ***Validity***

The certification system is not part of any formal validation system, but E.E.D.A. have developed their independent method to assess applicants' prior learning. Their validity is widely recognised by employers.

Students are constantly consulted about the validation process. Every student on the course is encouraged to fill in evaluation sheets and give feedback to the programme management.

#### ***33.5.3 Outcomes and benefits***

Approximately 2000 individuals have obtained one of the E.E.D.E. certificates since 1989.

#### ***Benefits for individuals***

Those with work experience can immediately access high quality education, rather than having to spend years going through basic training.

#### ***Benefits for companies***

Most participants are paid by their employers. For employers this validation methodology offers quick and cost-efficient method to up-skill their employees. In the long term it improves effectiveness, motivation and capability of their key employees.

#### ***33.5.4 Barriers met and future support needs***

Our interviews highlighted as barriers and future support needs the following:

#### ***Barriers***

- Greece is a small country where only a few institutes have resources to set up similar initiatives.
- Qualifications from abroad are increasingly popular.

***Supportive policy frameworks***

- More joint, European wide programmes on validation of informal and non-formal learning.
- More direct funding from the national level for development of validation schemes.

***33.5.5 Best practice and conclusions***

This methodology offers a non-bureaucratic process to validate informal and non-formal learning of business managers and in essence provide them with an access to master's level education on the basis of their work experience. The method was developed to take into consideration needs and demands of the private sector. It is cost-effective method for both businesses who sponsor their employee to undertake this training and for participant themselves who want to expand their knowledge on management or marketing.

### **33.6 Cork Institute of Technology**

*By Ray Coughlan, Cork Institute of Technology*

#### **33.6.1 Introduction**

The Department of Education Development (DEIS) was established by the Institute in July 1996 with a mission to innovate in education for quality and access. It operates generally to assist the Institute in developing its education/training provision to meet the changing needs of various client groups and in making this provision available to an increasing range of clients. In pursuing its mission, DEIS has engaged in developing, piloting and evaluating innovative interventions in education and in the subsequent integration into mainstream of those deemed to have been successful and appropriate.

This has resulted in five main areas of activity:

- Research/Development in Education
- Course Design/Development as a partnership process with a range of client groups
- Development of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy/practice and the provision of support for the RPL process
- Development of e-learning provision and support for this provision on an Institute-wide basis.
- Course development and delivery in the field of Community Education and Development

#### **33.6.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

Within the context of the National Framework of Qualifications the Institute has developed a comprehensive policy on RPL, which has been recommended by the Academic Council and agreed by the Governing Body (see below). The RPL process is based on the assessment of learning evidenced within a learning portfolio and measured against particular learning outcomes for the award of specific credit and/or grades - as outlined below.

Portfolio completion by the learner is supported by a mentoring process provided by dedicated academic staff of the Department of Education Development (DEIS). Staff development and support in the area of RPL for the institute academic staff is also provided by DEIS. A course in RPL mentoring and assessment is currently being uploaded to the WebCT Learning Management System. A website dealing with current and future development in RPL is currently under construction and will be maintained by DEIS on a continuing basis.

To date within the Institute over 1000 students across twelve academic departments have been awarded credit within the National Framework of Qualification at levels 6,7 and 8. It is anticipated that in excess of 250 students will be similarly recognised within the current academic year (2004/5).

Current research work within DEIS in the area RPL relates particularly to recognition of work-based and community-based learning using authentic assessment methods and to the use of rubrics in the assessment process.

### *33.6.3 RPL Policy at Cork Institute of Technology*

#### ***Introduction***

##### ***RPL:***

Recognition of Prior Learning is the generic term for systems such as Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) or Advanced Academic Standing which are used within Higher Education to describe the awarding of credit to students on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred prior to admission. The philosophy underlying RPL is to enable and encourage people to enter or re-enter formal education, leading to qualifications, by awarding or recognising credit for what they already know from the course curriculum. The onus is on the student to demonstrate the prior learning, by preparing and submitting adequate evidence, under the guidance and advice of the institution.

There are two main categories within RPL:

- Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (APEL): the awarding of credit for uncertificated learning gained from experience. It should be noted that academic credit can be awarded only for achievement of learning outcomes, not experience per se.
- Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL): the recognition of formal learning for which certification has been awarded through a bona-fide educational institution or other education/training provider. Under the principle that such credit should only be awarded once, such prior learning requires recognition rather than accreditation.

#### ***Basic Principles***

- The generic issue addressed in this document is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which includes Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL);
- Prior Learning refers to learning which occurs before admission to a course or to the relevant stage of a course;
- Prior Learning includes both experiential and certificated learning;
- Exemption from subjects or modules may be granted at the non-award stages of a course on the basis of recognising prior learning, according to the rules and processes stated in Sections 2 and 3;
- Exemptions are granted at the commencement or during the operation of a stage of a course and are recorded at the relevant Examinations Board Meeting;
  - Where the prior learning has not previously attracted credit under the ECTS framework or under a framework articulating with it, credits may be awarded for that learning in the context of the relevant course schedule and according to the rules set out below;
  - Credits and exemptions are awarded on the recommendation of the Academic Council;

- Exemptions are not allowed at the award stage or for elements of a course contributing to the award. However, for students with relevant prior learning, arrangements can be made for the consideration and recognition of this learning as indicated in Section 1.3.

***Recognition of Learning at Award Stages, including Contributing Elements:***

- Where students have substantial, relevant prior learning they may submit a learning portfolio, detailing their prior and current learning, including any additional information that may be specified;
- This portfolio will be assessed and credits and/or marks/grades may be awarded. Any marks/grades awarded will contribute to the overall classification of the award;
- In the case where the prior learning has been certificated and credits given under the ECTS framework or under a framework articulating with it, no further credits will be awarded, but such credits can be recognised and transferred.

***Criteria***

The following standard criteria for the implementation of RPL apply to all courses. However, a course may operate outside the criteria but all such cases should be specified in the approved course documentation.

***RPL in Non-Award Stages:***

Recognition or accreditation will only be given:

- for complete modules/subjects;
- where a minimum of 50% of the learning outcomes for the module/subject have been achieved;
- for a maximum of 50% of the modules/subjects for the stage;
- up to a maximum of 50% of the total credits for the stage;

Marks/grades will not be awarded at non-award stages. Where an end of year classification is to be calculated, such calculations will be based entirely on the modules/subjects that have been examined.

***RPL in Award Stage(s)***

Any stage which has an input to the overall classification of an award is deemed to be an award stage for the purposes of this document.

Recognition or accreditation will only be given:

- for complete modules/subjects;
- where a minimum of 50% of the learning outcomes for the module/subject have been achieved;
- for a maximum of 35% of the subjects/modules for the stage;
- up to a maximum of 35% of the total credits for the stage.

Subject exemptions are not granted at the award stage and, instead, marks/grades are awarded, as indicated in Section 1.3.

### ***Component Subjects***

Where an examination subject comprises component subjects, and the criteria for RPL have been met by the student for some but not all of the component subjects, recognition or accreditation can be given through a Section 1.3 process, with the marks/grades awarded being combined from those of the examined component subjects to give an overall mark/grade for the examination subject.

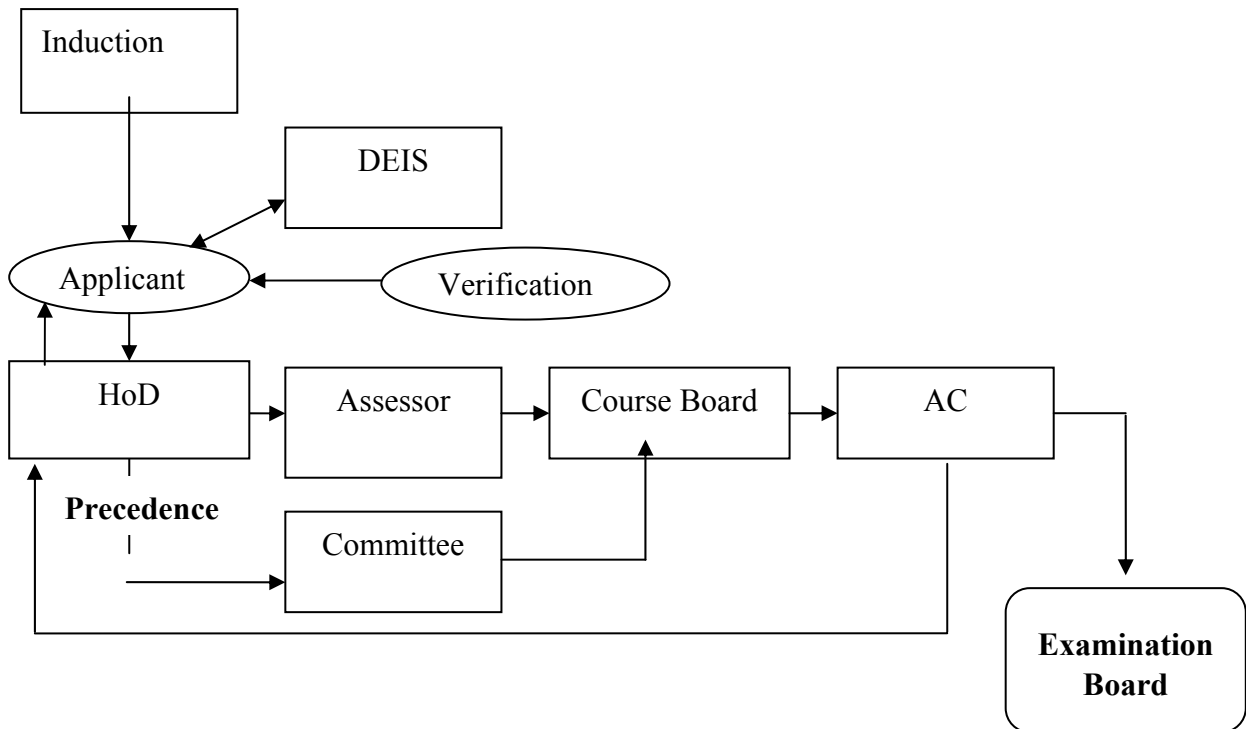
### ***RPL Process***

- The relevant Department informs all new students about Recognition of Prior Learning, including the granting of credits and/or exemptions, as part of the induction process.
- The application for RPL is a rolling process. However, applications for RPL in a subject are not accepted after the first examination sitting for that subject.
- The student is required to initiate the process by applying in writing to the relevant Head of Department, providing all appropriate documentation in support of their application. The Department will advise and assist the student regarding the documentation needed and presentation of their case.
- Where prior certificated learning is the basis of the case, the student is required to provide the relevant syllabus, the examination paper and a transcript of results. Where experiential learning is involved, the student is required to provide a learning portfolio for assessment. All such information must be independently verified.
- The Course Board has responsibility for assessing the application and making a recommendation for the granting, or otherwise, of credits and/or exemptions to the Academic Council.
- Where no precedence exists or where experiential learning is involved, an assessor appointed by the Head of Department, normally the subject lecturer, will evaluate the information and make a recommendation for each subject. The opinion of the assessor is then forwarded by the Head of Department to the Course Board, along with all relevant documentation.
- Where precedence exists, the Course Board may delegate the decision to a committee including the Head of Department and Chair of the Course Board or Course Co-ordinator. All decisions of this committee, together with the relevant documentation will be communicated to the Course Board for its next scheduled meeting;
- The Course Board may recommend or reject the request for RPL, or seek further input from the student. This could take the form of a written submission or interview or other methodology, as appropriate.
- In reaching its decision, the Course Board must satisfy itself that the student has presented learning of an appropriate standard.
- The recommendation of the Course Board is submitted to the Academic Council for final decision. A copy of the supporting documentation is provided along with the

recommendation, the original documentation being retained by the Department. All relevant documentation is available to extern examiners.

- Once a decision is made by the Academic Council, the Head of Department informs the student in writing of the outcome and copy the letter to the Course Co-ordinator, subject lecturer and year co-ordinator, if applicable.
- The various stages of the RPL process are shown on the flow chart in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Flow-chart of RPL Process**



**Implementation**

- The provisions of this document will be implemented initially for a pilot period of two years;
- It will be subject to review by the Academic Council after the pilot period;
- An advisory group will be appointed by the Academic Council to facilitate the implementation of the RPL scheme during the pilot period. The Advisory Group will provide guidance and assistance to Course Boards and Academic Council.

### **33.7 ELBUS, Norway**

*Anne-Marie Nevala (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

#### **33.7.1 Introduction**

The lead organisation, ELBUS, is the National Centre for Electro technical vocational post education in Norway. It is a not-for-profit organisation owned by NELFO (The Electro technical Contractors' Association) and EL & IT (The Norwegian Electro technical Workers' Union). ELBUS together with other partners from Norway and 4 other countries developed a methodology to map key competences and skills in electro-technology companies in order to be able to better match the business development strategies with professional competences, skills and aspirations of employees and potential employees. A fundamental element of this methodology was development of a process to identify, document and assess professional and social skills of employees and potential employees. In general terms, this means highlighting visibility of learning taken place outside of formal training and education system.

Project target groups are employees and human resource managers in the electro-technical industry.

#### **33.7.2 Description of the initiative**

##### ***Rationale***

The project developed pan-European methodological tool for documenting and assessing accumulated professional and social knowledge and skills of employees / potential employees in the electro-technology sector. Accumulated knowledge and skills here refer to learning acquired outside of formal education and training.

##### ***Working in partnership***

The methodology was developed by the leading partner ELBUS together with national bodies, sectoral associations and vocational training centres from Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom, Norway, and Greece. The methodology has been piloted and tested (this process is still on-going today) by electro-technology companies in each partner country.

##### ***Motivation***

The driving forces for the development of the methodology for ELBUS were:

- Difficult situation in the electro-technology market – need to increase competitiveness of businesses in the sector.
- Unemployment in the sector was very low and staff turnover levels had grown rapidly in recent years (especially in Norway, Sweden and Denmark). These factors caused serious concern in the industry and rapid action was required to improve job retention in the sector.



- Increasing international workforce mobility. Gradually more and more electricians in Norway had expressed an interest to work abroad, while immigration to Norway was also in increase. A complete lack of validation initiatives in the sector and inability to transfer electrician qualifications from country to country in Europe due to legal restrictions were the key incentives to develop a system to record and compare competences and skills.
- Professional development of electricians – the methodology would also allow to identify *desired* competences and professional aspirations of employees and therefore offer more transparent personal development routes.

One of the companies which has implemented the methodology is Dalhaug AB - one of the leading Norwegian companies in the electro-technology sector. The company employs some 100 persons and 90 per cent of the employees are currently going through the process to validate their informal and non-formal learning.

Dalhaug AB got involved in the initiative for three key reasons:

- Firstly, the company requires increasingly educated and highly skilled staff in the future.
- Secondly, the company wanted to screen and map the competences of its workforce to ensure they have right skills in-house to meet the strategic objectives of the company.
- Finally, the process offers better career progression routes and more room for personal development and growth for those who are motivated/capable to move forward in the company.

### ***Validation activities in the sector***

Adoption of initiatives to validate skills and competences of employees in the electro-technology sector is not very common because the sector is characterised by small businesses with approximately 15 employees. Such small businesses in this sector have very little expertise or resources to set up such initiatives.

Furthermore, anyone working in the sector in Europe must hold an official certificate to legally work in the sector. And these certificates can only be obtained from a formal education institute. This has partly reduced companies interest to recognise informal and non-formal learning of their employees.

### ***Project funding***

Project was funded by the project partners with assistance from the European Commission, Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Companies implementing the methodology have not contributed to the development of the tool but allocate time and staff resources for the implementation.

### ***How is learning assessed?***

The process consists of four different elements:

#### ***CV***

The first part of the assessment is focussed on gathering information about skills, knowledge, expertise, competences and other attributes that employee/potential employee possess – attributes that can be of value in their work. A three-part CV is used to record this information in a systematic manner. The CV covers information on personal details, professional skills and general skills:

- Personal details
- Official qualifications
- Education and courses
- Social skills (family life, social activities, interests)
- Local community and voluntary activities (memberships in different commissions/councils/societies, voluntary work experience)
- Hobbies
- Professional skills, work experience
- Desires, motivation and intentions with regards to their career progression.

Professional competences and experience are categorised to 30-40 subjects and each ranked according to three standards:

- Theoretical understanding of the process/task.
- Ability to carry out the task, but not without supervision.
- Ability to carry out the task alone without any help or support.

CV is available electronically to all employees.

#### ***Ability to Take Action - questionnaire***

The final step of the process for employees is a discussion with their employer about future, development, training and aspirations. To aid the development of dialogue with employer and employee, the project has developed an 'Ability to take action' questionnaire. The questionnaire refers to issues such as ability and motivation to learn and train further, career aspirations, team working and analytical skills and communication capabilities. The questionnaire is available in an electronic format to all employees.

#### ***Personal Development Plan***

Finally a discussion with an employer will be held, based on what the individual has recorded about him/herself on the CV and Ability to take action – questionnaire. The discussion follows defined guidelines and is strictly confidential between individual and employer. Discussion will lead to a personal development plan for each individual employee and different personal development measures (such as in-house or formal training courses) are discussed.

Skills gap analysis can be carried out after the skills and competences of employees are recorded on the system. Mapping tool is used to carry out the analysis.

### ***Mapping tool***

The mapping tool is a web-based programme of which content is based on the information recorded by employees about their skills, expertise, competences and aspirations. The tool was originally developed as a part of another project by AOF – Norwegian national training organisation. Only some adjustments to the tool were required, and this saved a significant amount of time and financial resources.

The tool mainly functions as a instrument for better human resource management and strategic planning. The aim of the tool is to identify skills gaps in an organisation and allow those with motivation and capabilities to move forward in the company. The mapping analysis allows the company also see whether relevant skills can be found in-house, for example, for development of new markets.

The mapping tool can be found at:  
<http://komptest.prodoc.no> (password protected)

### ***33.7.3 Outcomes and benefits***

The process has brought mutual benefits for individuals, enterprises and industry in general and increased awareness of validation of informal and non-formal learning in the sector. The following benefits have been experienced by nearly all project partners in different European countries:

#### ***For the individuals***

The interests of individual employees are central to this project. The key benefit for employees is creation of personal development plan that improves employees' training and career progression opportunities. And perhaps most importantly, employees feel more valued.

#### ***For the company***

Identification and recognition of informal and non-formal learning has improved effectiveness of companies' human resource policies and management; the process enables companies more effectively allocate their human resources. By better understanding resources of their workforce companies can improve their strategic planning and adaptability to the changing market needs. And most importantly, the experience so far has demonstrated that the implementation of the tool has increased motivation and commitment of their staff. Personal development plan and more meaningful dialogue between employer and employee make employees feel more valued and in the longer run this is expected to increase productivity of the company (through lower staff turnover levels etc.). Validation of informal and non-formal learning is also good for the reputation and marketing of the company. In the long term, this type of validation activity may also help the enterprise to establish itself abroad as the tool enables the company to identify and compare knowledge and skills of employees regardless of their country of origin.

### **Experience from Dalhaug AB**

Although the company is only now going through the implementation process (90 per cent of employees have recorded their skills and competences and personal development plans are being developed), clear benefits have already been identified. Employees feel more valued than before. The project has also enabled the management to discover specific training needs and offer employees short term and/or part time training. The process has also allowed the management to recognise individuals who have potential or skills to take up further responsibilities or further develop new business areas.

The company views this as an initial step towards long term process of further promoting lifelong learning and recognising informal and non-formal learning.

---

### ***Wider impact***

Experiences from five European countries have shown that the European electro-technical industry will benefit from harmonised documentation procedure to aid identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The tool addresses difficulties encountered by those hoping to work in the sector in another European country - it offers more accurate and rapid assessment and validation of skills and competences of foreign workers, refugees and other immigrants.

Electro-technical companies have traditionally valued their workforce mainly as a static mechanism for income - which up to now has proved successful. But this has meant that they have not kept up with the increasing need to nurture continued learning among their workforce; younger generation has an increasing capability and motivation to change, adapt and face up new challenges. At the same time companies have to become increasingly adaptable and possess higher levels of skills and expertise in order to remain competitive. The project makes a significant contribution to this goal by offering a methodology to assess informal and non-formal learning of employees.

#### *33.7.4 Sustainability and transferability*

The project's documentation procedure and associated tool were developed to take into account differences in different national contexts. The tool has been tested in five different European electro-technical companies and therefore has demonstrated that the tool and methodology does work in different countries and contexts.

The project is viewed as an example of good practice in validation of informal and non-formal learning. The project methodology was one of three to receive the first ever Leonardo da Vinci award launched by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission.

The project meets a real demand in the electro-technical sector. Both the process and the method in general are transferable and adaptable to related industries and other organisations. The transfer only requires small adjustments to the web tool. It may also be possible to make the process, the method and the web-based tool and supported tools (questionnaire and CV) commercially available.

The future of the project and tool is slightly uncertain at the very moment because ELBUS, the R&D branch of the Norwegian employer organisation, was recently shut down. But ELBUS employees who are still working for the same owner organisations (employer organisation / trade union) are determined to take the project forward.

### *33.7.5 Barriers*

The project has shown that it is possible to record, compare and assess skills and competences of electricians from different countries. At the moment, however, there is no way of comparing electrician qualifications from different countries or formally validate work experience; currently electricians in all European countries have to attend formal education to obtain licence to work as a qualified electrician.

Another barrier for companies in the sector to get involved in validation activities is the general small size of companies, most companies in the electro-technology sector are small and medium size businesses. These companies find it difficult to find time to get involved in such schemes. The project partnership for example found it quite difficult to find companies to participate the project as pilot companies. SME managers in the sector also do not have as comprehensive understanding of validation initiatives and their benefits as HR departments of larger companies in which in-house training and validation schemes are often a lot more established.

In relation to these points, some employers in the sector do not yet view training, recognition of wider set of skills and expertise and personal development of their staff as a priority matter as all their electricians already hold a formal certificate. But this is likely to change in the future.

### *33.7.6 Supportive policy frameworks*

The last few years have seen a record-breaking increase in both mobility of workforce between European countries and immigration in a wider sense as well. At the same time staff turnover levels in the electro-technical industry have grown rapidly. Consequently the need to be able to accurately and efficiently assess knowledge and skills of potential (and existing employees) is all the time more important. Consequently, companies in the sector hope more direct support (human resources, guidance or funding) from the national governments.

### *33.7.7 Conclusions*

This case study demonstrates particularly effective and comprehensive practice in the way it identifies and assesses informal and non-formal learning. The way the methodology also takes

into consideration ‘soft-skills’, hobbies, interests, motivation for career progression is quite unique.

The project outcome is not something tangible, certificate for example, which would be nationally recognised but is something which offers better career progression route for employees in the industry that is traditionally very much focussed on formal education.

The methodological concept was designed longer term sustainability and transferability to different countries and sectors in mind.

### **33.8 Koskisen Oy, Finland**

*Anne-Marie Nevala (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

#### **33.8.1 Introduction**

Koskisen Oy is a wood production company in Finland with 1,076 employees producing veneer and other products refined from wood. A system to validate informal and non-formal learning was developed already in 1994 by the company HR department and funded by the company itself. The validation system is based on recognition of skills and expertise acquired at work and is complemented by an in-house practical and theoretical training scheme. Every employee of the company is provided with an opportunity to validate their competences; the process has been designed to take into consideration different skill levels.

#### **33.8.2 Description of the initiative**

##### ***Motivation***

The company originally developed the system for three key reasons. In the 1980s the company was faced with a situation where staff turnover levels were in increase and at the same time the work in the industry became more demanding. They were also finding it hard to recruit new employees. Action had to be taken to improve the situation.

As a response the company wanted to develop a system which would allow employees to carry out a wider variety of tasks as a way of enriching their work routines and creating better jobs. As working in the factory was also becoming more demanding and the national qualification system did not offer relevant qualifications for low skilled production workers, the validation scheme was also designed to address this gap in the national / regional training provision.

##### ***Working in partnership***

The system was developed by HR manager of the company with support from the management. Lecturer from a local vocational education institute also provided some expert advice on the development process, particularly on the theoretical training and assessment process. Furthermore, employees were consulted about the project and assessment procedures; trade union representative from the company was involved in the development process from the very start and still attends all the meetings which are related to this project.

The company practice receives significant support and recognition from the sectoral trade union, the Wood and Allied Workers' Union.

##### ***Validation activities in the sector***

The company operates in the mechanical wood manufacturing sector – a sector in which validation of informal and non-formal learning traditionally has not played important role.

This is partly because the sector has not been particularly popular and traditionally employment in the sector has not demanded high skills or qualifications.

Situation has, however, changed in the last few years and some of the largest Finnish companies in the sector (e.g. Stora Enso, UPM) have introduced similar procedures.

### ***Project funding***

The methodology, training programme and certification system was solely developed and funded by the company itself. These days the Finnish government subsidises one third of training costs of each individual employee that goes through the programme, as a part of national apprentice funding programme.

All employees who have their competences validated and who obtain one of the certificates, receive a grant from the company together with an automatic pay increase. Furthermore, those over thirty receive also receive an additional adult education training grant from the Finnish government.

Five different types of competences can be validated at Koskisen Oy, of which three are focussed on validating skills relating to the factory's production work and two for management (people and production) skills. Originally the validation methodology was developed for production workers, a mechanism to recognise management skills was developed at a later date. Having increasingly well trained, multi-skilled staff created pressure to support managers at different levels. The HR department realised there was a need for similar procedure for people in management positions.

### ***Training***

The process to validate skills of production workers starts off by expanding the tasks she/he carries out every day. It is the core of the company culture that more experienced members of staff teach new processes for new members of staff. So the participants are trained by their senior colleagues to carry out all activities relevant to the production stage in which they are involved in. Furthermore, participants received 2 hours of theoretical training every week. This process takes 1-1.5 years after which their skills are formally assessed and recognised.

Those in management positions in the company, from team leader level to director, can have their management skills assessed and validated. They are also given an opportunity to go through 1 year informal training scheme. The scheme includes 4-5 all-day training events, different exercises ranging from managing and chairing meetings, individual and group exercises to short, written assignments. The complexity of training activities varies according to the management level of each employee.

All in-house training is tailored to match exact needs of the company and the sector.



The company also supports some employees to continue their further studies in a university or technical higher education institute if the employee has motivation to do so and skills are required in the company.

### ***Organsation of learning***

Validation of competencies in Koskisen Oy mainly covers skills acquired at work. However, some other competencies which have been acquired outside of work are recognised in some instances, for instance, First Aid and health & safety. But no formal validation mechanism has been developed to recognise these skills. Nevertheless, validation of management skills indirectly recognises skills gained outside of work as management and organisation skills can be learnt in hobbies, committees, politics etc. Customer and people friendly management style and language skills are particularly highly regarded by the company.

Assessment procedures are different for production workers and those in the leadership positions:

#### ***Assessing skills of production workers***

Competences are assessed through 4 practical competence tests and 4 written, more theoretical examinations. Employees have an option to replace written tests with oral ones if they prefer so. Theory tests weigh significantly less than the practical exams.

In practical examination the assessment team observes the employee for three hours and pays particular attention to work safety matters. Assessment is carried out by one company manager, trade union representative and colleague of an employee. Theoretical tests are assessed by an external expert (teacher).

#### ***Assessing leadership skills of employees in management positions***

Assessment of managers is an on-going process. Participants are assessed in the way in which they conduct the exercises (chairing meetings, written exercises etc.) and some elements of their everyday work. The assessment process ends with presentation and essay (topic is usually - Managing Change).

The approach of the company is that no matter how good qualifications some of the skilled workers of the company have, they still do have to demonstrate their leadership and people management skills.

### ***Certificates***

As mentioned, the validation methodology allows recognition of five different types of learning. Those who pass the formal assessment receive one of the five in-house certificates:

---

#### **Production workers:**

- Certificate for general production/process workers (veneer production)
-

- 
- Certificate for saw process workers
  - Certificate for mechanical maintenance workers

**Management skills:**

- Team leader certificate
  - Leadership certificate for different levels of managers
- 

Certificates can be compared to some of the national qualifications. Certificates for production workers match qualifications from vocational colleges, however, are more highly regarded by the company itself because of the extensive practical knowledge base.

Management training is not directly related to any national qualifications. Certificates are recognised by a number of educational institutes across the country and provide exemptions from certain courses. But at the moment these are case-by-case decisions, although the company and trade union are working to disseminate experience through national committees etc.

***Validity and reliability***

The reliability of the validation process is secured by the fact that the assessment is carried out by a team of assessors, each from different background. It is always made sure that another colleague is a member of the assessment team as they are the ones with thorough understanding of the work tasks. The validity of written examinations is ensured by an external expert; lecturer from a relevant vocational education institute helped to design the theoretical training and assessment.

Training programme and certification system also meet the public requirements and are recognised by the government as they cover third of the training costs, and also provide grant for mature participants.

Employees have also been consulted about the validation methodology and employee's representative has been involved in the development process from the start. The base for the whole methodology is that the assessment system is viewed both comprehensive and fair by employees.

### 33.8.3 *Outcomes and benefits*

#### ***For the individuals***

400 employees have validated their skills accounting some 37 per cent of all employees.

Employees who have participated this process have benefited in many ways:

- Better self-confidence
- Better quality job
- Broadened and improved skills-base which enables employees to undertake a greater variety of tasks
- Greater understanding of work processes and tasks
- Training grant
- Salary increase
- Improved access to training courses
- Better access to promotions
- Certificates which are recognised by companies in the same sector
- Course exemptions in colleges
- Farer career progression route.

#### ***For the company***

Outcomes for the company from recognising informal/non-formal learning are multifaceted:

- Their employees are multi-skilled and more motivated, committed and adaptable employees than before.
- Validation initiative has helped the company to transform itself from a basic manufacturing enterprise into high value-added production company – thanks to the highly skilled workforce.
- Team working culture has improved – staff members increasingly work together and are able to replace one and another during absences.
- Move towards more equal, less hierarchical employee structure due to increased skill levels.
- Company has received several national recognitions for its human resources policies (e.g. award for good employer, best apprenticeship scheme provider of the year, Best place to work 2004 ‘Suomen parhaat työnantajat 2004’ - 2nd position and the only awarded manufacturing company).
- Excellent working environment and low staff turnover levels (turnover levels have gone from 20-40% down just to 5%).
- Higher productivity: during the early training periods the productivity of each participating employee slightly falls but in the longer term significantly improves as a result of new skills and motivation.

#### ***Wider impact***

The initiative has also had a wider industry level impact. The initiative has helped to raise the status and credibility of the wood production industry. These days a couple of largest companies in the same industry (e.g. Stora Enso, UPM) have also introduced similar procedures.

#### *33.8.4 Sustainability and transferability*

Koskisen Oy recognises there is still more to do in this area and even more has to be done in this sector in the future. Companies in this industry will be hit extremely severely by staff shortages in a decade or so due to ageing population. Secondly, the industry requires increasingly higher skilled labour in the future.

#### *33.8.5 Barriers and future support needs*

##### ***Barriers for companies***

Traditional way of thinking in the Finnish society is that educational institutes take care of education & training while companies focus on running their business and providing employment. Education institutes lose money if more companies provide their own training and validate their skills – therefore some colleges may not be as interested in collaborating in validation activities as hoped. This again has knock-on effects on companies as HR departments rarely have the theoretical expertise in place to develop training courses and assessment procedures.

Finally, many companies do not understand the potential benefits of validation initiatives yet and smaller companies rarely have resources to set up such initiatives.

##### ***Supportive policy frameworks***

Support from different levels of policy makers and other actors could help more companies to get involved in validation initiatives. European and national level recognition for companies actively developing and delivering validation initiatives is of paramount importance.

National and European actors are also needed to increase appreciation for vocational work and vocational education and training. Currently too much focus is laid on university education, while majority of businesses are lacking skilled but less theoretically educated labour. It is also important to link education and training frameworks closer to the needs of business life.

Businesses taking up validation initiatives would like to receive more support from local and regional vocational colleges – flexibility from them to come and help companies to design and implement similar schemes.

#### *33.8.6 Conclusions*

This initiative demonstrates particularly good practice in the way in which it assesses and recognises skills acquired at work. The methodological validity of the development as well as the assessment is ensured by engaging different stakeholders, also employees themselves, in the process. Furthermore, external experts are also used to ensure theoretical validity of both training and assessment.

Recognition of skills and competences bring clear benefits for the employees of Koskisen Oy as well as for the company itself. Certificates are recognised by the industry and education institutes, and recognition also automatically leads into salary increase and improved access to training and promotions. Also very importantly, validation of skills in the company has created a fairer career progression system for all employees of the company.

The company adopts 'access for all' approach, everyone is allowed and encouraged to get their skills recognised.

### **33.9 Cockerill Sambre (Belgium)**

*Francesca Froy and James Winter (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

#### *33.9.1 Introduction*

Cockerill Sambre is a Wallonia-based steel making business, which, since 2002, has been part of the Arcelor Group, the world's biggest steel maker.

Group-wide restructuring means that Cockerill's blast-furnace activities will end in 2009 and the workforce will be cut by 25%. As part of the restructuring plan, the company's training department teamed up with researchers from the University of Liège (CRIFA) to develop a methodology for transferring the knowledge and skills of workers leaving on early retirement to other workers within the firm. The project involved:

- identification of skills profiles and key individuals to act as "trainers"
- development of training techniques and tools
- validation of these tools and desired outcomes within the firm (training centre and Human Resources department)
- implementation of training plan

The project was funded entirely by Cockerill Sambre. There was no centralised budget; instead each sector was allowed to set its own budget for the exercise.

The project partnership included CRIFA, University of Liege: Centre de Recherche sur l'instrumentation, la formation et l'apprentissage.

#### *33.9.2 Project development*

The project developed as part of a bottom up process. When Cockerill Sambre was forced to encourage early retirement to a percentage of their work force there were complaints from the work floor that a considerable amount of knowledge was being lost, and there were fears for the impact of this on the effectiveness and safety of production processes. The company's response to this was to attempt to transfer the knowledge of those taking early retirement to newer members of the work force through a validation and training procedure. Cockerill Sambre worked with CRIFA on the design of the validation and training process, whilst encouraging their staff to participate actively in the design of the tools and materials to be used, and in the training process itself. There were several negotiations with staff to ensure that they were happy with their involvement in the validation and training activities, and the resulting materials. These negotiations were successfully concluded so there was not a need for union involvement.

#### *33.9.3 Policy background*

In Belgium, there is still a tendency to give greater financial support to class room based learning because it is easier to quantify and understand than work based learning. This was felt to be a missed opportunity as real learning often happens 'on the job'.

### 33.9.4 *Activities*

The programme developed by Cockerill Sambre involves the following activities:

#### ***Developing competence profiles***

Through working with employees, CRIFA has identified competency profiles for four different types of post:

- Foundry workers
- Network Managers (staff who maintain electricity, water and other systems)
- Agglomeration process workers
- Workers in the coke plant

For each different sector, CRIFA worked with an identified ‘expert worker’ (an experienced individual who was about to retire) to identify:

- The main tasks involved in delivering their work
- The sub-tasks of each main task
- The problems which could potentially arise in association with each sub-task
- The order in which the tasks (and any problem resolution) should be carried out
- How these tasks should be taught to others (by explanation, demonstration, models, videos, documentation, allowing staff to ‘have a go’ before being corrected if necessary)
- This information was stored in Excel worksheets so it could be easily updated

### ***Developing fiches***

For each type of activity or sub task, three fiches were drawn up using the above information:

- A description fiche
- A problem fiche
- An order of operations fiche

These fiches used clear and simple language, and a common system of graphics, offering a user friendly guide for each activity. Plastic covered copies were made available at each place of work. Each fiche was drawn up in Word so it could be easily updated and reprinted.

### ***Developing manuals***

Those workers responsible for maintaining the supporting infrastructure networks needed more in-depth supporting information due to the more technical nature of the tasks involved. However, the same principles were followed, and CRIFA worked with experienced individuals to translate the complex and sometimes confusing manuals previously used into user friendly guides using photos and graphics, based on a common presentational style.

### ***Developing training tools***

A practical model was built in one case to help demonstrate how to do a task, in other cases videos were developed to help in the training process.

### ***Delivering training to tutors***

Once the supporting materials were ready, CRIFA then trained up the ‘experienced workers’ as tutors who could pass on their knowledge to young members of staff. Roughly half of all the experienced workers who were about to leave the company agreed to act as tutors, mainly for one specific competency. Negotiations with the management ensured that tutors did not lose either salary or benefits through their involvement in the tutoring process, however the tutors still maintained all their other production related duties.

The tutors also received special training in pedagogical techniques, including advice on how people learn, and guidance on how to evaluate learning activities and double check that learning has actually taken place.

### ***Delivering training to new workers***

In order to prioritise the training to be delivered to the newer workers, each sub-task was given a rating according to how frequently it was carried out, and how important it was. Most of the training was delivered ‘on the job’ with only workers in the Coke plant receiving class



room instruction. Each worker has a training book which acts as a check list of competencies they have learnt, and are going to learn. Periodically, a 'validation committee' consisting of the tutor, worker and direct manager meet to agree the competencies the worker has acquired and award an appropriate salary increase .

### *33.9.5 Learning assessment*

#### ***Turning 'tacit' knowledge into 'explicit' knowledge***

The CRIFA approach is based on the understanding that it is crucial to transfer the implicit knowledge held by the more experienced older workers into explicit competencies and techniques which can then be taught to others. Previous to the validation activity, new people joined the company with no specific training, and frequently with little schooling (primary or lower secondary level). They then learnt the trade through watching older and more experienced workers over a number of years. In this way, they learnt how to deal with problems and difficulties as they arose. It is estimated that learning in this way at Cockerill Sambre took between 3-5 years, as this was the time it took for a worker to witness the majority of the problems which can develop on the job, and to learn how to deal with them.

By asking experienced workers to explicitly identify their competencies, and the problems which can arise during their work, Cockerill Sambre have managed to build up a system where most of the problems which occur in the workplace can be simulated, and thereby dealt with in a far shorter period of time. This has condensed the learning process, cutting the learning of many tasks down to a few months. An advantage of this type of training, as opposed to a class room based training exercise, is that workers learn from experienced workers how things are *really* done on the job as opposed to how they are ideally done in a text book situation. For this type of work the physical means of doing something is particularly important, and this is difficult to learn from a book. In addition, as many of the new people being trained had a negative experience of school, it was felt to be important to differentiate this training from classroom tuition in order to encourage participation.

Learning is assessed by a 'validation panel' (see above) using a retrospective analysis of what a worker has learnt over a period of time. The worker's training book, or checklist, is useful in supporting this process.

### *33.9.6 Project management and monitoring*

No overall evaluation of the project has so far been carried out. There was an attempt to assess the cost of implementation in one sector, but given that there are so many costs which are difficult to quantify e.g. investment of staff time, it has been difficult to do a proper cost benefit analysis. One of the main benefits of the training will be avoidance of problems and dangerous situations, the benefits of which it is difficult to assess. The project has been unsuccessful in certain sectors, but it was felt that this is partly because the project was not so appropriate to these sectors, either because the transfer of knowledge was not felt to be so necessary, or because there were different claims on resources.

33.9.7 *Drawing from other European experience*

CRIFA have previously been involved in an ADAPT project and an ESF project in this field and has worked on a similar competency assessment exercise in the field of refuse collection and recycling in Luxembourg. They find validation methodologies to be particularly transferable between different sectors.

33.9.8 *Outcomes and benefits*

• ***For the individuals***

The main outcome for the new workers is that they now have more formalised training which allows them to learn quicker. In addition, they have their competencies recognised, which means that they achieve a salary increase. For the experienced workers, the main outcome is an appreciation of their own competencies, training in tutoring and the satisfaction of knowing that their skills are being passed on to a younger generation and their work will continue into the future.

• ***For the organisation***

Cockerill Sambre have reduced the significant loss of knowledge which can be associated with a large scale reduction in more experienced staff, in addition to improving knowledge management within the organisation, and integrating health and safety mechanisms into wider training.

33.9.9 *Sustainability*

This activity will continue while members of the workforce are being shed, until 2009 at least.

33.9.10 *Transferability & dissemination*

Cockerill Sambre have not yet disseminated information about their project very widely. This was partly because they felt that the project had been developed by their own workers in a way which was relevant to their own particular context. The involvement of staff in the development process is a key part of the activity, and Cockerill Sambre feel that the resulting fiches and paperwork would not be particularly useful to other companies/organisations, without their going through the same development process for themselves. However they acknowledge that they could disseminate the development model itself more widely and would be very happy to do so if people were interested.

33.9.11 *Success factors and barriers to be overcome*

***Success factors***

The following factors would seem to have led to the success of the project:

- Involvement and goodwill of the workers – at all levels of the hierarchy
- Development of clearly understandable training materials
- The emphasis on making implicit knowledge explicit
- Tutors have been well motivated
- Tutors employed had the right level of expertise to pass on the knowledge
- Each area of training adapted to suit the work practices it was dealing with
- Practice was based on proven theories:
  - knowledge management
  - Constructivism
  - Cognitivism
  - Applied teaching methods
  - Application of ‘made to measure’ toolsets (ergonomics etc.)

***Barriers to take up***

The following barriers were identified during the validation process:

- Developing a common vocabulary was a significant issue. There were a number of different buildings and sectors involved in the process and even groups working in similar sectors used a very different set of terms for similar tasks. This had to be rationalised when developing the task fiches and manuals;
- There was some resistance amongst some sectors due to the resources required
- There was some resistance amongst older more experienced workers who had been through several different restructuring processes and felt that this was expecting too much from them.

33.9.12 *Looking to the future*

When looking towards the future it was felt that the following factors could help support the further development of this type of activity:

***At project level***

- It was felt that an overall evaluation exercise would be useful, and Cockerill Sambre are interested in finding out more about the Corus Netherlands model for analysing the overall financial benefits of validation exercises.
- Another possible ‘next stage’ could be for the workers to receive certification for their competencies, but this would require a more outward looking approach to the exercise. At present, Cockerill Sambre is mainly looking inwards towards the needs of the organisation, rather than outwards towards the needs of individuals who have left the company.
- It was also discussed whether the experienced workers could be given a certificate for their training in tutoring skills. This was felt to be a relatively sensitive issue,

however, as it could lead to changing expectations by these workers in relation to their position within the company. The company was also slightly resistant to the idea of formal certification as this would require a greater level of external verification in order to ensure that the certification was fully valid and transferable outside of the organisation.

*At national policy level*

- More support for work based learning

*At EU policy level*

- Keep funding validation activities

### **33.10 Recreational Activity Study Book: Youth Academy, Finland**

*By Lauri Savisaari (State Provincial Office of Southern Finland, formerly Youth Academy, Finland)*

#### **33.10.1 Introduction: learning in voluntary activities – why recognition?**

School is an important learning environment for young people. However, young people learn outside school, as well. Especially participation in voluntary and leisure activities offer good places for learning. Young people learn many valuable life skills in voluntary and leisure activities, i.e., co-operation and team skills, communication skills, goal-orientation and problem solving skills. These mentioned skills are also useful when a young persons attends further education or working life.

Learning in voluntary and leisure activities carries various names: it might be called "civic learning", "non-formal learning" or "informal learning". If a learning activity is defined to be "non-formal learning", the organising party should have a clear understanding of the learning that is supposed to take place in the activity. That implies at least some educational principles or an "educational program" behind the activity. One cannot argue a learning activity to be "non-formal" without a clear, well-defined understanding of the learning that takes place in activity. In addition, it is essential that both the learner and the educator are aware of the aims and methods of the supposed learning situation.<sup>370</sup> Without these definitions, the learning is "informal" or "occasional" by nature. In this context, both non-formal and informal ways of learning things and acquiring competencies are dealt with, parallelly. Most organisations that deal with young people do have a clear educational role and many even have their own educational programs (for example the scout movement).

Formal education and non-formal or informal learning (that takes place for example in voluntary and leisure activities) support and complement each other. In line with the principles and aims of lifelong learning, the learning environment of young people should be approached as an entity, the ingredients of which are formal educational system, working life and free-time environments (such as home, leisure activities, family, peer groups, etc.). Integration of formal and non-formal learning implies actions and a change of traditional attitudes. Learning of young people in voluntary and leisure activities is usually observed from the point of view of formal education. When doing so, the essential concepts are a) identification, b) recognition, and c) validation of learning.

From the viewpoint of voluntary and leisure activities, it is important that the learning taking place in activities is recognised and appreciated in society. Thus, evaluation of non-formal or informal learning is also important. Through evaluation the learning environment produced by youth organisations can be further developed. Evaluation or measurement of informal learning is particularly difficult, though, since the learning outcomes are very difficult to place in a specific context, time or place. In addition, informal learning includes also non-

---

<sup>370</sup> For example Sahlberg 1999, 10.

course-based activities like information, advice or guidance, which do not usually have an agreed curriculum<sup>371</sup>.

Accreditation of non-formal learning in voluntary and leisure activities can also carry risks: if, for example, a formal educational institution automatically credits a certain activity, the voluntary nature of the learning activity could be endangered. In addition, the formal educational system is relatively equal (at least in the Nordic countries) in regard to place of residence, but possibilities to actively participate in voluntary and leisure activities vary a great deal, depending on which area or region of the country one happens to live in. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the learning experiences in voluntary and leisure activities always personally, case-sensitively and in regard to specific fields of formal education.

### *33.10.2 Recreational Activity Study Book*

In Finland there has been a system called "Recreational Activity Study Book" since 1996. The system is developed by Youth Academy, which is a co-operation organisation for major Finnish youth & sports NGOs. The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture supports the study book system. The study book is a non-formal and informal learning CV for young people. They can collect entries from all learning experiences in voluntary and leisure activities. There are over 70.000 study book owners in Finland (30.10.2004). The book serves young people as a tool for making all the experiences and learning – self-development, growth etc. - outside school visible. It is also an instrument for identifying and crediting non-formal learning when applying for a job or further education. Youth Academy has a written agreement with 250 formal educational institutions on how to value and credit the entries in the book. The study book is a feasible way to document and recognise the non-formal and informal learning of young people. The entries in the book can be collected either in Finnish, Swedish or English.

The Finnish study book system focuses strongly on the development of the individual learner – young people. Despite of the fact that some pathways towards formal education have been created as a part of the study book system, the idea is to cherish the very voluntary nature of the learning taking place in outside-school, voluntary and free-time surroundings. Therefore, there are neither any criteria for the measurement of learning outcomes or performance, nor any public examinations held to assess the competencies supposedly acquired.

The Recreational Activity Study Book system is feasible for the documentation – and recognition – of both qualifications and competencies acquired by participating in youth voluntary activities. More focus is, however, placed on the competencies. That has to do with the individual learner-centeredness of the study book system. In the study book, more emphasis is put on the development of each young person's personality rather than the actual qualifications of the skills required in particular job requirements.<sup>372</sup> The underlying idea is

---

<sup>371</sup> McGivney 1999 & 2000, ref. Katus 2002, 124-125.

<sup>372</sup> See Euler 2001, 197-198.

that by participating in youth voluntary or recreational activities, young people do have a chance to acquire key competencies in regard to personal development, such as social, communicative etc. competencies.

The reasons for the openness and “non-measurability” of the Finnish study book system are several. First of all, as Bentley argues, subjective perceptions of learning outcomes or competencies acquired should not be of marginal validity, as they often are in systems depending on public examinations. According to Bentley, subjective perceptions are “central to the quality of learning, and the extent to which what has been learned will be retained and applied in other contexts”.<sup>373</sup>

The second reason for the openness and flexibility of the study book system is the already mentioned appreciation of the voluntary nature of youth informal and non-formal learning. By formalising the system, the basic motivation for participation in youth activities, i.e. the joy of being, doing and learning together, would be endangered. Youth Academy attempts to encourage the representatives of the formal education system to recognise and value the learning and competencies young people acquire outside school, as well as to do more co-operation with organisations offering young people meaningful learning environments. But the issue is always approached from an individual learner’s point of view, not the point of view of the formal educational system, for example.

The third reason for keeping the study book system informal and flexible is that by doing so, all young people can gain access to it and collect entries from various learning activities. The Recreational Activity Study Book is not only targeted to those young people which are active in one or another youth organisation. Competencies can be acquired and things can be learned in various situations and settings, even the non-organised ones<sup>374</sup>. Therefore, even though the study book system is developed by Youth Academy and its twelve member organisations (major Finnish youth and sports NGOs), it is open to all young people, and the content is designed in a way that all young people “fit” in to be able to make use of it.

The study book itself is divided into nine categories, according to the nature of the learning activity. The categories are:

1. Regular participation in leisure activities;
2. Holding positions of trust and responsibility within NGOs;
3. Activities as a leader, trainer or coach;
4. Participation in a project;
5. Courses;
6. International activities;
7. Workshop activities (apprenticeship);
8. Competitions; and
9. Other activities.

---

<sup>373</sup> Bentley 1998, 147.

<sup>374</sup> See Euler 2001, 198-202.

By looking at the categories, one can see that there are environments of both non-formal and informal learning present. The most formalised form of learning is the category “courses” which means organised and often hierarchical educational programs offered by various youth and sport NGOs and other learning providers. The eight other categories fall more or less under the umbrella of informal learning, in which the learning-by-doing approach is often the method for acquiring competencies and skills.

According to a survey carried out by Youth Academy in spring 2003 (690 informants), the most popular category is “Courses” (17,4 %). The categories “Activities as a leader, trainer or coach”, “Holding positions of trust and responsibility” and “Regular participation in leisure activities” are also quite popular (12 – 13 % each).

The following figure illustrates an example page of the Recreational Activity Study Book.



Type of activity: Holding positions of trust and responsibility within NGOs					
Organisation in which the activity took place _____	Time/dates of the activity __/__/____ - __/__/____ In average _____ hours per week/month				
Position of the young person in the organisation _____	Successes and competencies acquired _____ _____ _____				
Description of the activity _____ _____ _____ _____	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%; border: none;">Place</td> <td style="width: 40%; border: none;">Date</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="border: none;">                     _____                      _____                      _____                 </td> </tr> </table>	Place	Date	_____ _____ _____	
Place	Date				
_____ _____ _____					
Young person's self-assessment of the learning _____ _____	Signature of the person responsible of activity _____ _____				
	Contact information of the undersigned person _____				
	Position of the undersigned person _____				

The entries in the book are always written by an adult (= over 18 years of age) person who is either responsible or well aware of the particular activity. Young people themselves fill in the part "Self-assessment of the learning". The idea is to focus more on what and how things have been learned rather than what has only been done. The person undersigning the entry adds his/her contact information, in case someone wants to check whether the young person actually has participated in the activity or not.

The educational institutions involved in the system have a written agreement with Youth Academy on how and to which extent they value and credit the entries in the book. It is essential to bear in mind that accreditation and validation of the learning experiences documented in the study book is always individual and case-sensitive. The system does not aim for direct accreditation in formal education in any way. It is of great importance that the voluntary nature of participating and learning in voluntary youth activities, whether organised or not, will not be endangered.

The Recreational Activity Study Book is distributed to young people mainly through youth and sports NGOs. Young people usually receive or purchase the study book during being involved in the activities of a particular NGO, for example when attending courses etc. Recently, more and more private companies have purchased a limited number of study books and given them to young people locally, either through schools or youth and sport organisations.

### *33.10.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the Recreational Activity Study Book*

The Recreational Activity Study Book was originally developed by several experts from the member organisations of Youth Academy. The need for such a product was of a rather instrumental nature in the first place: how could those young people that are very active in the voluntary work of specific NGOs gain and benefit from their experiences and learning? The main focus was on the benefits rather than on the development of individual young people. A hidden agenda was also present: the NGOs behind Youth Academy felt the need for better recognition of their own activities and even existence.

The Recreational Activity Study Book was very effectively distributed to the young active members of the founding organisations in the first years (1996-1998). The organisations were strongly committed to the promotion of the Study Book, but less focus was put on the actual use of the book. Therefore, a lot of the Study Books distributed in the first years were given to the “right” young people, but after that there were hardly enough support measures to encourage young people to go on using the book and collecting entries in it.

Having learned important lessons from the first years with the Study Book, Youth Academy invested on supporting those young people that already had got or purchased the book. Youth Academy began to published a magazine for the Study Book owners. The magazine came out twice a year, and it included articles about different kind of organisations, voluntary activities, learning in leisure time, funding own projects, using the Study Book in formal education and job recruiting etc. The magazine was sent to those Study Book owners who had registered to Youth Academy.

At the same time, Youth Academy began to do biannual surveys on how the Study Book was actually used and how the product could be developed. The main results from the surveys have been that, although some young people actually have used the book when applying to further education or a job, most of the study book users are somewhat passive in using the book. The most important function for the Study Book users seems to be that the book is a black-on-white documentary for themselves on what actually has been going on in their years of youth.

The educational institutions involved in the Recreational Activity Study Book system have not always found it easy to use in recognition and valuing previous learning experiences of young people. This has mostly to do with the fact that the book is structured according to the nature of voluntary freetime activities rather than according to the curricula of different formal educational institutions. The book focuses on experiences of young people and the

learning in those experiences rather than on the skills and competencies actually acquired. A more competence-based approach would suit the educational institutions better, and probably some young people as well. However, it has been a strong strategic – and even ideological – decision by Youth Academy and its member organisations that the Recreational Activity Study Book has to be structured upon the activities, not the competencies. This has to do with the more general question in youth work and youth policy about to what extent can youth work focus on the employability of young people. The answer to that question has been – at least this far – that youth work focuses on the development of the individual, not merely on employability issues.

When writing this article, Youth Academy is a national partner in a European project called “REFINE – Recognising Formal, Informal and Non-formal Education”. Youth Academy participates with the Recreational Activity Study Book. Being a partner in the REFINE project has made it possible to test the suitability of the book in formal vocational education. At the moment, 30 young students are using the Study Book in In Jyväskylä Vocational Institute, in which there’s a project aiming at prevention of dropping out of vocational education. As a part of that project, the Institute organises free-time activities for the students. The students participating in those free-time activities are testing the Recreational Activity Study Book and they are promised to get study credits from the entries in the study book at the end of the term. Results from this pilot project are expected in spring 2005. Preliminary feedback has sent the message that the Study Book probably needs some “calibration” to be done in order to be able to serve the needs of formal education curricula.

#### *33.10.4 Conclusion: Adaptation to the European mainstream?*

The Recreational Activity Study Book system has raised positive interest on European level – it is also mentioned as a good practice in the European White Book on Youth Policy by the European Commission. The Finnish study book system could be one starting point in creating a European model for the recognition of youth non-formal and informal learning, bearing in mind the cultural and educational differences in different European countries.

There are several other European processes regarding the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Most of the work in those processes is carried out by experts in the field of formal education. From the point of view of voluntary civic activities, this is a bit problematic, since the approach towards recognition is almost always focused on skills and competencies rather than rewarding activity as such. Youth Academy has closely followed the on-going processes and is considering their possible effects on the future of the Recreational Activity Study Book. It is inevitable that for example “Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning” by the European Commission have to be taken into account when further developing the Study Book. Luckily, in most of the European processes regarding the theme, youth organisations and youth voluntary freetime activities have been – at least to some extent – treated and dealt with as important learning environments.

It may well be, that in the future the Recreational Activity Study Book will be restructured to meet the common European principles and standards better. But even when that happens, we

have to be careful not to sacrifice the most valuable asset of the Recreational Activity Study Book, namely the appreciation of voluntary activities and young people's engagement to voluntarily participate in different freetime activities.

References:

Bentley, T. (1998). *Learning beyond the Classroom: Education for a Changing World*. London and New York: Routledge.

Euler, D. (2001). Ambitious Expectations and Social Key Competencies. *Lifelong Learning in Europe*, 4/2001, 197-204.

Katus, J. (2002). Literature review on two books by Veronica McGivney: Informal learning in the community, a trigger for change and development (1999 Leicester: NIACE); and Working with excluded groups. Guidelines on good practice for providers and policy-makers in working with groups underrepresented in adult learning (2000 Leicester: NIACE). In *Lifelong Learning in Europe*, 2/2002, 124-125.

Sahlberg, P. (1999). *Building Bridges for Learning: the Recognition and Value of Non-formal Education in Youth Activity*. European Youth Forum in co-operation with the National Board of Education, Finland. Brussels 1999.

### **34.0 CONCLUSIONS: VALIDATION APPROACHES IN EUROPE**

*By Manuel Souto Otero, Andrew McCoshan and Kerstin Junge (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

An examination of the national chapters presented in this report shows that national or European approaches to validation of non-formal and informal learning to some extent still operate on the periphery of the huge reservoir of competences developed through informal and non-formal learning. This is because a substantial reorientation of vocationally oriented education and training is currently taking place, often initiated at the public level with a move from input-oriented to output-oriented systems. This is also because a large number of validation initiatives are still at a relatively early stage of development and it is important not to underestimate the potential of these initiatives.

As has been mentioned in several instances in the overview chapter, European countries have developed and applied a number of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning, for different functions and purposes. A great rate of progress has been achieved in recent years in this area. To shed some light on these approaches, this chapter presents an attempt at categorising these.

While there are a large variety of validation initiatives have been established in Europe., a closer look shows that their underlying methods, principles and purpose is often similar. Based on these criteria, the sections below give five main categories of validation approaches:

- Tests and examinations
- Declarative methods
- The portfolio method
- Observation

These approaches differ not only by the process or end-result they achieve but also by complexity. A closer description of each of these methods is presented below, as well as examples of methods from the countries covered in the Inventory.

It is important to highlight that there is scope for further break down of the categories presented below into more specific validation methodologies within each of them. The categories we describe, nevertheless, present existing approaches in a comprehensive and parsimonious way. The categories presented below mostly overlap with the categories developed by Danielle Colardyn and Jens Bjornavold in their work on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.<sup>375</sup> However, due to the nature of the evidence presented in the national chapters of this report, we have not entirely followed Colardyn's and Bjornvold's approach. The main variation we have in relation to Colardyn and Bjornvold is that two of

---

<sup>375</sup>By progressing in this manner we choose a similar approach to that taken in the forthcoming Inventory publication by Danielle Colardyn and Jens Bjornavold. (Colardyn, D. and Bjornavold, J. (forthcoming) *National policies and practices in validation of non-formal and informal learning*, European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal Learning. Report 1)

their validation categories - simulation and evidences extracted from work - have been included in one single categorisation in order to make the reader aware of their existence and have, due to a lack of evidence presented in the national chapters, not been given much emphasis.

The section concludes with a summary highlighting the main points of the discussion. A table at the end of the chapter gives a wider set of examples for each category than is mentioned in the text.

### **34.1 Test and examinations**

This category comprises methodologies that identify and validate non-formal and informal learning through or with the help of examinations in the formal system. Thus, an individual enters examinations of the formal education system and by passing them, his or her competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning are validated. This process also formalises an individual's skills as the end-result is a formal and usually generally recognised diploma or certificate.

This type of methodology exists in a variety of European countries, for example Germany, Austria, Norway, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, France, Sweden, Finland and Malta. Validation with the help of examinations of the initial vocational training system is the most frequently applied approach.

In Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Lithuania, for instance, proof of several years' work experience in a particular occupation normally grants access to the final examination of the relevant occupation even if the individual has not been formally enrolled in the relevant training programme. The type of examination can be a mix of written and practical tests. This method can be characterised as being the most important (in terms of acceptability and take-up) of the validation methods in these countries. These countries have in common a training and employment system which places great emphasis on state-recognised qualifications as proof of competence.

However, there are variations on this system practiced in other European countries. In Norway, for instance, adults have by law the right to have their knowledge and skills documented *at all levels* within the public education system independently of how these competencies were acquired. This is in addition to the right to access to vocational training examinations based on work experience. In the Czech Republic it is access not to final examinations in vocational training but to the preceding exams that validate non-formal and informal learning that has taken place at the workplace. The new school act allows for the recognition of alternative ways to study if an individual is looking to transfer from one programme to another.

Examples of validating non-formal and informal learning with the help of formal exams outside initial vocational training are much more rarely found in the Inventory. Finland is among the few European countries that allows access to the secondary school leaving

examination (Matriculation Examination) to pupils who have not completed the necessary course of study in the formal education system.

Approaches are top-down<sup>376</sup> as they are necessarily government-initiated and summative in nature and are regarded as valid and reliable.

### **34.2 Declarative methods**

As the title of the category suggests, declarative methods are based on individuals' own identification and recording of their competences. Normally a third party counter-signs the declaration, which may take the form of a so-called "competence handbook", in order to verify the self-assessment. Declarative methods may involve a self-assessment against given criteria or none at all. This validation process is simple because it involves the use of only one instrument. It is a recording process because the purpose of validation is purely the *identification* of skills gained through non-formal and informal learning. Many examples of this type of method can be found in the third sector.

One example of a declarative instrument is the Recreational Activity Study Book developed by the Finnish Youth Academy. This book provides a means for young volunteers and their adult supervisors to record their activities and experiences at volunteering projects. The main purpose is to install a sense of achievement in the young person. Another example is the Hamburg Voluntary Booklet (Hamburger Freiwilligenbuch). This booklet allows the owner to describe a task and its duration. The entrance is then certified by a third person or organisation. The Dutch National Scouting Association Jamboree also has an instrument that allows its members to record the skills learned as leaders, tam leaders and group guides.

A variation of this method is the Competence Handbook of the German metal trade union IG Metall. This lists a set of between nine and 16 individual competencies in three areas: professional, methodological and social. With the help of this framework the individual can their personal profile of competencies.

These instruments have in common that an individual's recording of experiences is central in the process, though some external checks tend to be built into the methods. For this reason they are less reliable than the methods other in the other categories. It tends to be a bottom-up approach and formative in nature.

### **34.3 The portfolio method**

Competence portfolios have proved a popular methodology to validate non-formal and informal learning in Europe. Examples can be found in many countries covered by the Inventory, and competence portfolios are being developed and employed by the public, private and voluntary sectors. The distinguishing feature of competence portfolios is that they tend to use a mix of methods and instruments employed in consecutive stages to produce a

---

<sup>376</sup> The exceptions are Austria and Germany where, due to the strong involvement of the social partners in vocational training, this type of method is a mix of top-down and bottom-up.

coherent set of documents showing an individual's skills in different ways. In the most general of senses, competence portfolios tend to involve a self-assessment based on a questionnaire or a set of given criteria, interview(s) with a third party and / or an assessment centre. Because the approach is very versatile, it is being employed by a variety of organisations for a large range of purposes. The portfolio method tends to be process-orientated. Often it is used as a tool to help the further academic or career development of an individual.

The best-known portfolio method is probably the French *Bilan de Compétence* which has been in place since the 1980s. This involves the analysis of an individual's expectations and skills, a document drawn up by a professional counsellor employed by an accredited centre and is followed up by careers advice. Since 1991 all employees with at least five years' work experience have the right to 24 hours paid leave to undertake the process in an accredited centre. The *Bilan de Compétence* used in Luxembourg was created by legislation in 1998, and the methodology employed is a combination of interviews, questionnaires and observation by third parties of the individual being assessed. The Bilan has been drawn up as a tool to better match the personal and professional skills of an individual (often job seekers) and the skills required by the labour market. In the UK, a recent project by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) – Recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA) – consists of a five-stage process which identifies a learner's aims, their starting point in terms of knowledge and skills, learning objectives, progress and achievement during a learning programme and concludes with an assessment process leading to a portfolio containing records of the assessment (by the learner, their peers, the tutor) as well as evidence of any written and practical work undertaken.

Often, competence portfolios are developed in order to help disadvantaged people to social inclusion or into employment. For instance, the University of Rome has developed a digital portfolio to be used in particular by disadvantaged young people. In a four-stage process, competencies are analysed and identified, relevant documents digitised, the most important skills identified and a complete portfolio file, including photographs, produced. A further example is the learning portfolio developed by the Community Women's Education Initiative (CWEI) in Ireland. Targeting traveller women, the portfolio uses non-written techniques such as collages and photography as well as interviews with individual traveller women to explore the value of story telling and learning in the traveller culture.

The portfolio method addresses the questions of validity, reliability and authenticity by combining a variety of methods as well as "internal" self-assessment with external assessment. This reduces the subjectivity of the assessment. Competence portfolios are formative approaches and, as the examples above suggest, can be employed both in a top-down and a bottom-up manner.



### **34.4 Observation**

As the title suggests, this method for validating non-formal and informal learning involves extracting evidence of competence from an individual while they are performing everyday tasks at work. Evidence extracted from work practices relies on observation by a third party for the judgement of the competence level acquired.

The national chapters do not contain many examples for the sole use of observation at work as a method to validate non-formal and informal learning. However, in several instances observation is a key element in the validation methods developed and applied in the private sector.

For instance, in the Netherlands, businesses applying the procedures to validate non-formal and informal learning agreed in sectoral bargaining processes (EVC procedures) use workplace observation as one element of competence recognition. An employee applying to have practical skills recognised, and having initially created a competence portfolio, is visited by an examination board at the workplace where they are asked to fulfil certain tasks. Upon satisfactory completion, the certificate is handed over.

The Finnish chapter provides the example of a wood processing company who awards nationally recognised qualifications to employees with no formal qualification on the basis of practical tests carried out at the workplace which are assessed by an external assessor, employer and employee representatives.

### **34.5 Simulation and evidences extracted from work**

In addition to similar categories to those introduced above, Colardyn and Bjornavold introduce two additional categories for the validation of non-formal and informal learning:

- Simulation
- Evidences extracted from work (or other) practices.

According to Colardyn and Bjornavold, simulation means that competences are not tested in real life (because, for various reasons, they cannot be), but that an individual is placed in a situation that fulfils all the criteria of the real-life scenario in order to have their competencies assessed.

Validation methods falling into the category “evidences extracted from work (or other) practices” have in common that a candidate collects physical or intellectual evidence of learning outcomes. This may relate to work situations, voluntary activities, family or other settings. This evidence then forms the basis of a validation of competences by a third party.

The national chapters of this Inventory present little information on the use of these categories. Those interested in finding out more about these methodologies in practice we refer to the Colardyn and Bjornavold report, which shows that:

- AFPA in France use a simulation method in the field of “control and maintenance of enterprises local networks” where an individual’s ability is assessed with the help of two sets of questions that describe a real-life scenario; and
- A Dutch competence test requires an individual to describe the approach followed when wrapping up at least five different types of packages which serves as evidence of work practices.

### **34.6 Summary**

Above we have presented in some detail four methods to validate non-formal and informal learning in Europe:

- Tests and examinations
- Declarative methods
- The portfolio method
- Observation

These categories of methods are not specific to one particular sector. All of the methods falling into these four categories are employed by at least two of the three types of organisations involved in developing and applying methods to validate non-formal and informal learning: public sector, private sector and third sector organisations. They can be both top-down and bottom-up in approach.

One aspect that validation initiatives have in common is the importance of dialogue between the candidate and the teacher/ assessor during the learning and validation process, which is greater than in the context of formal education programmes. Such form of dialogue is particularly important in the identification phase of the validation process, but also at the examination phase. This makes the communication flow between learner/ teacher and assessor more balanced and less one-sided since it allows for inputs from the candidate in relation to different aspects of the learning process and learning outcomes. One advantage of such approach is that it can lead to greater validity of the results obtained during the validation process. However, this greater input can also raise questions in relation to the reliability and credibility of validation practices, what makes quality assurance issues of paramount importance, as already highlighted in this report.

In this respect, the least reliable category of those presented in this section, is probably the simple recording of competencies as subjectivity is least likely to be eliminated. Methods falling into the remaining three categories all tend to have a greater degree of reliability. A summary of the typology of methods presented and country examples that can be found in the Inventory is given below:

**Table 34.1: Typology of validation methods and a selection of European country examples**

<b>Type of validation method</b>	<b>Examples from European Countries</b>
<b>Tests and examinations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany: access to final examinations of vocational training courses</li> <li>• Austria: access to final examinations of vocational training courses</li> <li>• Liechtenstein: access to final examinations of vocational training courses</li> <li>• Poland: Award of formal qualifications by state examination commissions (national law)</li> </ul>
<b>Declarative methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finland: Recreational Activity Study Book developed (Finnish Youth Academy)</li> <li>• Germany: Hamburg Voluntary Booklet (Patriotic Society), Competence Handbook (IG Metall Trade Union), Competence record (German national research centre for the study of young people)</li> <li>• The Netherlands: Validation of scouting competencies (Jamboree - National Scout Association)</li> <li>• Luxembourg: bilan d’insertion professionnelle (BIP)</li> <li>• European record of achievement (EuroRecord): software tool for planning and recording learning achievements ((European consortium of academic institutions)</li> </ul>
<b>The portfolio method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Italy: Digital Portfolio (University of Rome)</li> <li>• France: Bilan de Compétence (accredited assessment centres)</li> <li>• Luxemburg: de Compétence (national legislation)</li> <li>• Ireland: Learning Portfolio (Community Women’s Education Initiative)</li> <li>• UK: Recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA) (Learning and Skills Council)</li> <li>• Slovak Republic: Individual and Group Psychological Evaluation (PriceWaterhouseCoopers)</li> <li>• Czech Republic: Balance Diagnostic Centres</li> </ul>
<b>Observation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Netherlands: workplace observation as part of the EVC procedure</li> <li>• Finland: awards of nationally recognised qualifications on the basis of practical tests carried out at the workplace and assessed by an external assessor, employer and employee representatives.</li> </ul>

Source: ECOTEC Research and Consulting

## **35.0 THE WAYS FORWARD**

*By Manuel Souto Otero (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)*

The European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning is not an aim in itself; its value will primarily be being a tool for decision-makers in the area of non-formal and informal learning, in different sectors – public, private and voluntary. Its aim is not to provide a mere description of existing initiatives that pre-empt the debate on validation by providing an authoritative source on validation methodologies and practices. It is rather proposed as a source of information that stimulates debate.

In this context, there are two key issues to be addressed: how to disseminate the current European Inventory and how to take the European Inventory initiative forward in the future. We take each of these in turn below.

### **35.1 Dissemination of the European Inventory**

#### *35.1.1 Dissemination activities*

A critical issue within the context of the current Inventory project is how to make it known and accessible to a wide audience. A series of steps have already been taken during the life of the project to ensure that the results of the Inventory reach the range of stakeholders interested in its results. These have included:

- The setting-up of a project web-site (<http://ecotec.com/europeanInventory2004/>). As set out in ECOTEC's proposal, during the project life a dedicated project website would be the main mechanism for dissemination of the project activities. Websites are a cost effective means for dissemination of project activities and outputs, providing easy access to information to interested parties. Through the setting up of a project website ECOTEC has made draft European Inventory chapters available for feedback from readers from January 2005. This has increased the transparency regarding work done and has served to improve the quality of the final chapters. The website, moreover, also puts the European Inventory in context and contains information on the Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning, the previous European Inventory prepared by Danielle Collardyn and Jens Bojnavold, other literature on this topic and a glossary of key terms.
- Presentations about the Inventory project at different meetings in Brussels with the European Commission and the Expert's Working Group on validation of non-formal and informal learning, which included representatives from the private as well as public sector.
- Presentation at the European Commission - European Training Foundation conference on the Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning, attended by public and private sector representatives from 13 countries (Vilnius, February 2004).

- Presentation at the “Bridges for recognition” conference organised by SALTO Youth, attended by 125 representatives from the Youth Sector, International organisations and educational institutions from a wide range of European and non-European countries (Leuven, January 2005).
- Distribution of project leaflets at the “Bridges for recognition” conference to disseminate information about ECOTEC’s project website.
- Distribution of project leaflets at the “Beyond Dichotomies” conference, organised by the Comparative and International Education Society, at Stanford University (Palo Alto, March 2005), to disseminate ECOTEC’s project website.
- Liaison with International Organisations such as CEDEFOP, the European Training Foundation and the International Labour Organisation at different stages during the life of the project.
- Interviews with public, private and voluntary sector organisations which served to collect primary information about existing initiatives, to gather feedback about the Inventory draft chapters and to disseminate the project website.
- Liaison with CEDEFOP’s Virtual Community on Non-formal and Informal Learning. ECOTEC has liaised with the Community Moderator, and dissemination of the availability of the European Inventory Draft Chapters has been provided by the Community, which currently has a large membership of practitioners, policy-makers, private and voluntary sector representatives as well as academics, which numbers around 1,000 people.
- ECOTEC’s European Inventory website is currently the second hit provided by the search engine Google.com – the most widely used search engine on the web - to a query on the words “European Inventory” (search on 14/05/05), providing easy access to the website for those who have heard about the project but are unaware of the website address. This would have to be considered when planning to move the website to a different server.
- A reference to the Inventory project will be made on ECOTEC’s corporate website ([www.ecotec.com](http://www.ecotec.com)), under the “Learning and Skills” theme.

### *35.1.2 European Inventory website*

The project website already features on a number of public sector (The European Training Foundation, The European Science Education Portal (xplora), The European Association for Education of Adults, The Swedish National Commission on Validation website, the Finish CIMO, The Norwegian VOX, amongst others), voluntary sector (the European “Association of Colleges”, Scouting Gelderland Netherlands, SALTO Youth, etc.) and private sector websites (for instance software and e-learning firms such as Koders and others, Leonardo Project Inflow). Some of these sites also provide links to the project website.

The Inventory could be further disseminated by establishing links to the project website from the websites of other organisations (European Commission 2010 website, CEDEFOP's website), or by moving the Inventory website to the CEDEFOP server, whilst re-directing visitors there from the current ECOTEC's Inventory website. An important aspect would be to add periodic news and updates to the website so as to keep its audience interested in a continuous use of the website, which could in the future also include following editions of the European Inventory.

The final version of the Inventory will be made available on the website as a number of individual chapters in Adobe Acrobat 7 (for use by those with lower internet bandwidth or an interest in particular sections of the Inventory, for example particular chapters) and a single Adobe document. Adobe Acrobat 7 has a much more powerful search function than previous Adobe versions, making it possible to search for words throughout a single document (as opposed to the page-by-page search function of version 6). This would enable readers to have easy access to the information they are interested in within the Inventory.

In any event, it will be important that the website presents the European Inventory in its policy context to readers. In other words, the Inventory website should reflect the profile of the Inventory and the material it contains. We suggest that the structure for the final version of the European Inventory website as a result of this project is as follows:

*Home: Introductory page, with links to sub-sections*

- Project Aims
- Policy Background

*European Policy*

- European Qualifications Framework
- European Common Principles for Validation of non-formal and informal learning
- "Peer learning" in the context of Europe 2010

*European Inventory 2003*

- Introduction
- Full report

*European Inventory 2005*

- Introduction
- Full report in one document
- Individual National chapters
- Illustration of good practice: case studies

*Other Research on Validation of non-formal and informal learning*

- Downloadable documents
- Excel matrixes with research references (providing details on the content of the referenced materials)

*Links*

- International sources (including the Virtual Community)
- National sources

*Glossary*

- From Cedefop, Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe, Tissot, P., 2004

*Contacts and Feedback*

- ECOTEC contacts and feedback mechanisms

## **35.2 The future for the European Inventory initiative**

### **35.2.1 Introduction**

The current version of the European Inventory aimed to meet an existing need for a wider and deeper overview of validation initiatives in Europe and a clearer understanding of existing data-gaps than existed before. We believe that the Inventory presented in this report, notwithstanding its limitations, meets this need. Never before had systematic information on high-quality validation initiatives been collected for 30 European countries, which is also across different sectors, thus enabling a richer exchange of experiences than in the past. Positive feedback on the chapters has indeed already been received from different national authorities who have reviewed national chapters, by users of CEDEFOP's virtual community on validation of non-formal and informal learning and participants in the "Bridges for Recognition" conference organised by SALTO Youth, where the Inventory was presented<sup>377</sup>.

We consider, however, that a debate should now be opened between those concerned with the use of the Inventory on how the project should be taken forward to be of greater use for stakeholders. Whereas the Inventory presented in this report will be of use for many, we hope, it is also necessary to point out that initiatives in this area are on-going. This great pace of reform makes necessary that the Inventory is continuously updated if it is going to be a reference point for those who it aimed to reach from the beginning of the initiative. Moreover, collecting data on validation initiatives on a large number of countries is a time-consuming task, precisely due to the extremely decentralised character of many of these initiatives. We therefore recommend that discussions on the future of the Inventory are opened between key stakeholders as to what shape should it take in the future as soon as possible.

These discussions could take as a base a broad range of possibilities, which should be filtered depending on the exact needs of the Inventory users. There are a number of current initiatives including:

- current national reforms of validation systems, on-going in a number of Western and Eastern European countries

---

<sup>377</sup> For the full evaluation by Bridges for recognition participants see <http://www.salto-youth.net/BridgesEvaluation/>.

- the implementation of the Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning,
- the preparation of the European Qualifications Framework and also
- “peer-learning” developments in the context of Europe 2010.

These initiatives could be supported by this and future versions of the Inventory, but it would also be important to broaden discussions to include representatives from the private and voluntary sectors, as well as policy-makers.

### *35.2.2 A new version of the European Inventory, with similar structure and new contents*

There are several alternatives on how to take the Inventory forward. Firstly, future editions of the European Inventory could present a similar description of national initiatives as the current Inventory. This option would have several practical and analytical advantages. Firstly, much of the work would entail updating and completing existing information, as opposed to creating a new Inventory structure. Readers would know what to expect on the new versions of the Inventory, and therefore would monitor the release of new reports if the information contained in it is of their interest. Even more importantly, opting for consistency in the nature of the data gathering will be useful in the context of tracing progress made in the Implementation of the Common Principles, not only from a top-down but also from a bottom-up approach (companies, sector, voluntary organisations). It is expected that the Inventory helps in monitoring progress on the implementation of the principles –see, for example, Michael Aribaud, European Commission<sup>378</sup>. For this, periodic editions of the Inventory, which have a certain degree of methodological consistency, are necessary. The Inventory could also present more information on the current “hot issues” around validation that develop through time. Notably, the next edition will probably need to take into greater consideration the increased emphasis on linking Lifelong Learning, and perhaps include more detail on HE.

The Bergen<sup>379</sup> (May 2005) Recommendations to Strand B (Validation of non-formal and informal learning) have indeed recommended that Lifelong-Learning should be integrated with the Bologna process, whilst recognising that Bologna has paradoxically “increased difficulty for adult participation and validation”, an issue which should be addressed. The recommendations have also called for the discussion of an annual survey to monitor the implementation of validation in Universities and an Inventory of good practices to supplement a trends report on the issue. These monitoring systems and quality assurance procedures could be linked or even integrated with future editions of the Inventory.

---

<sup>378</sup> [http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:2Ky0NSRwo-YJ:www.bbt.admin.ch/aktuell/events/praxistage/d/mai05\\_c.pdf+european+Inventory+validation+non-formal+and+informal+learning&hl=en](http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:2Ky0NSRwo-YJ:www.bbt.admin.ch/aktuell/events/praxistage/d/mai05_c.pdf+european+Inventory+validation+non-formal+and+informal+learning&hl=en) checked on the 14/05/05

<sup>379</sup> <http://www.eucen-conf29.uib.no/Proceedings/Bergen-Recommendations%20Feutrie.ppt#257,3,1> Bologna process and LLL



The conclusions of the “SALTO Youth” conference on “Bridges for recognition” also welcomed the European Inventory and a recommendation was made to the Acting Director of the Youth, Civil Society and Communication Unit that the initiative is continued, if providing additional information on the Youth Sector and other Third sector organisations (information on validation practices for those who participate in the youth activities as “users”, but also for teachers, trainers and youth leaders).

Moreover, there is a need to enhance synergies between the Inventory and the on-going activities of other initiatives which collect information on validation of non-formal and informal learning, such as the on-going CEDEFOP eKnowVet data collection. Although it is necessary to recognise that the purposes of eKnowVet and the Inventory are different and therefore both projects have different data requirements, it is also true that synergies between both projects can be identified and it should be ensure that wastage in the collection of data is minimised whenever possible.

Networks are already available with national experts who undertook the current version of the Inventory, and methodological lessons have been learnt, therefore the completion of future Inventory projects could be quicker, and with a very high degree of efficiency. ECOTEC could support the organisation taken this option forward, regardless of who the contractor is.

### *35.2.3 A sector-specific European Inventory*

The existing version of the European Inventory provides an overview of a wide range of initiatives, in a very large number of countries. This necessarily leads to a number of trade-offs to make the project viable and feasible. It is now up to stakeholders to decide whether the level of information provided in this Inventory is useful, and whether, regardless of its usefulness at present, future Inventory versions should lead in different directions. In other words, is the right level of detail needed by stakeholders in the future? Or are there any particular areas where further information should be made available? In particular, and given the differences in the aims, purposes and therefore emphasis on different methodologies used in different sectors, but also the unbalance in the availability and difficulty in the collection of information for these different sectors, it may be preferable to produce sector-specific inventories in the future, perhaps on a rota basis (private-voluntary-public) depending on the availability of resources. The interest of the voluntary sector in this type of sector-specific Inventory was evident at the Bridges for Recognition conference, but it also was evident the full acceptance and the need to maintain links between the analysis of validation initiatives in all sectors and play within the framework of wider developments in this area. Striking the right balance between detail and general overview is therefore a key issue. In addition to an external contractor, should this option be preferred, there are a number of networks that could collaborate on this task, such as NARIC or National Reference Points, coordinated by a central unit which would link findings from different organisations. What organisations should be involved in this process depends on the nature of the Inventory to be produced. When information is mainly to be collected for the private sector a questionnaire to the right contacts in National Ministries topped-up with a small number of interviews may be a simple and efficient way to approach the collection of information, in particular given existing information (National Reference Point, for example, may be able to do this efficiently and

with relatively low resources). Yet Ministries and public authorities are not best placed, we have found, to inform on private and third sector initiatives. This requires approaching a different set of stakeholders, and has proved a very time-consuming process; a different contractor therefore may be needed for this task.

#### *35.2.4 An Inventory focused on methodologies*

A third option would be to undertake methodologically-specific Inventories in the future, focusing mainly on illustrating best-practice. This would require a previous filter of initiatives from the existing Inventory, as a first task, to select those for which further detail should be provided in the future. The selection would arguably need to take into consideration the methodological quality of the initiatives, but also try to search a balance and provide information about how to improve the methodology of initiatives in which take-up is higher, that more cost-effective, or have stronger political support or relevance for companies/voluntary sector. Compliance with the Common Principles should be another key factor to be taken into consideration in the selection of initiatives. The level of detail needed in the description of these methodologies may need to be discussed with different types of stakeholders, who will of course have different needs. The description of the methodologies could go deeper into the background and aims of that methodology and illustrate best practice through a very in-depth description of them, in the form of one or two case-studies from which other organisations and individuals can replicate the methodology or select points of it for their own work. Whereas public organisations may be willing to reveal such a level of detail about the design and application of methodologies, collection of similar information from the private sector will prove more challenging, and this should be appropriate consideration.

#### *35.2.5 A platform for updating the European Inventory*

The platform for updating the Inventory in the future can be supported, but cannot be led by the establishment of a permanent project website with a central point of contact. Information on public, but in particular private and voluntary sector initiatives needs to be actively sought by the Inventory manager, rather than be expected from stakeholders. That has been the approach used in the production of the current Inventory, entailing a large task in following up leads on validation initiatives obtained in conferences, interviews and literature review. The platform should nevertheless contain mechanisms for feedback and updating by readers (e.g. through dedicated feedback e-mail addresses) and also for support for readers (e.g. through an “info” e-mail where additional information about existing initiatives or contact details could be requested). The platform could also contain a section on on-going research activities, where authors or readers could publish short reviews of available material, for example in the style of the American Journal “Education Review”, which specialises in making reviews available to readers on a range of education issues.

In our opinion, ultimately, the decision over the different shapes of the Inventory to be undertaken in the future is as much a political decision which should be made depending on the needs of the Inventory’s users and the political will to support the initiative as a technical question.

# Annex 1

## Methodological Tools

---

A European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Draft questionnaire to stakeholders

---

December 2004

ECOTEC  
Research & Consulting  
Limited

Priestley House  
28-34 Albert Street  
Birmingham  
B4 7UD

Tel: +44 (0)121 616 3600  
Fax: +44 (0)121 616 3699

**Contact Details: Interviewer to complete in advance**

**Name of interviewee:**

**Organisation:**

**Telephone number:**

**E-mail address:**

**Name of interviewer:**

**Date:**

**SECTION ONE: Needs and initiatives**

1. What are the key main reasons for public bodies, educational institutions, private sector and third sector organisations to develop initiatives on validation of informal and non-formal learning? –*interviewer to probe on each*

In your country?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

At a European level?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. What initiatives exist in your country in relation to validation of informal and non-formal learning? –*probe on whether these initiatives address all needs mentioned in question one.*

Please specify for each area below:

Public initiatives:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....

Private/industry initiatives:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Third/voluntary sector initiatives –including youth:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Public-Private-Third sector partnership initiatives:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. When did these initiatives start and how are they funded, managed and monitored?

Starting period:.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Funding Sources: .....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Management:.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Monitoring .....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. Is there any quantitative information about take-up of these initiatives?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. Are there any mechanisms in place to ensure that validation done in one sector (public, private, voluntary) can be “transferred” or recognised in other sectors? - *e.g. through national qualifications frameworks, etc.*

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

6. Which one of the categories below dominates within existing initiatives on validation of informal and non-formal learning in your country?

Please specify for each area below (if possible give examples):

“New professions” where no formal qualifications are yet available

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Professions undergoing change where no formal qualifications are yet available

.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
Traditional professions

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
Social recognition in civil society

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
7. In your opinion, are the current methods and instruments used to validate non-formal and informal learning valid and reliable? *–interviewer to probe on the benchmarks used by the interviewee to consider validation methods valid and reliable*

If no, please specify how validity and reliability of the methods and instruments used can be improved.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
8. What is the dominant profile of people taking up validation initiatives? *–students, young people in general, professionals (specify what sectors), volunteers, etc.*

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
9. What is the dominant reason/purpose for people to validate their learning?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
10. Can existing initiatives be characterised as a bottom-up or top-down? *–note to interviewer: explain to the interviewee what is meant by bottom-up and top-approaches in the context of this piece of research.*



.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. In your opinion, what are the most important 'barriers' for increased access/take-up of validation initiatives

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

12. In your opinion, is there a need for new methods and instruments for the validation of informal and non-formal learning?

If yes, please specify in which areas and for what purpose.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

***SECTION TWO: Stakeholders and research networks***

13. Which actors contributed to the design and implementing of existing validation initiatives in your country?

Please specify for each area below:

Public/state bodies

.....  
.....  
.....

Private organisations

.....  
.....  
.....

Voluntary organisations/NGOs (including youth)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

14. Please give examples of existing research networks at national, regional and local level in your country dedicated to initiatives on validation of informal and non-formal learning.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

***SECTION THREE: Dissemination***

15. Is information on validation of informal and non-formal learning adequately presented (e.g. is it relevant and accurate and accessible) to key stakeholders (e.g. industry, individuals, training providers, civil society organisations)? *–please specify by stakeholder when applicable*

.....  
.....  
.....

If no, what improvements are needed?

In your country?

.....  
.....  
.....

At a European level?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

16. How do you think dissemination at European level could be improved?

.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
**SECTION FOUR: Good practice**

17. Can any best practices be identified from existing national or international initiatives?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

18. What are the key factors determining the success of an initiative?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**SECTION FIVE: Implementation of Common European Principles**

19. Are you familiar with the Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning? *–Proceed with this section only if the interviewee is familiar with the Common Principles.*

.....  
.....

20. What organisations -if any- are currently involved in the implementation of the common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning or using these principles in your country/ context?

Please specify,

Providers:

.....  
.....

Authorities:

.....  
.....

Social partners:

.....  
.....

NGOs:

.....  
.....

21. What actions, initiatives and progress have so far been made in your country with respect to the implementation of the Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning?

Please specify for each principle,

Individual entitlements (equal access and fair treatment for all individuals):

.....  
.....

Obligations (responsibilities, systems, approaches, quality assurance mechanisms) of stakeholders:

.....  
.....

Confidence and trust (fair, transparent processes and procedures for identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning):

.....  
.....

Credibility and legitimacy:

.....  
.....

22. What actions, initiatives and progress –if any- have so far been designed or implemented in your country to:

Disseminate and promote the use of Common European Principles:

.....  
.....

Encourage social partners in a social dialogue in order to use and adapt the common European principles in the workplace:

.....  
.....

Encourage non-governmental organisations to use and adapt the common European principles:

.....

.....  
Develop and support quality assurance mechanisms:  
.....  
.....

23. What actions or initiatives –if any- are planned in your country in relation to the  
Common Principles?

.....  
.....  
.....

Thank the interviewee and provide details on the European Inventory Website. Ask  
the interviewee for any other organisations that may be interested in the Inventory  
website.

---

## **A European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

Draft questionnaire to industrial & sector representatives, voluntary sector organisations and educational/ training institutions

---

December 2004

ECOTEC  
Research & Consulting  
Limited

Priestley House  
28-34 Albert Street  
Birmingham  
B4 7UD

Tel: +44 (0)121 616 3600  
Fax: +44 (0)121 616 3699

**CONTACT DETAILS: Interviewer to complete in advance**

Name of interviewee:

Organisation:

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

Name of interviewer:

Date:

*Note to interviewer: Brief the interviewee on the subject and scope of the Inventory project and its key concepts. Make sure the interviewee understands what is referred to by “validation of non-formal and informal learning”.*

**SECTION ONE: Needs and initiatives**

24. What are the main reasons for *[interviewer to select as appropriate]* private sector organisations/ educational institutions/ voluntary sector organisations to get involved in initiatives that recognise competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings<sup>380</sup> –e.g. competences acquired outside the education system, through working life, voluntary activities or in individual’s own time

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

25. What initiatives is your organisation, or its members, *[note to interviewer: e.g. if talking to an umbrella organisation]*, involved with in relation to validation of informal and non-formal learning? –*probe on whether these initiatives address all needs mentioned in question one. Probe on whether these initiatives are managed by public bodies, industry and/or other organisations. We are looking for detailed descriptions of the methodologies used and the steps followed in the validation process*

.....  
.....  
.....

---

<sup>380</sup> Recognition of these competences will be referred to as “validation of non-formal and informal learning” hereafter in the questionnaire.





.....  
.....  
Funding Sources: .....

.....  
.....  
Management:.....

.....  
.....  
Monitoring: .....

.....  
.....  
27. Is there any quantitative information about take-up of these initiatives?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
28. Are there any mechanisms in place to ensure that validation done in one sector (public, private, voluntary) can be “transferred” or recognised in other sectors? - *e.g. through national qualifications frameworks, etc.*  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
29. In your opinion, are the methods and instruments currently used to validate non-formal and informal learning in your organisation or sector valid and reliable? – *interviewer to probe on the benchmarks used by the interviewee to consider validation methods valid and reliable*

If no, please specify how validity and reliability of the methods and instruments used can be improved.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

30. What are the most common uses of the outputs from validation initiatives by *[interviewer to select as appropriate]* employees/ volunteers/ students and *[interviewer to select as appropriate]* companies/ voluntary/ civil society organisations?

Employees/ Volunteers/ Students .....

.....  
.....

Companies/ Other organisations .....

.....  
.....

31. In your opinion, what are the most important 'barriers' for increased access/take-up of validation initiatives

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

32. In your opinion, is there a need for new methods and instruments for the validation of informal and non-formal learning in your organisation/ sector?

If yes, please specify in which areas and for what purpose.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**SECTION TWO: Partnership & other actors**

33. Which other actors have you or your members worked with in the design and/ or implementation of existing validation initiatives?

Please specify for each area below:

Public/state bodies

.....  
.....  
.....

Private organisations

.....  
.....  
.....

Voluntary organisations/NGOs/ other civil society organisations

.....  
.....  
.....

**SECTION THREE: Success factors and dissemination**

34. Can you name three factors that you consider key in determining the success of validation initiatives in your sector? –*success to be defined in terms of take-up and quality (reliability, validity and cost-effectiveness) of the initiative. Probe on concrete examples of initiatives considered successful by the interviewee, within (e.g. from Q.2) or outside his/her organisation*

.....  
.....  
.....

35. How do you think dissemination of good practice on validation initiatives could be improved to reach your sector?

.....  
.....

Thank the interviewee and provide details on the European Inventory Website. Ask the interviewee for any other organisations that may be interested in the Inventory website.

## ***Introduction: Questionnaires for the Case Studies***

---

The Inventory interviews with public, private and voluntary sector organisations will give information about current practice in these sectors and will flag up examples of *best practice*. ECOTEC will make use of the identified examples of best practice to elaborate up to 10 case studies -2 to 4 pages long. For the elaboration of case studies we will interview:

- human resources managers or equivalent; and
- employees who have benefited from the validation of parts of their informal learning or
- voluntary organisations staff managing validation initiatives
- volunteers/ young people who have undergone validation of their non-formal/informal learning

The approximate duration of each interview will be one hour. Interviews will be conducted by telephone<sup>381</sup>.

Case studies will provide practical, comprehensive information about the methods (e.g. traditional tests and examinations, declarative methods, observation, simulations, portfolio based approaches) particular organisations have used on their own or in partnership with other companies or public bodies to validate non-formal and informal learning and how legitimacy of the validation process (amongst employers, educational institutions or society) has been ensured.

Case studies will reflect best practices in all the three elements of validation of informal and non-formal learning, namely:

- identification;
- assessment; and
- recognition.

Questionnaires for the coordinators of informal learning initiatives and beneficiaries can be found below in this document.

Meaning of “validation of non-formal and informal learning” to be explained to interviewees prior to the beginning of the interview.

---

<sup>381</sup> Since no travel expenses can be charged to the contract after December.

***Draft Questionnaire: Coordinators of the implementation of validation initiatives***

***Target: Human Resources Managers or equivalent***

***A. Information regarding the company:***

- 1) What is the name of your organisation
- 2) What is the number of people working in your organisation? –*total worldwide*
- 3) In what economic sector is your organisation operating?
- 4) What is your job title?

***B. Motivations , overview and funding***

- 5) Is validation of informal and non-formal learning common in your sector?
- 6) Why do you think this is the case?
- 7) Why did your organisation get interested and active in the validation of non-formal and informal learning?
- 8) Who funds the validation of learning in your organisation? –*probe on whether the organisation or the employees receive any financial or non-financial support for validation of non-formal and informal learning*

***C: Informal learning validation within the organisation***

- 9) What competencies can be/have been validated within your organisation through existing validation initiatives? –probe on
  - a) work-related competencies acquired in the workplace –please give details
  - b) a wider set of competences acquired in the workplace and outside? For instance: Learning in community and voluntary activities; Learning at home or in family life; Learning gained through non-vocational training (driving lessons, performance training etc) -please give details
- 10) What methods for validation are used in your company? – e.g. formal examinations, observation, simulation, collection of traces of activity/evidence extracted from work situations, backwards observation (explain this is for instance when you have already worked with someone for a while and give a ‘post hoc assessment’), other: please describe.

- 11) Do workers (or equivalent members in your organisations) have a say in the identification of competences to be validated and the methods for validation?
- 12) Who assesses the non formal and informal learning validated in your organisation? *–internal assessors, qualified external assessors, other.*
- 13) What competence levels can be validated within your organisation?
- 14) Are these competence levels related to national qualification systems or other external standards?
- 15) Does the validation initiative lead to a certificate? *–if not, what are the outputs of the validation process for the individual and the organisation*
- 16) If it does, has this certificate a value only within the company or also outside – nationally, regionally? *–please provide details*
- 17) What do you consider are the barriers to recognising learning gained outside the formal education and training sector and how do you think they may be addressed? *–Probe on: risks around transferability of qualifications – do they risk losing people to rival companies?, resources available, interest and take up from staff, transparency in assessment procedures?*
- 18) Do you feel your organisation could do more in this area? *–if so, what?*

**D: Outcomes**

- 19) What has been the take-up of validation initiatives in your organisation?
- 20) What benefits has validation for the individuals that undergo it in your organisation (e.g. salary or career progression, etc.)?
- 21) What are the main outcomes for your organisation from delivering or recognising informal/non-formal learning? *–probe on*
  - *Fairer career progression and greater equality?*
  - *Increased staff retention?*
  - *Increased staff motivation?*
  - *Better matching between individuals and skills needs of your organisation?*
  - *Better structuring of job profiles and career paths?*
  - *Other? –please specify*

22) What support would help your organisation to get involved in validation initiatives more effectively? *-probe from the following:*

- *EU policy makers (including exchange of experience with other EU countries)*
- *National policy makers*
- *Regional policy makers*
- *Local policy makers*
- *Other businesses*
- *Workers/ volunteers*

## ***Draft Questionnaire: Beneficiaries***

***Employees or equivalent who have benefited from the validation of parts of their non-formal / informal learning.***

### ***1. Introduction***

- 2) What is the name of the organisation you work for?
- 3) How long have you worked for this organisation?
- 4) What formal qualifications do you have relevant to this post?
- 5) When you were taken on by your organisation, were they interested in your previous experience and learning gained outside the formal education and training sector? *-probe on what specifically were they interested in?*
- 6) What training (formal and informal) have you undertaken with this organisation?
- 7) What other non-formal and informal learning have you undergone which help you to deliver your work? *-probe leisure training and activities, family responsibilities, voluntary work etc*

### ***2. Competences and validation methods***

- 8) What competences have you had validated within your organisation? *-probe on*
  - a) work-related competencies acquired in the workplace –please give details
  - b) a wider set of competences acquired in the workplace and outside? For instance: Learning in community and voluntary activities; Learning at home or in family life; Learning gained through non-vocational training (driving lessons, performance training etc) -please give details
- 9) Can you describe what method was followed for the recognition of competences within your company? – probe on how standards of competence, validity and reliability of the method were respected
- 10) What do you consider are the barriers to participating in validation initiatives and how do you think they may be addressed?



### 3. Outcomes

- 11) Do you feel that validation of your previous learning and experience (excluding formal qualifications) is taken into account in relation to:
- *Access to training courses*
  - *Access to internal jobs*
  - *Access to promotions*
  - *Salary and rewards*
  - *Other –please specify*
- 12) More generally, what do you see as the main benefits of the validation of your non-formal/ informal learning?
- 13) Has validation of your non-formal/ informal learning increased your motivation to work for your organisation?
- 14) Has participation in the training increased your commitment to your organisation?
- 15) Have you received a certificate, or other formal record, as a result of the validation of your non-formal/ informal learning? Did you receive credits which could build up to a later qualification?
- 16) Do you think certification will have value outside of your organisation? If so, where? –*other companies, education system, society*
- 17) Has the recognition of your competences through the validation of your non-formal/ informal learning given you a clearer idea of your skills and future career paths?
- 18) Were there any negatives aspects in relation to your involvement in validation initiatives?

## Annex 2

# National Sources and Methodologies for the collection of information

## ***Denmark***

### *Literature:*

DANISH MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:  
Recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning in CVT, VET and other adult education programmes in Denmark, June 2002:

[http://us.uvm.dk/videre/voksenuddannelse\\_dk/recognition.htm?menuid=350535](http://us.uvm.dk/videre/voksenuddannelse_dk/recognition.htm?menuid=350535)

DANISH MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:  
Better Education. Action Plan, June 2002:

<http://pub.uvm.dk/2002/better1/>

ASEM LIFELONG LEARNING INITIATIVE:  
Thematic Report 2: Integrated Approaches in Lifelong Learning and Recognition of Prior Learning. Working Group 2, September 2002:

[http://www.uvm.dk/asem/reports/asem\\_thematic\\_report\\_2.pdf](http://www.uvm.dk/asem/reports/asem_thematic_report_2.pdf)

### *Phone and email interviews:*

Aalborg University, Centre for Interdisciplinary Study of Learning, April 26, 2004.

Aarhus Technical College, July 6, 2004.

Confederation of Danish Industries, May 3, 2004.

Danish Council for Adult Education, April 28, 2004.

Danish Federation of Trade Unions, April 30, 2004.

Danish Industries April 23, 2004.

Danish Ministry of Education, May 12, 2004.

Danish Ministry of Education June 24, 2004.

Danish University of Education, April 28 & 30, May 3 and June 21, 2004.

Ordkloeveriet, July 7, 2004.

Roskilde University, Department of Educational Research, April 27, 2004.

VUC FYN Glamsbjerg, Adult Education and Training Centre, August 6, 2004.

Workers' Education Association, April 30, 2004.

## **Germany**

### *Literature:*

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) ed.:  
Weiterbildungspass mit Zertifizierung informellen Lernens. Machbarkeitsstudie im Rahmen  
des BLK-Verbundprojektes, January 2004.

Arbeitsgemeinschaft betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V.: Projektdatenbank, July  
2004:

[http://www.abwf.de/main/projekte/frame\\_html](http://www.abwf.de/main/projekte/frame_html)

### *Phone and email interviews:*

Arbeitsgemeinschaft betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung e.V., Berlin, April 28, 2004.

Bundesinstitut für Berufliche Bildung, Bonn, April 20, 2004.

Bundesinstitut für Berufliche Bildung, Bonn, June 23, 2004.

DaimlerChrysler, Gaggenau, May 5, 2004.

Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung, Bonn, April 27, 2004.

Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag, Berlin, April 23, 2004.

Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, Frankfurt, April 23, 2004.

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF), Berlin, April 23, 2004.

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF), Berlin, April 28, 2004.

Sozialforschungsstelle, Dortmund, April 27, 2004.

Other projects:

## **Greece**

Methodological matrix:

The research carried out in this study for Greece, has brought up two *Methodology Papers*  
under 'Public Administration' that is, information on:

- 1) the validation of computer literacy through the ECDL, Microsoft and Cambridge certificates (information on [http://www.ypergka.gr/index\\_gr.html](http://www.ypergka.gr/index_gr.html) - information available in Greek)
- 2) the validation of learning of foreign languages (information on <http://www.ypepth.gr/kpg> - information available in Greek)

Both of the above sources cover all three areas of validation (i.e. identification, assessment and recognition of competences). No evaluations of the two methods have taken place to date but it appears that the validation of basic skills on computers has been warmly welcomed by adult learners (both unemployed and working).

It has not been possible to locate any academic, private sector or third sector information sources (either internet or paper-based).

A Policy Outline paper on the recognition of informal and non-formal learning has been prepared by the Committee of Experts of the Ministry of Employment, but this document is not public. It appears that the document outlines a future framework for validating skills acquired informally through a system following quite closely that used in France.

### ***Research process***

The research for this study involved:

- 1) Holding brief telephone interviews with representatives of:

Public Sector organisations:

- Ms Komninou, Ministry of Employment
- Ms Tina Simota, EKEPIS
- Mr. Georgios Georgopoulos, Ministry of Education
- Ms Daskagianni, OEEK

Third Sector organisations:

- Ms Matina Magkou, Youthforum, Greek Bureau member

Private Sector companies:

- Human Development Department of INTRACOM SA
- Human Development Department of ALPHA BANK

- 2) Consulting the following internet sites:

<http://www.ekepis.gr> is the site of the National Accreditation Centre of Vocational Training Structures and Accompanying Support Services (EKEPIS), which in recent years has been developing methods for the accreditation of training structures, trainers and course syllabi. EKEPIS is aiming to develop methods for validation of competences in the future.

<http://www.adulteduc.gr/> is the site of the Hellenic Adult Education Association, a non-profit organization aiming to develop adult education in Greece. The portal holds studies giving an overview of adult education in Greece.

The internet site of the Ministry of Education of Greece, <http://www.ypepth.gr/kpg> offers details relevant to the ‘State Certificate of Competence in Languages’, one of the few processes for validation of non-formal learning which are currently applied in Greece.

<http://www.oEEK.gr/index2.html> is the site of the Greek Organisation for Initial Vocational Training (OEEK) which hosts details of accreditation of initial training which is part of the formal educational system.

## ***Iceland***

### ***National overview***

For information on validation initiatives, the following sources can usefully be consulted.

#### *1. Academic Journals*

There are no specific Icelandic academic journals on the subject of validation of non-formal and informal learning at present time. But, the issue of validation has been raised in a small number of articles, most notably in a trans-Nordic publication by the Nordic Council of Ministers on the subject of “real competence”, i.e. validation of skills acquired by non-formal and informal learning.

- *TemaNord 2003:504 – Validering af realkompetence*, Nordic Council of Ministers 2003. [e. Validation of non-formal, informal and formal competence]
- *Golden Riches 1/2003 – Validation of Non-formal, Informal and Formal Competence*, Nordic Council of Ministers 2003.

#### *2. National policy documents*

Policy documents specifically addressing validation of informal and non-formal learning do not exist. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture mentions validation of non-formal and informal learning briefly in the National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary School from 2004.

- *National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary School*, The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2004, pp. 31-32

#### *3. Specialised academic websites and websites from public bodies and other stakeholders*

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture ([www.mrn.stjr.is](http://www.mrn.stjr.is))

The Educational Gateway ([www.menntagatt.is](http://www.menntagatt.is))

University of Iceland – The Social Science Research Centre ([www.fel.hi.is](http://www.fel.hi.is))

University of Iceland – The Research Liaison Office ([www.rthj.hi.is](http://www.rthj.hi.is))

#### *4. Web-sites of social partners, private companies and third sector organisations*

The Education and Training Service Centre ([www.fraedslumidstod.is](http://www.fraedslumidstod.is))  
EDUCATE Iceland ([www.mennt.net](http://www.mennt.net))

#### ***Ireland***

##### References

Policies actions and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners, National Qualifications Authority 2003

FETAC Draft Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

FETAC Strategic Plan 2003 – 2006

Draft Principles on Recognition of Prior Learning in further and higher education and training, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

*An overview of ongoing research activities in this field, providing an updated list/summary of publications and projects that you know in the area.*

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland has in late 2004 established an Advisory Group to assist the Authority to determine a set of principles for the Recognition of Prior learning in education and training in Ireland. This set of principles will be determined during 2005.

The draft principles are intended to encourage the development and expansion of processes for the recognition of prior learning by education providers and awarding bodies so that they may:

- promote and support the recognition of prior learning
- communicate their commitment to the recognition of prior learning
- bring coherence to the recognition of learning
- remove any difficulties that may confront an applicant wishing to transfer within and between the different education and training sectors.

It is planned that ‘a national approach would build on and refer to developments already taking place both nationally and internationally; many awarding bodies are, or have been, actively developing their own policies and practices, this there is a need to develop a national approach to ensure coherence and a widespread acceptance of the outcomes of recognition.’

#### ***Take up of APEL in Higher Education***

A research paper recently presented the main initial findings from an audit of AP(E)L practices in higher education in Ireland, undertaken primarily as the first activity of a Socrates-Grundtvig 2003-2005 project, VaLEx; Valuing Learning from Experience. The

project is led by Glasgow Caledonian University with partner universities Stirling, Warwick, South Brittany, Brussels, Tartu, Turku, and the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)<sup>382</sup>.

The overall aims of the VaLEx research project are as follows:

- Carry out a theoretical analysis of existing practices and the learning and teaching principles underpinning APEL implementation in the partner countries
- Develop a pedagogical model based on APEL transformative process: a reflective learning approach enabling uncertain adult learners to articulate learning and core skills acquired through experience, be it at work or elsewhere, through an adult guidance approach
- Target learners likely to suffer from social exclusion: people with disabilities, people with no formal qualifications, the unemployed, and refugees/ asylum seekers, using local partners (educational/ NGO organisations) as 'consultants' to access the learner groups
- Pilot and evaluate learning tools (the 'APEL toolkit') emerging from the pedagogical model

The outputs will include a sound pedagogical model transferable across diverse European realities, an 'APEL toolkit', comprising of electronic and paper-based learning tools, and professional guidelines for teaching, advising and support staff.

The project approach is to build on the outcomes of an earlier Socrates research project: Social Inclusion through AP(E)L: The Learners' Perspective<sup>3</sup>, which was also led by Glasgow Caledonian University, and the national reports of the TRANSFINE<sup>4</sup> project which sought to establish the basis of a common European architecture for transfer between formal, informal and non-formal education. TRANSFINE research was not conducted in the Republic of Ireland, so it was necessary to establish similar contextual base line data for comparability with existing sets of data from the countries of the participating VaLEx partners. Only four colleges reported having college-wide policy in place, though others are currently either developing or awaiting approval for such a policy. Nationwide there is only one full-time AP(E)L officer. Four colleges have staff with an AP(E)L role as part of their remit, especially in the cases of access officers. Colleges which use AP(E)L have supporting in-house documents, but only one has web-based support for applicants. Only two colleges have AP(E)L modules. In both colleges, the modules are available in-house, to registered students only. One college offers two module types: one, which is broadly a developmental/existential model with the potential for module exemptions, and one, which is a credit exchange-exemptions model. The second college with an AP(E)L module uses the credit exchange model only. All three cases are linked to ECTS credits.

---

<sup>382</sup> Personal communication received from Anne Murphy of Dublin Institute of Technology. (September 2004) Paper presented at SCUTREA 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, University of Sheffield, UK. 6-8 July 2004. See also <http://crll.gcal.ac.uk/crrp/crrpvalex.htm>



Numbers of AP(E)L claims range from over one hundred per annum in one college down to single numbers in others. Rejection of claims is rare, and not all colleges have an appeal system.

The drivers of AP(E)L development in Ireland have been the professions such as nursing, social care and engineering, which is not dissimilar to the UK experience. What is not obvious from any of the studies is the extent of interface between work-based learning (WBL) and AP(E)L, or the extent to which higher education prefers to negotiate courses of new learning in preference to building on prior learning.

This analysis develops from an earlier study that suggests that despite intensive research, debate and legislation over the last decade, the autonomous Irish Universities are not taking much advantage of the move towards a National Qualifications Framework. Some evidence is presented that mechanisms are in place for exceptional entry to postgraduate programmes, and that Recognition of accredited prior learning [RAPL] is practised for access and credit exchange generally on the grounds of equivalence of learning<sup>383</sup>. “What did not inform any of the case studies ... was any theoretical understanding of ‘personal’ knowledge and personal learning. ... Nor has there been any serious research about how the universities might ‘learn from experience’, frame coherent policy, and develop coherent practices about the future implementation of AP(E)L.<sup>384</sup>”

The National College of Ireland has the objective of providing a continuum of education, transfers between programmes are possible, allowing students to build-up qualifications by accumulating Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (ACCS) Credits to the level of their abilities. National College of Ireland, in association with HETAC/FETAC, is participating in a scheme, which will enable the College to grant formal recognition to students, for knowledge, or experience that they have previously gained. This knowledge, be it from life, work or previous study is evaluated by the College, through the APEL system. If successful, the applicant is awarded credits, or exempted from certain programmes of study. This scheme is particularly attractive to people who wish to pursue programmes of study which are relevant to areas where they either work, or have worked in the past<sup>385</sup>.

## ***Latvia***

### ***Process followed to find references for the methodology***

#### ***National overview Latvia***

At the first stage it was found out that the basic terms, which are used by the stakeholders and which relate to validation of informal and non-formal education in Latvia, are: 1) informal

---

<sup>383</sup> Murphy A (2003), “Is the University Sector in Ireland Ready to Publicly Assess and Accredite Personal Learning from Outside the Academy?” *European Journal of Education*, 38, 4, 401-411

<sup>384</sup> Op.Cit. 410.

<sup>385</sup> [http://www.ncirl.ie/Prospective/bec\\_prog\\_m.htm](http://www.ncirl.ie/Prospective/bec_prog_m.htm)

education, 2) self-education, 3) continuing education, 4) adults education and 5) lifelong education. These are the terms, which were treated as key-search words creating the list, since such term as “validation” (or something of similar semantic meaning) has not been used in Latvia up to present moment. Thus, the biggest part of the information, submitted in the list, can be related to the object of the research only indirectly.

In accordance with the task of the given work the process followed to find the information concerning validation of non-formal and informal education in Latvia took two main directions: 1) the Internet and 2) paper sources. It is necessary to emphasise that the search for information in both directions turned out to be complicated both by a comparatively small amount of publications on the Internet and by low intensity of newspaper and other paper publications on the given theme. During the research the Internet-sites of all higher educational establishments of Latvia and of the majority of professional recruiting companies were visited; unfortunately, this did not give any appreciable results. As a rule, the information on the theme we are interested in is limited to a simple enumeration of available courses and professional skills improving programs. The search system [www.google.lv](http://www.google.lv) was the basic Internet-source for searching, through which the publications on the sites of Latvian National Observatory ([www.aic.lv](http://www.aic.lv)), Ministry of environment of the Republic of Latvia ([www.varam.gov.lv](http://www.varam.gov.lv)), Ministry of education and science ([www.izm.gov.lv](http://www.izm.gov.lv)), Latvian Craft Chamber ([www.lak.lv](http://www.lak.lv)), etc. were found. The information concerning the legislative acts may be found on the site [www.likumi.lv](http://www.likumi.lv). Also, a national Internet-portal [www.apollo.lv](http://www.apollo.lv), a site of business newspaper “Dienas bizness” ([www.db.lv](http://www.db.lv)) and a national portal for job offering and searching – [www.cv.lv](http://www.cv.lv) were used. The visit of the Internet-site of Latvian Adult Education ([www.laea.lv](http://www.laea.lv)) yielded the best result. Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA), being an NGO, actively participates in the process of assistance and development of informal and non-formal education in Latvia. This circumstance caused a personal meeting with an executive director of LAEA, Doctor Inta Paeglite. During the conversation valuable advice was received, and also the access to the mass of paper publications in 1994 – 2003 was received. Immediately after a personal meeting with Daina Šproge, which is a director of “Agency of Youth International Program”, was led. The given organization supervises the EU program of non-formal education “Youth”. A great amount of publications was found out while working in the regional library of Latgale, in the library of Daugavpils University, in the library of Latvian University and Latvian National Library.

## ***Liechtenstein***

### ***Summary of process followed to collect material methodology***

The methodology to uncover documents on methods of validating non-formal and informal learning followed a hierarchical structure and thus ensured that all major sources of information were covered.

- *Pan-European organisations.* In order to establish whether any case study work had been undertaken by relevant European organisations, the publications sections of the web sites for CEDEFOP, the European Training Foundation, European Accreditation of

Certification, ISA, EU DG Education and Culture, OECD and the Council of Europe were searched.

- *National organisations.* The pages of the main governmental and academic bodies dealing with vocational or adult education and economics were searched. For Liechtenstein these are: the Office for Vocational Training (Amt für Berufsbildung), the Liechtenstein University of Applied Science, Adult Education and the BWI (Berufliche Weiterbildung) which is a department of the Chamber of Economics in Liechtenstein. A telephone conversation and subsequent email exchange was carried out with the head of the Liechtenstein Office for vocational training, Mr Werner Kranz (see contact details below).

---

<b>Liechtenstein</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
Werner Kranz Head, Liechtenstein Office for Vocational Training	T: (+423) 236 72 10 E: <a href="mailto:Werner.Kranz@abb-llv.li">Werner.Kranz@abb-llv.li</a>

---

- *Google search.* Google searches were run using the terms informal learning, recognition/validation of informal learning, informal competence, (continuing) education journal, lifelong learning and more.

No documents on validation were uncovered using this process and a conversation and subsequent research by the head of the Liechtenstein Office for Vocational Training revealed that the only validation method currently in use is laid down in the vocational training act. However, the process of transparency has been started within the new framework of the EUROPASS<sup>386</sup>. The documents are available on the website of the National Agency of the EU-Program Leonardo da Vinci which is integrated in the Vocational Training Department ([www.leonardodavinci.li](http://www.leonardodavinci.li)). The validation of international traineeships e.g. a practical training within the framework of the Leonardo-da-Vinci-Program is validated by a Certification of the Vocational Training Department and the Europass Mobility.

### ***Websites of Education and Training Organisations in Liechtenstein***

[www.berufsbildung.li](http://www.berufsbildung.li)

[http://www.llv.li/amtsstellen/llv-abb-wettbewerbe/llv-abb-world\\_skills.htm](http://www.llv.li/amtsstellen/llv-abb-wettbewerbe/llv-abb-world_skills.htm)

[www.leonardodavinci.li](http://www.leonardodavinci.li)

[www.leonardodavinci.li](http://www.leonardodavinci.li) (button Transparency)

[www.fh-liechtenstein.li](http://www.fh-liechtenstein.li)

[www.GWK.li](http://www.GWK.li) (button Weiterbildung)

<http://www.erwachsenenbildung.li/>

---

<sup>386</sup> DECISION No 2241/2004/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 15 December 2004 on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass)

[http://www.liechtenstein.li/en/liechtenstein\\_main\\_sites/portal\\_fuerstentum\\_liechtenstein/home.htm](http://www.liechtenstein.li/en/liechtenstein_main_sites/portal_fuerstentum_liechtenstein/home.htm) (button education)

## **Luxembourg**

### *Government organizations and agencies*

- <http://www.men.lu/edu/fre/> *Ministère de l'Education, de la Formation Professionnelle et des Sports* – Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport
- <http://www.cnfpc.lu/> Centre national pour la formation professionnelle continue
- <http://www.infpc.lu/> *Institut National pour le développement de la formation professionnelle continue* - National Institute for the Development of Continuous Vocational Training
- <http://www.adem.public.lu/> - *Administration de l'emploi* – national employment agency
- [www.chd.lu](http://www.chd.lu) - *Chambre des députés de Luxembourg* – Luxembourg Chamber of deputies contains archives of national legislation
- <http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2000/0551107/0551107.pdf> - Luxembourg law on adult learning
- [www.statec.lu](http://www.statec.lu) - *Service central de la statistique et des études économiques* – Luxembourg national statistics office

### *Private sector*

- <http://www.lifelong-learning.lu/index.php3> Portal for Continuing Vocational Training
- [www.cc.lu](http://www.cc.lu) *Chambre de commerce de Luxembourg* – Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce
- <http://www.ifcc.lu/index.php> *Institut de Formation de la Chambre de Commerce*
- [www.acel.lu](http://www.acel.lu) *Association des Cercles d'Etudiants Luxembourgeois*
- <http://www.cepl.lu> - *Chambre des employés privés Luxembourg*
- <http://www.lllc.lu/> - Luxembourg lifelong learning centre, part of the CEPL
- <http://www.ak-l.lu> - *Chambre de travail Luxembourg*

<http://www.chambre-des-metiers.lu/> - *Chambres des métiers Luxembourg*

## **Slovenia**

This document is a result from an in-depth survey of documents, legislation, articles and data available on education system in Slovenia, emphasising the development and implementation of certification system, as well as from our involvement and cooperation with the key institutions in many national and international projects on vocational education and training (VET) reform in the last few years.

Our main sources of documents were:

- Previous related researches or projects implemented in Slovenia (in some of which our firm took part).
- The Slovene “COBISS” (Co-operative Online Bibliographic System & Services), which is a shared catalogue including all libraries in Slovenia (national, university, academic, public, special and school libraries).
- Websites of the main institutions involved in certification of non formal and informal knowledge in Slovenia;
  - Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (Andragoški Center Republike Slovenije – [www.acs.si](http://www.acs.si) )
  - Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (Center Republike Slovenije za poklicno izobraževanje – [www.cpi.si](http://www.cpi.si) )
  - Ministry of Education, Science and Sport ([www.mszs.si](http://www.mszs.si))
  - Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs\_([www.gov.si/mdds](http://www.gov.si/mdds))
  - Chamber of Commerce and Industry ([www.gzs.si](http://www.gzs.si))

In order to retrieve additional accurate information, we also have directly contacted some of institutions, involved in implementation of certification system:

- The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.
- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- The Chamber of Craft.
- The pharmaceutical firm Krka, a leading company for the implementation of certification.
- The Faculty for Social Sciences in Ljubljana.
- The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education

## ***The UK***

### ***Bibliography***

Bjornavold J (1997), Assessment of Non-Formal Learning: the Quality and Limitations of Methodologies, *European Journal of Vocational Training*, 12, 52-67

Boud D, Keog R & Walker D (1995), *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, London, Kogan Page

Brown A (1992), *Valuing Skills: Recognition of Prior Learning*, North Melbourne, Australia, Victorian Education Foundation (2nd ed)

Colardyn D and Bjornavold J (2004), "Validation of Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning: policy and practices in EU Member States", *European Journal of Education*, 39, 1, 69-89

Colley H, et al (2002) *Non-formal learning: mapping the conceptual terrain. A Consultation Report*, Leeds: University of Leeds Lifelong Learning Institute. Also available in *the informal education archives*: [http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/colley\\_informal\\_learning.htm](http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/colley_informal_learning.htm)

CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), (1997), *Identification, Validation and Accreditation of Prior and Informal Learning: the United Kingdom*, (a CEDEFOP national report), Thessaloniki, CEDEFOP

Dearden G (1991), *Assessment of Prior Learning: An introduction for employers, employees and academic assessors*, London, Learning from Experience Trust

Dochy F, Segers M & Buehl M M (1999), "The Relationship between Assessment Practices and Outcomes of Studies: the Case of Research into Prior Learning", *Review of Educational Research*, 69 (2), 145-186

The Employment Department (1992), *How to Accredite Work-Based Learning: A conceptual framework*, Sheffield, HMSO

Evans N (2000), *Assessing experiential learning around the world: employability and the global economy*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Evans N (1987), *Assessing Experiential Learning: A review of progress and practice*, A Project Report, London, Longmans for FEU

HEQC (Higher Education Quality Council) (1995), *Guidelines on Quality Assurance of Credit-Based Learning*, London, HEQC

Johnson B (2002), *Models of APEL and Quality Assurance*, SEEC (South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer), Brentwood, Cravitz

Konrad J (2000), "Assessment and Verification of National Vocational Qualifications: policy and practice", *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, Volume 52, Number 2, 225-243 [http://www.triangle.co.uk/pdf/validate.asp?j=vae&vol=52&issue=2&year=2000&article=Konrad\\_JVET\\_52\\_2](http://www.triangle.co.uk/pdf/validate.asp?j=vae&vol=52&issue=2&year=2000&article=Konrad_JVET_52_2) (last visited March 20, 2005)

Konrad J (2001), *Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in the United Kingdom*, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001831.htm> (last visited March 20, 2005)

Merrifield J, McIntyre D & Osaigbovo R (2000), *Mapping APEL: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in English Higher Education*, London, Learning from Experience Trust

Nganasurian W (1999), *Accreditation of Prior Learning for Nurses and Midwives*, Salisbury Quay Books

Nyatanga L, et al. (1998), *Good Practice in the Accreditation of Prior Learning*, London, Cassel

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2001), *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, QAA, Gloucester

SEEC (2003), *Revised SEEC Code of Practice for the Assessment of Prior (Experiential) Learning*, SEEC

Storan J (2003), *Transfere Project (Transfer between formal, informal and non-formal education): A UK Country Study*, University of East London

Wailey T & Simpson R (2000), *Juggling between Learning and Work: AP(E)L in the UK, Lifelong Learning in Europe*, 5 (2), 83

### ***Selected web-sites***

Title	Address
Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning, Bradford College, Practitioner's Guide; Students' Guide	<a href="http://www.materials.ac.uk/resources/librarian/apelintro.asp">http://www.materials.ac.uk/resources/librarian/apelintro.asp</a>
British Association for Nutritional Therapy APL/APEL Guidelines	<a href="http://www.bant.org.uk/PDF/2004-5/APLGuidlines_2004-2005.pdf">http://www.bant.org.uk/PDF/2004-5/APLGuidlines_2004-2005.pdf</a>
Mapping APEL: Accreditation of prior learning in English HEIs	<a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dfee/heqe/let_final.htm">http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dfee/heqe/let_final.htm</a>
Anglia Polytechnic University Professional Practice in APL/APEL Module	<a href="http://www.apu.ac.uk/dso/catalogue/cambridge/Forward_Planners/level_4_mdf/UN_UniversityModules/UNM3001.doc">http://www.apu.ac.uk/dso/catalogue/cambridge/Forward_Planners/level_4_mdf/UN_UniversityModules/UNM3001.doc</a>
STRATEGIES FOR WIDENING ADULT PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE	<a href="http://www.qub.ac.uk/alpine/ALPINE/1_1.htm">http://www.qub.ac.uk/alpine/ALPINE/1_1.htm</a>
University of East Anglia APL procedure	<a href="http://www.uea.ac.uk/ltq/Calendar/APL.pdf">http://www.uea.ac.uk/ltq/Calendar/APL.pdf</a>
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority: Pilot Study on responsiveness of Vocational Qualifications	<a href="http://www.qca.org.uk/downloads/pilot_study_report_on_responsiveness_of_vqs.pdf">http://www.qca.org.uk/downloads/pilot_study_report_on_responsiveness_of_vqs.pdf</a>





## Annex 3

### List of Interviewees

## ***Stakeholders***

### **Peter Kreiml, BMBWK, Austrian Ministry of Education**

Pavla Špidlenová, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic together with National Institution Technical and Vocational Education

Toon Janssen, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Netherlands

### **Nick Bailey, Learning and Skills Council, UK**

Vincentas Dienys, Methodological Centre for Vocational Education & Training, Lithuania

Anna Murphy, Framework Development National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Tiiia Randma, Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Gunars Krusts, Vocation Training Department, Ministry of Education, Latvia

Jos Noeson, Ministere de l'Education, Luxembourg

Loukas Zahilas: OEEK, Organisation for Vocational Education and Training, Greece

Astri Hildrum, Department of Work, Learning and Workforce Development in the Ministry of Education and Research, Norway.

Liliana Scarlet, Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, Employment Policies Directorate, Romania.

Elizabeta Skuber, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Slovenia

Urška Marentič, Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education CPI

Barbara Kunčič, Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education CPI

Andreja Ogrin, National Examination Center, Slovenia

Francisca M<sup>a</sup> Arbizu Echávarri, Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones (INCUAL). Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, Spain

Lilian Dobroslavka, Ministry for Education and Science, Continuing Vocational Training Unit, Bulgaria

Petr Vicensik, The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, Czech Republic

Romana Jezberova, The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, Czech Republic

Hana Cihakova, The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, Czech Republic

Miroslav Kadlec, The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, Czech Republic

Mario Stretti, The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, Czech Republic

Vera Czesana, National Observatory of Employment and Training, National Training Fund, Czech Republic

Alena Zukersteinova, National Observatory of Employment and Training, National Training Fund, Czech Republic

Jaromir Coufalik, National Agency of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, National Training Fund, Czech Republic

Miroslava Mandikova, National Training Fund, Czech Republic

Martin Odehnal, Office of the Czech Republic Government, Council for Human Resource Development, Czech Republic

Agnieszka Maleta, National Observatory of Vocational Education and Training, Poland

Krzysztof Kafel, National Ministry of Education and Sport, Department for Vocational and Continuing Education, Poland

Magdalena Sweklej, Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy, Department of European and Multilateral Relations, Poland

Juraj Vantuch: Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education, Centre for Equivalence Diplomas (ENIC/ NARIC), Slovak Republic

Milos Novak, Methodicko-pedagogicke centrum (Teacher INSET Centre), Slovak Republic

Iveta Orbanova, The Institute of Life-long Education at the Technical University of Kosice, Slovak Republic

*Private and voluntary sector*

Philippe Perfetti, Assemblée Permanente des Chambres de Métiers, France

**Per H. Madsen, Dansk Metal, Denmark**

Nuno Biscaya, CIP - Confederation of Portuguese Industry, Portugal

Alenka Pucko, KRKA (Pharmaceutical company), Slovenia

**Jo Peeters, Scouting & Guilding, Netherlands**

**Madhu Singh, UNESCO Institute for Education**

**Liliane Volozinskis, UEAPME, Belgium**

Joël Decaillon, European Trade Union Congress

**Anders Vind, LO – the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions**

**Milos Novák, Methodicko-pedagogicke centrum (Teacher INSET centre),  
Slovakia**

Joze Gorznik, Drustvo Mladinski Ceh (Youth NGO), Slovenia

Alenka Petek, Beneficiary of Drustvo Mladinski Ceh (Youth NGO), Slovenia

Fjola Maria Larusdottir, Education and Training Services Centre, Iceland

Javier Menéndez, Iberia, Spain

Gabriel Hortal Castaño, COCISA – Chambers of Commerce and Industry of  
Salamanca, Spain

Mary Katsiloulis, Hellenic Management Association, Greece

Lene Strom, TDC (Danish Telecom), Denmark

Svein-Harald Larsen, NELFO (the Norwegian Electrical Contractors' Association),  
Norway

Geir Dalhaug, Dalhaug AB (electro-technology company), Norway

Esa Keskinen, Koskisen OY, Finland

Øystein Nielsen, Beneficiary, Dalhaug AB, Norway

Heidi Pihlaja, Beneficiary, Koskisen OY, Finland

Lauri Veikko Savisaari, Nuortenakatemia (Youth Academy), Finland

Sonja Brunner, Zentralverband des deutschen Handwerks (ZDH) (Central Association of German Crafts, Germany)

Ciprian Fartusnic, Romanian national observatory, Romania

Ove Poulsen, Dansk Metal (Danish Metal Trade Union), Denmark

David Carden, Utbildningscentrum Tjörn (UCT), Sweden

## Annex 4

### Corus case-study

#### 1. Cost-benefit analysis of evc activities

## Elders Verworven Competenties

### **Corus Training Centre**

3K-01

Postbus 10.000

1970 CA IJmuiden

Nederland

3K-01

T +31 251 494512

T +31 251 491965.....

F +31 251 470357

Wiebe.baanstra@corusgroup.com

### *Development costs EVC*

60 men days                      € 45960

### *EVC costs for Corus*

Intake conversation	2 hours	€ 180	
Workplace investigation	4 hours	€ 360	
Review workplace investigation	1 hours	€ 95	
Assessment non-technical skills	16 hours	€ 1532	<i>Contract agreement NovaVigor</i>
Assessment technical skills	16 hours	€ 1532	<i>Contract agreement NovaVigor</i>
End review	1 hours	€ 95	
Portfolio		€ 150	<i>Year use</i>
Candidate work absenteeism	8 hours	€ 360	<i>Average costs</i>
Administration costs	6 hours	€ 350	<i>Function group 12</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>54 hours</b>	<b>€ 4654</b>	<i>To department € 4800</i>

### *Costs in case of EVC-candidate rejection*

Intake conversation	2 hours	€ 180	<i>Most of the time rejection moment, then € 180 for the department</i>
Workplace investigation	4 hours	€ 360	
Review workplace investigation	1 hours	€ 95	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 hours</b>	<b>€ 635</b>	

## ***Facilities training in work***

### *a. Financial facilities*

All training costs (course subscription, books, exam tuition, other tuition, etc.) are compensated by Corus at the moment they are encountered. In addition, travel costs associated with the course (course, exam) are compensated on the basis of 100% public service, second class.

### *b. Time facilities*

The course follower can come late/ go earlier or leave an entire work day (OPLO) with respect to the following of a course.

When the training falls outside regular working hours, these hours are compensated either in time or money. There are no overtime regulations put into practise.

Because of the exam half a work day exception leave (BV) is awarded.

Costs for Corus national training packages level 1-4

BBL training	Days Candidate work absenteeism	Costs abesenteism	Study costs	Opmerkingen
Level 1	100 days (function gr 5)	€ 8800	€ 4200 or € 12000	<i>Depending on training</i>
Level 2	100 days (function gr 8)	€ 9072	€ 8720 or € 18000	<i>Depending on training</i>
Level 3	100 days (function gr 10)	€ 10500	€ 6695 or € 10465	<i>Depending on training</i>
Level 4	100 days (function gr 12)	€ 12100	€ 8475 or € 10465	<i>Depending on training</i>

Output/Efficiency gain EVC Corus in comparison to national training packages level 1-4

MBO level 1			
	Process technology	Mechanical engineering	
Competence cover	100%	100%	
Cost saving on abenteism	€ 8800	€ 8800	
Cost saving on study costs	€ 4200	€ 12000	



Saving total	€ 13000	€ 20800	
--------------	---------	---------	--

#### MBO level 2 (average savings and costs)

	Process technology	Mechanical engineering	Logistics
Competence cover	78%	82%	90%
Cost saving on absenteeism	€ 9072	€ 9070	€ 9070
Cost saving on study costs	€ 8720	€ 18000	€ 9300
Costs additional thesis	€ 2090	€ 1720	€ 950
Saving total	€ 15700	€ 25350	€ 17420

#### MBO level 3 (average savings and costs)

	Process technology	Mechanical engineering	Logistics	Electro-technics
Competence cover	72%	85%	92%	89%
Cost saving on absenteeism	€ 10750	€ 10750	€ 9070	€ 10750
Cost saving on study costs	€ 6695	€ 10465	€ 9300	€ 12020
Costs additional thesis	€ 2660	€ 1425	€ 760	€ 1050
Saving total	€ 14785	€ 19790	€ 17610	€ 21720

#### MBO niveau 4 (average savings and costs)

	Process technology	Mechanical engineering	Logistics	Electro-technics	Factory clerical staff
Afdekking competenties	72%	85%	92%	89%	90%
Besparing kosten verzuim	€ 10750	€ 10750	€ 9070	€ 10750	€ 10750
Besparing studiekosten	€ 6695	€ 10465	€ 9300	€ 12020	€ 8100
Kosten aanvullende scriptie	€ 2660	€ 1425	€ 760	€ 1050	€ 950
Totaal besparing	€ 14785	€ 19790	€ 17610	€ 21720	€ 17900

#### Assignment 2005

#### Average saving per candidate from level 1-4 all training packages (day shift and shift work)

Day shift	€ 18400	
Shift work	€ 21400	Shift allowance 28%



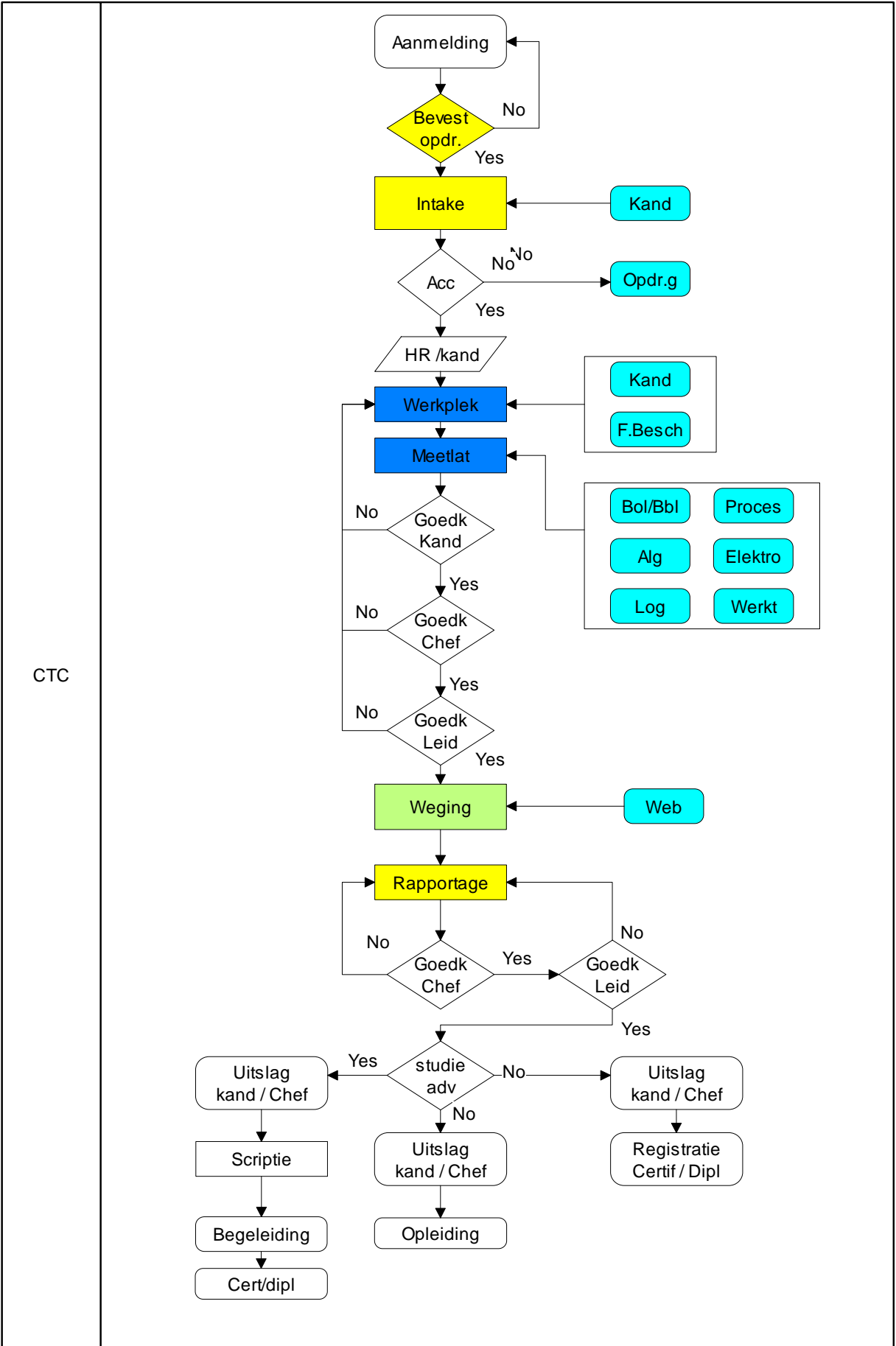
Thesis

Registration Certificate/Diploma

Accompaniment/supervisor

Certificate/Diploma

## 2. Corus case-study\_flow chart of stages of evc process within corus



3. Corus Case-study  
Justification and concepts  
NOVAVIGOR

18 June 2004

***"Tailored education" by exploiting the workplace as a learning spot.***

***In advance***

This text attempts to lay down some main points for the construction and justification of working method of NOVAVIGOR within the framework of tailored education and EVC (recognition of grown competences).

Important put in is that NOVAVIGOR strives to make as much as possible the workplace to a learning spot. Not only because this is efficient, but likewise because this the richness of the work surroundings remunerate and the employee/student in centre of the learning process places. If circumstances make this not possible, is being searched for the best appropriate solution.

NOVAVIGOR the next service parcel raises the bid for their employees to businesses half-measure to train. This service parcel knows the following steps:

1. Initial interview
2. To collect argument in Personal development planner and investigation of current workplace.
3. EVC Assessment and report:
  - a. Assessment for general personal competences in combination with technical assessment, including (provide training recommendation and certificate with qualifications Crebo) or diploma
  - b. Technical assessment, including (provide training recommendation and certificate with qualifications Crebo) or diploma
  - c. Assessment for general personal competences, exclusive training recommendation and including a development proposal and certificate concerning professional level
4. Tailored and personalized education plan
5. Diploma

These text pierces himself on the second and third step of this route. The differences between the investigation of work experience, the technical assessment and the assessment of general personal competences are evaluated.

***Framework***

What is a competence? In the concept of NovaVigor a competence means someone's proven ability to operate successfully in a professional task situation or domain in relation to others. Someone's success is stipulated as much as possible from his actual situation as are someone's shown behaviour, the results which are provided and the degree in which others (actors) trust him and are satisfied.

Each development level indicated is related to the five levels of the law education profession education (WEB). The required substantive knowledge becomes in the field of action defined by the task situation.

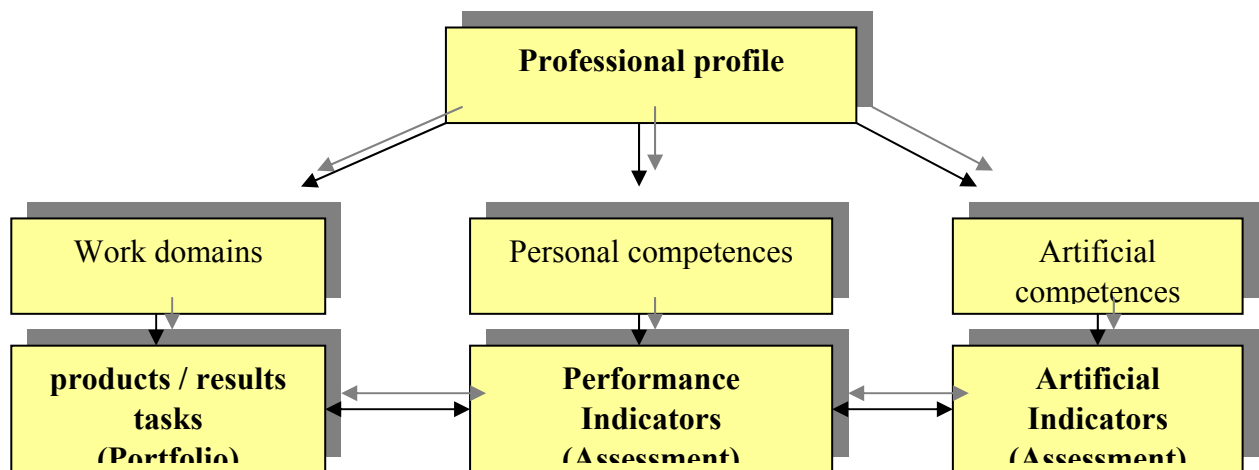
Education profiles have been borrowed from a delimited sum of task situations which attributed become to profession fields.

For stipulating one's competences it therefore is important to:

1. level descriptions to have for each training phase;
2. Relevant task situations and profession products to distinguish
3. Indicators to have for successfully professional act. These have been related to interested parties and to the professional standard.

For argument within the framework of port folio an employee/student always these three facets must involve. In overview mentioned below is present this there as follows from:

**Figure 2: Overview for competences:**



Argument for competences this path follows. In fact three questions are formulated:

1. Which products and results can show someone?
2. In which degree is there talk of acceptance by the interested parties on ground of personal (general) competences?
3. In which degree satisfies the contents and treatment of the results to professional standard for skill which belongs to a profession field? (to think to matter such as security, sustainability, transparency, reliability, ..)

Main point of the second step (Instruction Personal Development Planner (PDP) and collecting of evidence) in our procedure have been aimed at the first question. Insofar possibly elements of the second and third question is already taken along. The assessments aim at transparent judgments of reaching at answer of the last two questions.



### ***3 EVC Procedure***

#### *professional products and results*

EVC procedure continue building on argument round profession products. This this happens by means of the workplace research. This becomes preferably by the employer carried out.

In the case that NOVAVIGOR carries out this task, is collecting argument around profession products and results a component of the initial interview. The first interpretation of its PDP takes place by the candidate after he on the functional functioning of it it has been indicated. Also it is reviewed at interested parties or by candidate given up function and possible description of it correct is.

#### *General personal competences*

General personal competences have been related to the commonly professional level that someone possesses. We stick to the levels such as those in the WEB (law professional education) are distinguished:

Level 1: Employee is supervised by and acts entirely at instruction level (MBO1);

Level 2: Employee is partly supervised and works partly independent (MBO2);

Level 3: Employee works in his tasks entirely independent and is collabarative executive (MBO3);

Level 4: Employee is executive with closed objective/task description (MBO4);

Level 5: Employee is executive with open objective/task description (HBO).

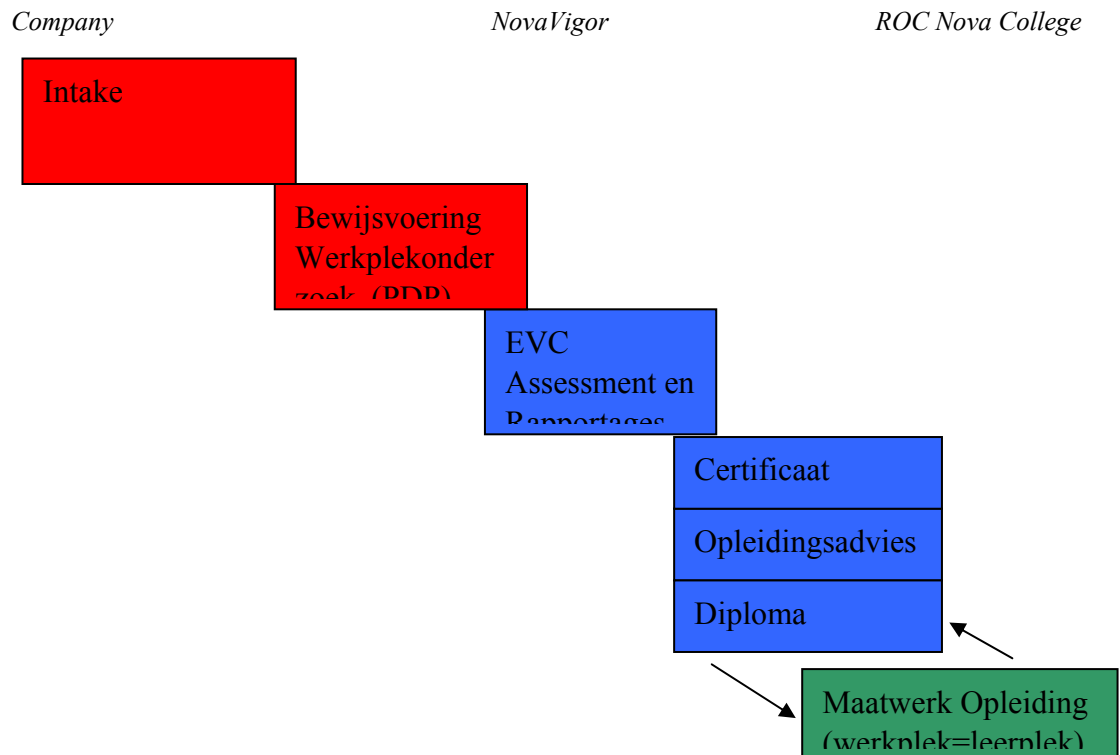
by means of "assessment personal competences" determine of level says something concerning one's general professional competences, but does no pronouncement concerning the degree in which also concerning sufficiently technical profession niche has for a specific profession role. It concerns here one's general to function and the breadth in which someone is usable.

#### *Technical competences*

For determining one's technical competences becomes assessment by profession specialists experienced carried out. During this assessment it is determined or someone all task situations and profession products, which belong to a profession field, properly has carried out. In fact it concerns the observation which degree a candidate sufficiently has knowledge of the concepts of a profession and if the used working method meets the profession requirements. Determination of technical competences have been related to Crebonummers (read: Educational terms related to professions).

Strength of the procedure where the company does the workplace research, is that then three appraisals by three formally independent parties become carried out. With that a degree of transparency and intersubjectivity becomes realised that gives sufficient guarantees for reliability and verifiability.

**Figure 4**



### *Certification*

On ground of the assessments can be distributed certificates. On the basis of general personal competences possible exclusively certificates are delivered. certificate exists from a level granting. At the certificate becomes also report distributed in which the considerations for level granting become called. This certificate has no formal civil impact.

certificate can be also distributed on the basis of a combination of assessment general personal competences and technical assessment. Then becomes beside level granting also described concerning which technical competences (related to qualifications Crebo) a candidate has. To such certificate is simple reduce which qualifications must become gained aimed by means of a training route tailored at an acknowledged diploma.

### *Diploma's*

In case a candidate by means of assessment appears satisfy to the final attainment levels of a profession training and also level granting the general personal competences sufficient a candidate can a diploma of a recognized profession training be directly distributed get.

In exceptional cases, for example if a candidate has already a MBO diploma, is possible level 3 assessment for general personal competences, completed with sufficient argument are enough for getting a diploma at level 4.

### ***Tailored education***

If a constituent, a training recommendation wishes that tailored is supplied. type of recommendation depends of ambitions of the candidate and the outcomes on assessments.

training recommendation can exist depending on of the need from:

- recommendation to reach a higher level;
- recommendation to reach a specific diploma.

In all cases at the recommendation the feasibility for the candidate is taken along with what is realistic in the work situation.

In both cases become in consultation between the constituent or candidate training plan made, where NOVAVIGOR sets objectives for work situation himself here this way optimum possible commitment by of the workplace a specific learning spot to make. Only if the situation this does not allow other support resources are exploited.

Up to level four training programs are carried out by Nova College.

Training on level of Higher Professional Education is facilitated by Nova Contract or by an Institute for Higher Education with which cooperation is realized (i.c. Hogeschool van Amsterdam).

### ***Objections and Appeal***

#### ***Objection***

Against a conclusion of assessment can be made a note of no objection. The report needs such transparency that for the people concerned conclusions are based on controllable considerations.

Against a consideration in a report can be made a note of objection. The candidate has to deliver evidence for the inadequacy of a consideration or used information. When accepted a new report is written and a new certificate produced. Earlier supplied reports and certificates are then invalid.

Objection is submitted at the project leader of NOVAVIGOR.

#### ***Appeal***

Client or candidate can appeal against a report and the final conclusion. A profession with a justification must be provided.

Appeal instance is the Exam Regulation Committee of the ROC Nova College with all thereby belonging procedures.

NOVAVIGOR



## Annex 5

### Terms of Reference

**SPECIFICATIONS APPLICABLE TO INVITATION TO TENDER  
EAC/ 34 /02**

**Public service contract No DG EAC/34/02 to be awarded by open procedure**

**TITLE: A European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning**

**INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT OF THE CONTRACT**

In response to the conclusion of the Commission Communication on Lifelong Learning (November 2001) to establish a 'European Inventory on validation<sup>1</sup> of non-formal<sup>1</sup> and informal<sup>1</sup> learning', this call for tenders invites organisations in the EU Member States, the EEA countries and the candidate countries to submit proposals on how this task can be accomplished, both methodologically and technically.

The question of how to identify, assess and recognise non-formal and informal learning has, during the last decade, received increasing attention in all the Member States of the European Union. Learning taking place outside formal education and training bodies, at work, in voluntary organisations, during leisure time and in the family is recognised as being of crucial importance not only to individuals but to enterprises and to society at large. Any serious effort to realise lifelong learning, enabling individuals to combine learning outcomes from different settings throughout life, requires appropriate methods and systems for validation to be developed and implemented. As has been realised in countries trying to find practical ways of dealing with this challenge, considerable methodological and institutional problems must be overcome. It is widely acknowledged that some of these problems can be solved through a more systematic exchange of experiences and good practice.

In the European Commission's Communication 'Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality' (op.cit., p.16,17), it is stated that systematic exchange of experiences and good practices in this field is necessary in order to stimulate the development of high-quality assessment methodologies and standards at European level. The European Commission will therefore 'establish by the end of 2003, based on the systematic exchange of experience, an Inventory of methodologies, systems and standards for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It should target the international, national and sectoral levels, as well as enterprises.'

The Commission, together with CEDEFOP, already began work on this Inventory during the autumn of 2001. Member States and EEA countries were asked to provide basic information on existing policies as well as on practical initiatives in this field. A

total of 13 countries have so far responded to this, providing a good starting point for the next stage of work, defined by this invitation to tender.

## **PURPOSE OF CONTRACT**

The main objective of the project is to assist the European Commission in establishing a **European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning**. This Inventory should cover initiatives and activities at European, national, sector/branch and enterprise level. It must be emphasised that the Inventory should be set up in such a way that the material can be used by actors at different levels and in different positions for a variety of purposes.

### **Tasks to be fulfilled**

If a European Inventory on validation of non-formal learning is to be made available, as stated in the Communication on lifelong learning, the following tasks have to be fulfilled:

- To assist the Commission in developing a methodology for the collection and updating of information on validation of non-formal and informal learning. This methodological approach must cover quantitative as well as qualitative data, forming the basis for future updates and extensions of the European Inventory.
- To assist the Commission in providing an updated overview of European methodologies and systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning. This requires, first, an overview of political and practical initiatives by public authorities at national, regional and local level (for example, as part of strategies pursued by Ministries of Education and/or Employment at various levels). Second, an overview must be established on developments in working life (in enterprises, industry branches, etc.). Given the heterogeneity and decentralised nature of initiatives in working life, this is a complicated but highly important task. Third, an overview of initiatives in voluntary organisations should be provided. Fourth, the contractor will be expected to provide an overview of ongoing research activities in this field, providing an updated list/summary of publications and projects. The contractor will be expected to both build on and substantially extend the material collected during 2002, in terms of both qualitative and quantitative data.
- To assist the Commission in developing an electronically accessible format for presentation and dissemination of the information. The aim should be to ensure that all interested parties, including policy-makers and practitioners in public and private institutions and organisations, are given full access to the material and may use this according to their own needs and priorities.

### **Final product**

Fulfilment of the tasks listed above is a necessary step in a process that will eventually result in a permanent system for the collection and dissemination of experiences and good practice in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning. Proposals should consider how to make the best of existing resources at

national and European level (for example, the work of Community programmes such as Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates). It is essential that this work is carried out in close cooperation with the European Commission.

### **Reports and documents to be submitted**

The contract for the evaluation work will be for a period of 12 months, commencing from the date of signature of the contract by the two parties. The Commission will require the contractor to submit an interim report after six months and a final report containing a detailed financial statement, in duplicate in each case.

#### Interim report

The interim report will cover, for the first six months commencing from the date of signature of the contract by the two parties, the services performed and the results obtained, indicating in particular:

- any overall impact which the results may have on the services covered by the contract;
- the programme of services scheduled for the subsequent period.

The interim report must be sent to the Commission after six months from the date of signature of the contract by the two parties. It will be written in English.

#### Final report

The final report will describe the work accomplished and the results obtained when carrying out the contract. A draft version of the final report must be submitted to the Commission no later than the last day of the contract period. The Commission will then inform the contractor of its acceptance of this report, or will pass on its observations. Within 30 days of receiving the Commission's observations, the contractor will submit the final report in definitive form, either taking account of these observations or setting out different arguments.

In the absence of observations from the Commission within 20 days after the date of receipt of the draft report, the contractor will be entitled to request its acceptance of the report in writing.

The final report will be considered as being accepted by the Commission if, within 20 days after the receipt of this request, the Commission has not explicitly made its observations to the contractor.

The final report will be presented in English, including a detailed summary also in English.

The paper copy of reports shall be sent by normal post. An electronic copy of all reports and documentation shall also be made available in a format agreed with the



Commission. Exchange of advance copies as well as other non-formal communications shall take place via electronic mail.

The contractor may be asked to present the results to EC officials and Member State representatives throughout the contract period.

### ***PAYMENT***

The payment procedures are as follows:

- an initial payment of 30% of the total amount within 30 days of the signature of the contract by the two parties;
- a second payment of 40% of the total amount within 30 days of the approval by the Commission of the interim report;
- payment of the balance within 30 days of the approval by the Commission of the final report.

Payments will be made into the bank account of the contractor upon presentation of invoices.

**BIDS ARE TO BE DRAWN UP WITH DUE REGARD TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE STANDARD CONTRACT ANNEXED TO THIS INVITATION TO TENDER (ANNEX 1).**

### **TENDERERS MUST INCLUDE IN THEIR BID:**

- all the information and documents needed to enable the authorising department to analyse bids on the basis of the selection criteria and award criteria set out in point 9;
- the financial tables as per Annex 2 to these specifications, duly completed;
- the relevant bank details of the tenderer, showing the bank account number, the account holder (name and address), the bank/branch code and the BIC/SWIFT code (the form "Financial identification" enclosed as Annex 5 to these specifications, duly completed, may be used for this purpose);
- a declaration to the effect that the tenderer is/is not subject to VAT and, as the case may be, the VAT number or certificate of exemption;
- the price in accordance with point 7.

### **TENDERERS' ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS IN RELATION TO THE PRICE QUOTED:**

- The total amount envisaged should not be more than € 130 000, including travel expenses.
- Prices must be quoted in euro:

- The rates for converting the national currencies of the "euro-participating" countries were fixed by the Council on 31 December 1998 and entered into force on 1 January 1999.
- Tenderers from other countries must use the conversion rates published in the Official Journal of the European Communities, C series, on the date of publication of the invitation to tender.
- An all-in price is to be quoted (in euro), covering all of the work required.
- The price must be fixed and not subject to revision. It must be justified by a detailed breakdown of fees and costs, indicating notably costs expressed by person-day, as well as travel and subsistence expenses. A clear breakdown of costs relating to manpower, software licence costs and hardware costs must be provided.
- The price quoted is to include a separate estimate of the travel and subsistence expenses which will be incurred for the purposes of the project, including the meetings due to be held in Brussels.
- This estimate is to be based on Annexes 2 and 3 of these specifications, including any travelling necessary for meetings with the Education and Culture Directorate-General, and will, in any case, constitute the maximum amount of travel and subsistence expenses which may be paid for all of the services.
- Under the terms of Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Communities, the latter are exempt from all charges, taxes and duties, including value added tax; such charges may not therefore be included in the calculation of the price quoted; the VAT amount is to be indicated separately. The VAT will not be taken into account when examining the prices quoted in the different bids.

**BIDS MUST BE DRAWN UP IN ONE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MUST BE SUBMITTED IN TRIPLICATE.**

*SELECTION CRITERIA*

Tenderers must provide evidence:

- a. Of their financial and economic capacity to take on the tasks specified in this contract. Such evidence may be provided in the form of one or more of the following reference documents:
  - appropriate bank declarations or proof of professional indemnity insurance;
  - balance sheets or extracts therefrom;
  - a statement of overall turnover or turnover relating to the services in question, covering the last three financial years.

If, for a justifiable reason, the tenderer is unable to produce the references required by the awarding authority, it is authorised to prove its economic and financial capacity by any other document considered to be appropriate by the awarding authority. In the case where

the contractor is an individual, s/he is obliged also to provide proof of his/her independent status. To this end, s/he should provide documentary evidence concerning his/her social security cover and VAT obligations, or proof of exemption from VAT, as appropriate.

Where the tenderer wishes to sub-contract or otherwise rely on the capacities of other entities, it must in that case prove that it will have at its disposal the resources necessary for performance of the contract, for example by producing an undertaking on the part of those entities to place those resources at its disposal.

- b. Of their experience in the area of similar studies.
- c. Of their knowledge with regard to the context and the object of this contract.
- d. Of their ability to create a team capable of carrying out the work required in all the countries participating in the programme.

Each tenderer's application dossier must also include:

- The staff chart of the organisation and the CVs of the staff who will be responsible for the work and of any partners likely to be involved, giving details of their professional experience and their specific contributions to the proposed task.
- A list of the principal services provided during the last three years, indicating the subject, the amount, the date and the recipient of the services provided (public or private).
- The list of partners participating in the work across all the countries concerned, where a single contractor represents a partnership in order to fulfil the conditions required by these specifications.
- Tenders from consortia of firms or from groups of service providers must specify the role, qualifications and experience of each member of the group.

N.B.: Tenderers omitting to meet any of these requirements will be excluded.

Tenderers shall be excluded from participation in a procurement procedure if:

- (a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of *res judicata*;
- (c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify;

- (d) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the contracting authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- (e) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the Communities' financial interests;
- (f) following another procurement procedure or grant award procedure financed by the Community budget, they have been declared to be in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations.

Tenderers must certify that they are not in one of the situations listed above.

As satisfactory evidence that the tenderer is not in one of the situations described in point (a), (b) or (e) above, production of a recent extract from the judicial record is required or, failing that, a recent equivalent document issued by a judicial or administrative authority in the country of origin or provenance showing that those requirements are satisfied.

The contracting authority shall accept, as satisfactory evidence that the tenderer is not in the situation described in point (d) above, a recent certificate issued by the competent authority of the State concerned. Where no such certificate is issued in the country concerned, it may be replaced by a sworn or, failing that, a solemn statement made by the interested party before a judicial or administrative authority, a notary or a qualified professional body in his country of origin or provenance.

Contracts may not be awarded to tenderers who, during the procurement procedure:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the contracting authority as a condition of participation in the contract procedure or fail to supply this information.

Administrative or financial penalties may be imposed by the contracting authority on tenderers who are in one of the cases of exclusion provided for above, in accordance with Articles 93, 94 & 96 of the Financial Regulation (Council Regulation 1605/2002 of 25/6/02) and Article 133 of the Implementing Regulation (Commission Regulation 2342/2002 of 23/12/02)”

Depending on the national legislation of the country in which the tenderer is established, the documents referred to above may be requested in relation to legal persons and/or natural persons including, where considered necessary, company directors or any person with powers of representation, decision-making or control in relation to the candidate or tenderer. If desired to have this information in relation to legal persons, this must be specified.

## **AWARD CRITERIA**

The contract will be awarded to the tenderer submitting the economically most advantageous bid, on the basis of:

- the understanding of the problem and the quality of the suggested solutions;
- the quality of the proposed methodology and of the work plan;
- the total cost of the project (derived from a clear and comprehensive budget plan).

When the bids are evaluated, each of these criteria will carry the same weight for the purpose of awarding the contract.

**SUBMISSION OF A BID IMPLIES ACCEPTANCE OF OUR "GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO CONTRACTS" AND ALL THE PROVISIONS SET OUT IN THE SPECIFICATIONS, THE INVITATION TO TENDER AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS.**

**BIDS MUST REMAIN VALID, IN RESPECT OF ALL CONDITIONS, FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS FOLLOWING THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING THEM.**

THIS INVITATION TO TENDER IS OPEN TO TENDERERS FROM THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA AND THE SIGNATORY STATES TO THE GATT TREATY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY.

**BIDS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A LETTER OF PRESENTATION, SIGNED BY THE TENDERER OR AN AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVE.**

A signed bid is binding upon the tenderer vis-à-vis the awarding authority. The tenderer must indicate clearly the identity of the organisation concerned: business name (full legal title); short name (where appropriate); acronym (where appropriate); legal status (association, commercial company, university or other), VAT No (where appropriate); address; and any other relevant information.

## **SUBMISSION OF BIDS**

Tenderers can opt to submit their bids:

a) either by registered mail, posted no later than 23/04/2003 as evidenced by the postmark; b) or by hand (delivered by the tenderer or by any authorised representative, including private courier) to the secretariat of the department concerned:

European Commission  
Directorate-General for Education and Culture  
Unit B/1  
“A European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning”  
B—7 5/54  
Belliard, 7  
B-1049 Brussels

no later than 4 p.m. on 23/04/2003. In this case, proof of submission will take the form of a receipt dated and signed by the official to whom the documents are handed over.

Bids must be submitted in two envelopes, one inside the other, both of them sealed. The inner envelope, addressed to the department concerned, is to be marked **“Appel d’offres n° DG EAC/34/02 - A ne pas ouvrir par le courrier ni par le secrétariat”** (“Invitation to tender No DG EAC 34/02 - Not to be opened by the internal mail department or by the secretariat”). If self-adhesive envelopes are used, they must be sealed with adhesive tape and the sender must sign across this tape.

## **OPENING OF BIDS**

An ad hoc committee will be set up to open the tenders and to check whether the submission procedures have been complied with. This committee will open the tenders on 06/05/2003 at 10.00 a.m. at the premises of the European Commission, Directorate-General Education and Culture, rue Belliard 7, B-1040 Bruxelles, room 05/12.

A representative of each bidding organisation may attend the opening of the bids.

**THE COST OF SUBMITTING A BID IS TO BE MET BY THE TENDERER.**

**TENDERERS MAY NOT SUBMIT BIDS FOR ONLY PART OF THE SERVICES REQUIRED. VARIANTS ARE NOT ALLOWED.**

## **SECURITY OR GUARANTEES**

The Commission may require the tenderer to provide a bank guarantee (or other security) to cover the total amount of the contract, including the reimbursable costs, as a guarantee of the correct performance of the contract. The guarantee will be paid back as and when payments are made by the Commission to the contractor. In the event of non-fulfilment of the contract, of delay in its fulfilment or of a failure to meet quality standards, the Commission will be compensated for any damages, and expenses incurred in compensating for the loss, by deduction from the guarantee, whether this has been provided directly by the contractor or by a third party.

## **PUBLICATION**

The rights relating to the report and to its reproduction and publication will remain the property of the European Commission. Any document based wholly or partly on the work carried out under the contract may be published only with the formal written agreement of the European Commission.

## **TENDERERS WILL BE INFORMED OF THE OUTCOME OF THEIR BIDS IN WRITING.**

### **Annexes:**

- 1 Model contract**
- 1/I Special conditions**
- 1/II General conditions**
- 2 Financial tables**
  
- 3 Reimbursement of expenses**
- 4 Financial identification**
- 5 Reference documents:**