

Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in Germany
Synthesis of the study visit in Germany (16th January – 17th January 2012)

Nicolas Rode, consultingeuropa

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Introduction: NFIL largely formalised and entrenched in German society but there is still considerable need for discussion.

Germany faces long-term demographic changes. Currently there are around 50 million people of working age based on a total population of 81.8 million. After 2020 this number will decrease, so in 2030 there will only be 42 to 43 million people left in this working age group. This means potentially 7 million less workers and a considerable risk for economic growth.

The German economic success is partly built on the three pillar structure of its education system. The first pillar is the formal education system, the second is vocational education and training (the dual system of education in vocational schools and initial training in companies) and the third pillar of learning through civic engagement (alumni clubs, sport associations, social and political organisations, etc.). General and specific non-formal and informal learning outcomes can be, but must not be, recognized by an employer, therefore NFIL could be a third element of education (?) based on pilot projects.

In Germany, the term professional competency is based on knowledge, technical competencies and self-competency. According to the German Trade Union Federation (DGB), self-competency includes co-determination (Mitbestimmung), embodiment (Gestaltung), and reflexivity (Reflexivität). Qualification measures should be planned, executed, examined/evaluated and reflected. These should be the standards of the VET measures. The recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is quite recent in Germany. However the concept has been developed in Europe in the 1970s and it reappeared on the forefront through the memorandum on Life-Long-Learning. In order to coordinate vocational education and training outcomes the European Qualification Framework started in 2008. This European framework was an important impulse for VET reforms in Germany by pressuring national actors to connect [bridge] formal education, formal vocational education and training as well as the spheres of work and civil society.

In Germany education policy (all levels: lower, secondary and higher education) is largely dealt with by the sixteen states of the Federal Republic, the “Länder”. However, the general framework for vocational education and training is developed at national level.

This study mainly deals with measures, projects and initiatives on the national level because it is not possible to present the developments in all sixteen federal states.

The pilot initiative “Development of a credit system in vocational education and training” (DECVET)

Within the DECVET project, Germany did also look at the Swiss model of modular recognition and modular continuous qualification. During the ECVET project, German social partners agreed that for the moment, they do not want to introduce a point system or the possibility of accumulation of points, even if, as we will see later, this would increase considerably the transferability between education systems.

All professions should become compatible with the European systems, but there are differences in quality and complexity for Professional Master degrees (a state-recognized degree for professions), for example in the cleaning sector/building maintenance.

1. The legal framework for the recognition and validation of NFIL is in constant change

1.1. Target groups of recognition and validation of NFIL outcomes

The recognition of skills and qualifications of marginalized groups in the labour market is still at an early stage, often done through a trial and error approach in pilot projects of civil society associations (NGOs, social, cultural, political and religious associations, trade unions, etc.). Lacking a coherent NFIL policy, actors in the VET sector are responsible for the recognition of NFIL outcomes. Various organizations concentrate their activities on particular target groups such as workers with low or medium qualifications, long-term unemployed, job seekers, migrant workers, etc. The target groups are differentiated according to regions and sectors.

The first target group is **young people**. This also means finding ways to give young people sufficient help to reach a sufficient level of knowledge, self-discipline and skills. The chambers want to increase the quality of new apprentices by reaching out to the formal education system.

Some young people receive preparatory training (Vorbereitungskurse) in order to be trained in skills essential for the labour market. Other tools in Germany are modules for job starters which have elements for the recognition of NFIL. Preparation for professions (Vorbereitungskurse) would be level 2 yet they do not lead to a certification, but the access to further formal education can be considered a form of recognition.

More and more, young people who **drop out of university** before acquiring a degree – this happens often in technical study programs- are a new target group for the dual VET system. This requires that study points can be transferred to the VET system. The issue is that the VET community does not want to introduce a point system. How is ECVET compatible with the ECTS?

The potential of the young population is not utilized . 250.000 young people are in training programs without formal recognition. The demographic change has not yet affected all the sectors in terms of recruits for apprenticeship. For example, in the health sector there are around 100,000 less applications for training places, but this just leads to more competition and higher demands from the employers.

Temporary agency workers and their inclusion in training and certification is another topic. According to the Federal Employment Agency the number of temporary agency workers increased in Germany from 371,309 in August 2003 to 862,335 in August 2010. Over 50% do not stay longer than 3 months in one company, thus companies have little interest to finance training or to recognize acquired skills. Temporary agency workers are mostly getting training by the employment agencies during periods of unemployment before getting back to temporary agency work. Nevertheless there are some improvements. Some training and certification measures are now offered by agencies such as Randstad (http://www.randstad-stiftung.de/index.php?page=lernen_im_job) in relatively short time such as for languages, computer skills, forklifting and welding.

People who acquired a degree through the dual system have a high professional mobility, however continuous education and therefore later on retirement **pensions remain low**. This is also partly due to the fact that jobs related to hard physical work cannot be done until age 67. There is generally less investment in low skilled workers in terms of continuous education.

During the crisis after 2008, temporary work should have been used to train workers, but it was rarely done. Some programs like WEGEBAU in the construction sector, helped to use short time employment (Kurzarbeit) during the crisis for additional training.

Germany is known for high professional competency but low levels of geographic mobility. International companies such as Rolls Royce and Siemens have developed European VET system to give students the best training from each participating country. This leads to national standardization

in a first step and then, in a second step, to European wide standards of VET and validation of qualifications.

Because clients want more and more services from one company, companies and employees are working together to develop multi-disciplinary teams. This leads also to more transmission of non-formal learning within project teams. The learning effect can be an added value for further projects.

For the **handicapped or people with disabilities**: modules for qualification and a posteriori qualification based on work experience are prepared by the German national institute for vocational education (BIBB).

Voluntary work could be recognized as well within the DQR and several initiatives and projects have dealt with this idea. However, without guidance they have set up their own level system and reduced the number of levels which makes the results incomparable with the existing framework established by professional sectors. The idea is good, but the transposition should be done in a larger context of national, federal, and sectoral application.

Family competences: Capacity of conflict management and management in general are developed throughout the development phase of children. Can the skills of conflict resolution be acquired after a certain age of the child? There are already several European projects on this question of NFIL outcomes from family management.

1.2. Formal validation of professional experience: the external examinations

Another important target group are so-called “low skilled” persons. For them, the primary objective is to get access to the formal vocational education system. Here the external exam, in German “*Externenprüfung*”, is taken by the regional and local chambers of crafts. This is the best way to get work experience and thereby non-formally learned skills validated. The exam is preceded by the self-assessment of the applicant. In case of unemployment, the person can get financial support from the German employment agency. The initiative for participation has to come from the individual.

Vocational education and training in Germany is characterised by a formalised dual system of education and training. The curricula and examinations are based on a consensus of the social partners and the education institutes. This system is well established and therefore not very open to the changes necessary to accommodate non-formal and informal practices outside the VET system, but it offers the advantage of constant controlling of quality and the possibility of matching trained workers and workplace. Because this system is so formalized, the so-called “external examination” was introduced. The external exam is considered as very efficient in Germany, less commercial and less complicated than in other countries. Depending on the Bundesland, the profession and the sector, the chambers of crafts or the chambers of commerce and industry are responsible for the exam.

The external exam is reserved for candidates who want to acquire a certificate based on their professional experience (*Externenprüfung*). It now allows about 30,000 students with a similar professional background to enter the exam process. They will receive at the end the same certificate as those who have passed the examination after professional learning courses in the dual system. The work experience required beforehand should at least be half the time of the prescribed training period according to § 45 paragraph 2 of the Vocational Education Act.

The external examination allows to recognize 1.5 years of work experience. The requirements are usually for a minimum total of **4.5 years** of work experience in the occupation at the appropriate level. The exam is carried out by the chambers of commerce and industry and of the chambers of crafts. BIBB supports the process and develops hand-outs for chambers. The exam is equal to the apprenticeship exam. Large parts of the necessary skills and knowledge are supposed to be achieved through non-formal learning. An estimated 7% of any age cohort uses this tool to access their

certification. This model is not easily transferable because of the nature of the German dual system. The system allows only a full accreditation and not the recognition of single modules. Shorter training courses (16 hours training, etc.) are not validated, only programs over 2 years are recognized and integrated into the formal education of a Bundesland (state).

1.3. The law on vocational education - Berufsbildungsgesetz

The Vocational Training Reform Act of 1st April 2005 merged and reformed the Vocational Education Act and the Vocational Training Promotion Act. This reform includes regulations which increase the permeability at the interfaces between professional preparation and dual training, between full-time schooling and occupational training, and between dual education and training, and facilitate access to testing for people who have not gone through the dual training system. This is the so-called “external examination”.

The law on vocational education and training (Berufsbildungsgesetz) includes about 350 professions. The Health professions are regulated in special laws.

The process of defining a profession in Germany goes through three stages:

- 1. First a discussion (Eckpunktegespräch) between social partners on the creation or modernization of a profession is clearing the main issues,**
- 2. Then there is a tripartite committee of experts which includes the BIBB. The definition and transposition of the new profession is done by unanimity,**
- 3. The new profession is accepted by the authorities.**

One example of simplification of professions can be found in the profession of sales personnel. For nearly every sector, there is a VET program for salesmen. This makes the system more complicated and leads to a high number of professions. The harmonization of requirements between sectors leads to fewer professions and in the end to less bureaucracy and more transferability between sectors.

Building site foremen and “Poliere” (head masons) are considered to be certified “Master of construction”. These are categories which are examined by social partners and recognized by the federal state. These German particularities are unique in Europe.

Professions that only need two years of training (positions in call-centers, low skilled management tasks, etc.) are not welcomed by the trade unions, but the employers managed to convince the ministry to declare them valid.

1.4. The new Recognition Act - the can opener for the German labour market

Professional qualifications from other countries should be recognized in Germany based on the EQF agreement, but in fact so far it is better to pass through the ordinary examinations to be recognized professionally in Germany.

The federal law on the recognition of foreign qualifications will establish a nationally standardized system of assessing foreign professional qualifications in a way which will be more transparent and open for applicants and relevant authorities. Previously an individual equivalence review was only reserved for German repatriates and the system was not formalized across Germany. The law should help to close skill gaps in German businesses. It enters into force in April 2012.

The so-called Recognition Act is basically a new federal law, the "Professional Qualifications Assessment Act" (Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz - BQFG) and includes over 60 amendments related to the recognition of qualifications in "regulated professions," such as professions in academic areas, healthcare and crafts.¹

¹ <http://www.bmbf.de/en/15644.php>

This law should considerably help to improve previously non-uniform and thus occasionally discriminatory assessment practices. Every single federal state has to implement the law in a transparent and coordinated way. The Bundesländer have to provide uniform implementation criteria to the enforcement agencies responsible for the professions concerned. It will be crucial that there be a standardized procedure for the recognition of qualifications identical in each federal state. There will be a web portal in order to allow social partners and relevant institutions to define and map countries of origin, international collaborations, and successful recognition of foreign professional credentials. The main principle is the equivalency of foreign professional qualifications to German standards. Thus, the responsible authorities will assess the candidate's qualifications based on the equivalent profession in Germany in order to maintain the high standard of German degrees and professional certificates. This law might also increase the recognition of NFIL. It would affect around 300.000 foreigners living in Germany.² The **new recognition law** might have serious consequences for the German VET system and VET markets, because it might lead to

- possible discrimination of native Germans / more recognition for foreign credentials
- conflictive discussions in the chambers when foreign credentials are validated might lead to legal cases where foreigners will ask for more recognition
- more competition on the labour market
- more labour migration particularly from EU countries

2. Critical appraisal of the transposition of the EQF in Germany

Some of the interlocutors played the devil's advocate and explained that the description of **social competences** in the European Qualification Framework is mostly limited to team work and leadership and not defining social skills related to interaction for example with patients and clients, which are particularly important with relation to health and social services.

Client-oriented social skills are considered professional competencies, but they are not described as such.

The catalogue of social skills includes team building and leadership skills but not reflexivity or ethics. There is no specific legal base for the implementation of the DQR, it all depends on the integration into the administration of validations by chambers and universities. A national institution will probably not be created. The consequence will be that the German Federal parliament will not be consulted and therefore degrees will not have a national legal basis.

The working group of the social partners has formulated and published the DQF. According to the DGB, the selection of stakeholders is not well explained and seems not to be systematic. There are, however, also several problems especially on the categorization of specific skills, e.g. social skills. For example: should a banker be a good salesman or should he rather follow an ethical code?

There is no discussion on NFIL in the health sector. Social competences must yet be defined in detail. The questions for the validation system as a whole should be whether to invest in the existing approaches or to find possibilities to validate experiences in new sectors.

At the last annual conference of the German trade union federation DGB, stakeholders could not reach an agreement on a common declaration. Even experts have problems to validate professional experience because it is partly subjective. Consequently the social partners are rather waiting to see how the formal validation of professional experience will be integrated in the DQF.

One example is that a PhD in medicine is level 8, while a doctor with 10 to 15 years practice is level 7. Bachelor is always level 6, even if the number of acquired competences might be different for each discipline, while a competent hospital nurse is only level 4 to 5. Professional experience and real social competences are not considered, this is particularly negative for women.

² <http://www.igbce.de/portal/site/igbce/anerkennungsgesetz/>

2.1. DQR - The German Qualification Framework

The introduction of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) has resulted in a German Qualification Framework (DQR) in 2009, which does not yet include the validation of informal and non-formal learning outcomes³. It was developed by a specialised working group on the NQF. The ministry for education and research (BMBF) is coordinating the DQR process. At the moment the data collection is done, legal guidelines may follow at a later stage. Through the matrix in the DQR it should be much easier to define opportunities to improve continuous learning processes for individuals and companies. Nevertheless, there seems to be a competition between the validation of professional qualifications and academic degrees like the bachelor degree. In the DQR, Level 7 and 8 are mainly reserved for academic ranks and careers, this does not seem fair for non-academic professions. The social partners play an important role in this process. Their involvement has pushed the relevant authorities to include some professional qualifications on levels 6, 7 and theoretically even level 8.

On the vertical level it includes 8 levels, but on the horizontal levels there are other priorities than in the EQF. There is a differentiation between professional competences (knowledge and specific skills) and personal competences (social skills). The DQR is a transparency tool and does not entail rights to the recognition of informally acquired skills. The system has been tested on 50 qualifications but is not yet formally put in place.

The DQR is a framework for analyzing professions. According to the German trade unions, even the German DQR is not sufficient for the precise formulation of competences and skills (e.g. social competences). The work must be taken to the level of the chambers of commerce, industry and crafts, as well as sectoral social partners. German actors are pushed towards reforms through the DQR: the exam rules must be rewritten in order to integrate the new information of scaling and levelling results (output oriented). The main task for the Ministry for Education and Research is to structure the presently existing certificates and diplomas on national level. The concrete transmission into practice will follow. This means that the validation of NFIL outcomes will only be integrated later. NFIL integration will be based on necessity.

The Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) is organizing the discussion through working groups with stakeholders. For example, the social partners argue that a high school degree should be level 4 but the council of Ministers of Culture argues it should be level 5.

NFIL is not fully integrated in either the EQF or the German DQR.

The German competencies description is considered more open and transparent by the German social partners than the European model. High school degrees can often be replaced by professional experience.

On the 31st of January 2012 an Agreement of ranking diplomas and certificates, based on the German Qualification Framework, was reached. This agreement excludes the baccalaureat because it is not a professional certificate in itself.

2.1. Financial aspects

There are only specific funds, but no nation-wide fund financed by companies like in France.

The Federal ministry for education and research (BMBF) has a “Bildungsprämie” (training premium) for low skilled persons. The ministry co-finances VET education by financing up to 50 percent of a VET measure. The education voucher (Bildungsscheck) can be worth up to 500 EUR. The total fund is

³ see GEW DQR-Gutachten 10

worth 35 million EUR and has been extended by 2 years. It is co-financed by the European social fund.

For employees there are generally no direct funds for VET, however the social partners in the chemical sector have established a fund for demographic change in 2010, based on a collective agreement for the chemical and plastics sectors in 2008. This fund is worth over 180 million EUR in 2012. It should not only allow early retirement and temporary work etc., but it would also finance training on demographic challenges for companies and employees.⁴

Federal laws governing adult education are the Social Security Code II and III (Sozialgesetzbuch II & III): they regulate benefits for different kinds of vocational training in order to increase the potential of jobseekers to integrate into the labour market; then there is the Career Advancement Further Education Promotion Act (Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz (ABFG)). It regulates subsistence money (grant of 30 per cent and loan of 70 per cent) for people who want to qualify as a master in crafts or technical occupations.

Additionally the Federal Education and Training Assistance Act (BaföG) offers the opportunity for young people and adults to get financial assistance if they want to take exams in order to obtain qualifications. This is called the alternative route for mature learners.

3. The different aspects of formal certification.

There are over 1000 adult education centres in Germany. The market of VET is actually shrinking, but the theoretical needs in terms of adaptation to change (renewable energies, energy efficiency, knowledge transfer between generations, etc.) are growing. In the following chart, the diversity of the German VET market can be appreciated:

⁴ <http://www.bayern.igbce.de/portal/site/bayern/menuitem.acfb5317d488cc0c45c7da6935bf21ca/>



The VET schools of the German handicrafts sector are certified as such by the German chambers of crafts. This means their short trainings are certified. The chambers of crafts have their own examinations and then there are regulated professions that are governed by national law for example the Master of crafts (Meister), which is equivalent to level 6. There is even a level 7 in the craft, the “Betriebswirt des Handwerks”, basically an MBA of crafts. There is no need for level 8 in crafts. The costs for the professional exams differ across Germany, because each chamber fixes the price. There are no seats in the governing bodies of the chambers for industry and commerce for representatives of trade unions.

The ISO certification is already a competitor to the dual vocational education system. These often include timely limited certification which must be updated by the holder, e.g. Internet security. It is a parallel system.

3.1. The transferability of professional knowledge to the German academic system - the higher education system opens itself up to professionals

Universities are convinced that they provide better qualifications, but the formal frontiers are increasingly getting lower. For many years, the social partners have lobbied for easier access to universities.

Dual VET education is officially accessible for all (no baccalaureat necessary), but universities normally operate a “Numerus Clausus” for many courses, meaning minimal average grades in a secondary school leaving certificate (Abitur) is required to enter a study program. This has forced a lot of people without “Abitur” to engage themselves into doing their baccalaureate at a later stage in adult life (“Zweiter Bildungsweg”, second-chance education). On the other side, the German high school degree has been excluded from the DQR matrix because the German social partners do not consider it to be an official professional certificate for the labour market. It is not comparable to apprenticeship.

In 2009, the standing committee of the ministers for culture and education of the 16 Länder decided to increase the permeability between professional training and higher education (Durchlässigkeitsbeschluss), thereby increasing the access of qualified workers to higher education. For example, the federal state of Niedersachsen allows people to access university exams without attending the preparatory seminars.

The formal education system has recently become more open, but workers rarely study at German universities, they rather go to business and management schools.

The Project ANKOM has been developed with around 20 German universities. The objective was to validate professionally acquired competencies in the higher education system. This is a considerable step for universities.

To further promote the use of higher formal education during a work life, the network's "ways to study"⁵ was initiated as a joint platform of federal ministries, the federal employment agency, the German Trade Union Federation, the German chamber of commerce and industry, the federal parents organization as well as the student support body and the universities vice chancellors' organization.

The numbers of academics should be increased according to the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), but the thesis of the IG BAU is that "equality must be lived" between the formal education system and professional learning.

Non-formal and informal learning outcomes are not seen as a danger nor as an opportunity for the higher education system. Academically educated employees often get time and financial support from their companies in order to acquire an MBA, if the company sees an added-value to retain the person in the company. Workers are offered and use this option rarely. Universities are not extensively promoting this model for workers. Most of the time, the procedures to shorten study time is not explained very well.

One interviewee explained that in many sectors, the higher the level of education, the shorter academics stay in one company or sector. If they learn in a company, this is often used to start new studies (MBA, PhD). Workers are less mobile and less attracted by continuous learning, but they are also more loyal. Employers still have to find the healthy balance between academic and professional education.

4. In Germany social partners engage themselves in the issue of introducing NFIL outcomes into the VET system

4.1. The perspective on the recognition and validation of NFIL practices from the employers side and from the trade union side

In the pyramid of needs, there are elementary or minimum requirements, primary requirements, secondary requirements and extra skills and competences.

Employers argue that the design of professions in Germany is developed quite extensively, so that more recognition of NFIL would not help to extend the definition of these professions. NFIL is important to increase transferability and links between professions. Employers want to use all the skills, and in particular the soft skills of their employees. Internal organization systems such SAP can already manage NFIL acquired skills. They are used to identify the necessary competent personnel for a specific project. These systems are also used to select the right VET students for the company. The value of non-formal and informally learned skills is not honored with higher salaries; this is also due to the lack of awareness of market power on the employee side.

Professional mobility will be increased through qualified professional certification, but what is more relevant for employers than official documents is the trial period during which employers can test apprentices. Certificates given by employers often include the recognition of non-formally acquired

⁵ <http://www.wege-ins-studium.de/de/studiumaberwieundwas/studierenohneabitur.htm>

skills, but these documents are not legally binding. These certificates could help to define all the aspects of NFIL, because they often describe working activities in detail.

Similar to employers, trade unions have little experience in the recognition and validation of NFIL outcomes. For trade unions the equality of degrees is essential. For the trade union IG BAU, the more important part is the consultation with the employers on defining professions and their requirements. The chambers are executing bodies. There is increasing independence of chambers which leads to conflicts when social partners ask specific questions on behalf of their members. This might be considered in some cases as “intervention in the chamber’s internal affairs”.

The trade unions had to engage in this European process of integration of NFIL outcomes. The architecture and notions (e.g. knowledge, competences and skills) of the European Qualification Framework are not easily transferable into the German system.

There are some projects on both sides, but the cooperation between social partners only occurs when there is an urgent case which was brought forward by a member. The chambers of crafts have their own policy but are more cooperative than the industry and commerce chambers.

Some trade unions have done projects on the recognition and validation of professionally acquired skills (IG Metall Job navigator, IG Metall KomNetz project 2005-2006, DGB Hamburg: Projekt zur Anerkennung von NFIL).

4.2. The recognition and validation of NFIL outcomes in collective bargaining in Germany

In collective bargaining, non-formal and informal learning outcomes do not play a direct role, only measured and certified professional experience in the sector. In terms of remuneration, the position and prior formally certified education counts more than informal qualification acquired in the sector. The remuneration is also dependent on the sector and the department in the company.

The professional qualifications and skills are not always integrated into collective bargaining agreements.

The collective agreements in the public sector are organized by qualification and experience in terms of years but NFIL does not count. This is also due to the tradition in this sector.

In the area of qualification the social dialogue is much better than in direct collective bargaining.

4.3. One example of sectoral social dialogue on NFIL: the German construction sector

For the German construction sector, the German trade union IG BAU and the German craft chamber are working on the integration of professional profiles into the EQF ranking system. For example, a certified construction controller (Certified site foreman, in German “Meister-Polier”) would be level 6 in the matrix of the EQF, therefore at the level of a University degree bachelor.

The German certified site foreman (“Polier”) is examined by the audit committee of a trade association or Chamber of Commerce (it is a state recognized degree). Previously, he had to prove to have been trained 600 hours by, for example, having completed a training center course in the construction industry. This course provides extensive knowledge of business administration, law, social studies etc. Such courses also contain very comprehensive elements of specific management techniques, and professional and educational work. On the 31.1.2012 an agreement has been signed between the social partners to launch a degree certified by them.

Continuing learning in companies in the construction sector has still to be developed. Employees have maybe once per year a talk with the employer and receive a note in their personnel file, but they rarely ask for interim reports of their work because they fear that they might affect the familiar relation with the employer. Asking for a work report seems to be perceived as a sign of looking for a new job.

The German trade unions deliver political training for their staff as well as councillors for works councils based on the law on works councils (Betriebsverfassungsgesetz) and they also train members of economic affairs committees (e.g. legal issues, interpreting balance sheets, training on insolvency, rhetoric etc.). These trainings are not yearly but are set up on request.

For employees in construction and crafts, there is a possibility to reduce the study period. If the employee wants to restart vocational training and education, employer and employee can jointly

demand the chamber of crafts to consider a reduction of the vocational study period based on the acquired skills during the working experience.

Conclusion: NFIL not yet integrated – NQF is still a debate between experts

For some experts in Germany NFIL seems to be a solution for a problem that rarely exists in Germany because the dual system has largely integrated skills and competences learned in the work environment.

There are many discussions on the issue of recognition; the main issue with the validation of NFIL is the **value of recognizing low skills** (“Verwertbarkeit”, usability). This is a central issue to decide if the establishment of new forms of certification is really helping to match demand and supply on the labour market, because examinations can be complicated and costly and social systems tend to reproduce themselves for their own good.

The actors in Germany nevertheless considered that the concept of NFIL should be used to improve existing instruments. The German ministry for Education and Research, the German social partners and VET institutions keep the third pillar of non-formal and informal learning in mind while reforming the existing system. Based on this coordinated work on specific sectors and professions, the new transparency between professions and sectors will lead to more transferability of NFIL outcomes into the formal system. For the moment, there is no will from the social partners to force the debate about the ECVET as a validation system and a comparison system for vocational degrees similar to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation system.

Interview Partners

German Trade Union Federation (DGB)

Interview with Hermann Nehls, expert on vocational education and training, member of CEDEFOP,

ver.di, United Service Sector Trade Union Federation

Gerd Diehlmann EQF and DQF expert and particularly health sector

Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, Bonn

Katrin Gutschow (), 24.02.2012, 10:00

IG BAU Frankfurt. Trade union for construction, agriculture and the environment

Kerstin Zimmer 2.2.2011., 11:00

Deutsche Handwerkskammer (German Crafts Chamber)

Interview with Daike Witt, expert on SME, 17.02.2012, 9:30

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NFIL and Validation of NFIL in Denmark
Synthesis of the study visit (February 2012)

Renaud Damesin

Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission



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NFIL and validation of NFIL in Denmark

Denmark is a small country facing globalization. During the 1990's and 2000's, to get growth in such context, State and social partners implemented “flexi-security”, that means that firms can use the working force in a flexible way, but when workers loss their job, they have a good (secured) unemployment status until getting another job.

Flexi-security is not the only reason of the Danish successes. To keep and develop the performances of the economy, Denmark has also a global capacity to raise skill level and maintain a high level of qualification for the workers. Both State and firms, supported by Trade Unions, invest in human capital. The Public spending about learning and apprenticeship is one of the higher of the European Union (8.3% of the PIB in 2005), as Danish firms spending comparing with European countries averages (2.7% of the wage cost).

Since 2004, taking into account this commitment for training and learning, one of the Danish priorities is to develop prior learning recognition.

1. The need for high level of qualifications and the adult training system

The high level of qualification of the Danish workers is partly due to the life-long learning system. Indeed, at the end of the 2000's, only 70% of the 20-24 year old population in Denmark had completed at least upper secondary education, which is below the EU average of 79%(OCDE)¹. At the same time, Eurotrainer (EC) showed that about 80% of the Danish workers followed a vocational training (compared with 60% at the beginning of the 80's).

Denmark has got a “dual learning system” since 2001, distinguishing further education for adults – adult education and continuing training– from ordinary education.

The “adult education and continuing training” permits to get degrees from preparatory adult education (FUV) to masters:

- Preparatory adult education (FVU)
- General adult education (AVU)
- Higher preparatory exams (HF)
- Adult vocational training (AMU) since 1997
- Basic Adult Education (GVU) since 2001
- Vocational education and training programmes since 2003
- Short cycle higher education programmes (VVU)
- Master's programmes

This part of the dual system emphasizes on adults certificates for competences and further long-life education. It focuses on individual skills identification. This system was built and developed to facilitate the access to training for low skilled and no skilled workers, and to raise the global level of qualification.

¹ <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/fulltext/5kg26lp355f0.pdf?expires=1331489318&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=05F59088DDA5318FA310BA587C6DFEE5>

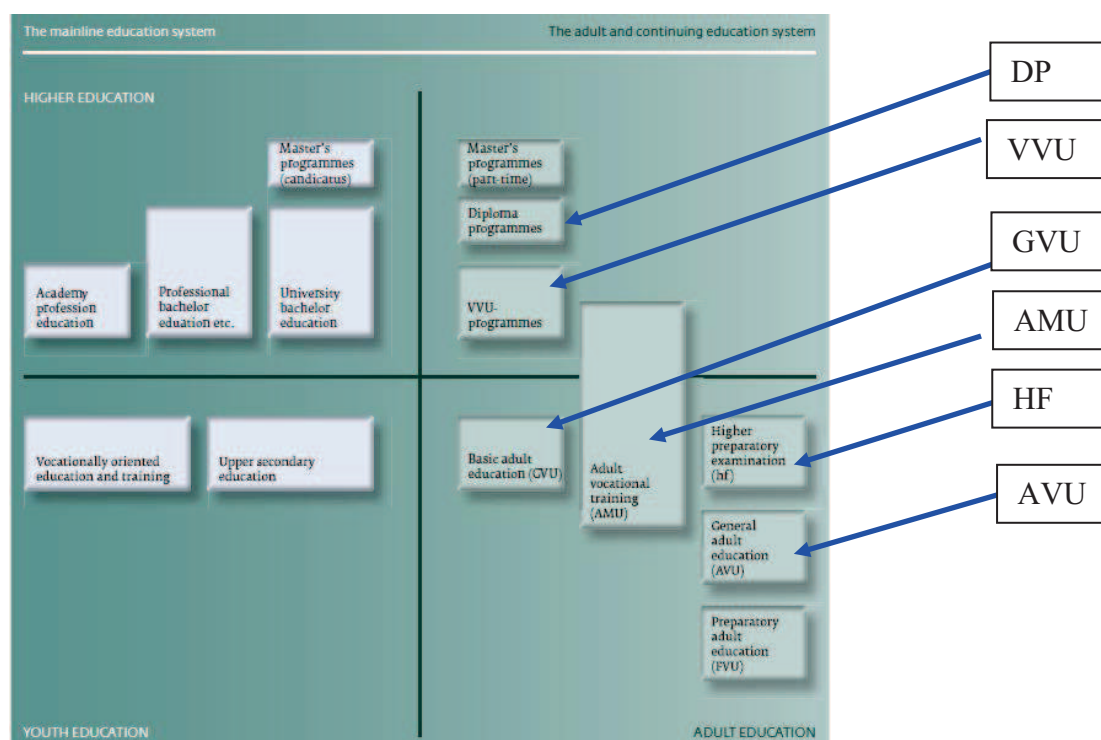
But, as we will see in the next chapter, this architecture also facilitates the use of prior learning assessment.

2. The validation of prior learning

2.1. Foundation of the validation system

During the 2000's, Denmark gave a better place to prior learning recognition. This was not the fact of a collective agreement between social partners, but produced by the law after a consultation process at the beginning of the decade.

In 2004 policy, a paper called “recognition of prior learning within the Education system”, was a first formulation and incitation to prior learning recognition. The Act n°556 of 6 June 2007 defined validation of prior learning for the six following educational fields²:



Since 2007, every adult has the right to ask an educational institution of the “adult and continuing education system” for the assessment of its prior learning in order to obtain the recognition of its competencies. If the “prior learning recognition” decision doesn’t satisfy the candidate, he can appeal against this decision (with the Qualifications board).

² Source of the translated graphic : Source : Mie Buhl & Lars Birch Andreasen, E-learning for lifelong learning - the case of Denmark e-ASEM White Paper seminar, Phuket, Thailand, 30-31 Aug 2010

To get a better knowledge of the practices and the impact, the National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning (NVR) has been created.



2.2. Partnership with social partners to spread the n°556 Act, and the following steps

In June 2007, the Ministry of Education with LO – the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, FTF – The Confederation of Danish Professionals, DA – The Federation of Danish Employers and The Danish Association of Managers and Executives signed a partnership agreement to promote recognition and the use of adult and continuing education programmes. For example³:

- From the DA point of view: “This partnership agreement allows us to be part of setting the agenda when it comes to finding solutions for people who normally aren’t motivated to enrol in continuing education. Prior learning assessments will help profile individuals’ qualifications and make them more attractive to employers” (Henrik Bach Mortensen, director)
- From the LO point of view: “The benefit of recognising people’s prior learning is that you don’t need to start from scratch when you want to begin an education. You get credit for the things you can do. People’s experiences will now be officially recognised, and I feel that will help motivate more people to go back to school.” (Ejner Holst, Confederal Secretary)

In spring 2008, the Ministry of Education and social partners created a prior learning information and networking campaign, targeting members and people represented by the social partners.

During those yearsj a strong emphasis was done on web communication (access to information, tools, ...) to activate the willingness to follow the prior learning recognition process. For example:

A specific on line portal provides general information about prior learning	An online skilled portfolio can be used to document skills :
 <p>http://www.ug.dk/</p>	 <p>http://www.minkompetencemappe.dk/</p>

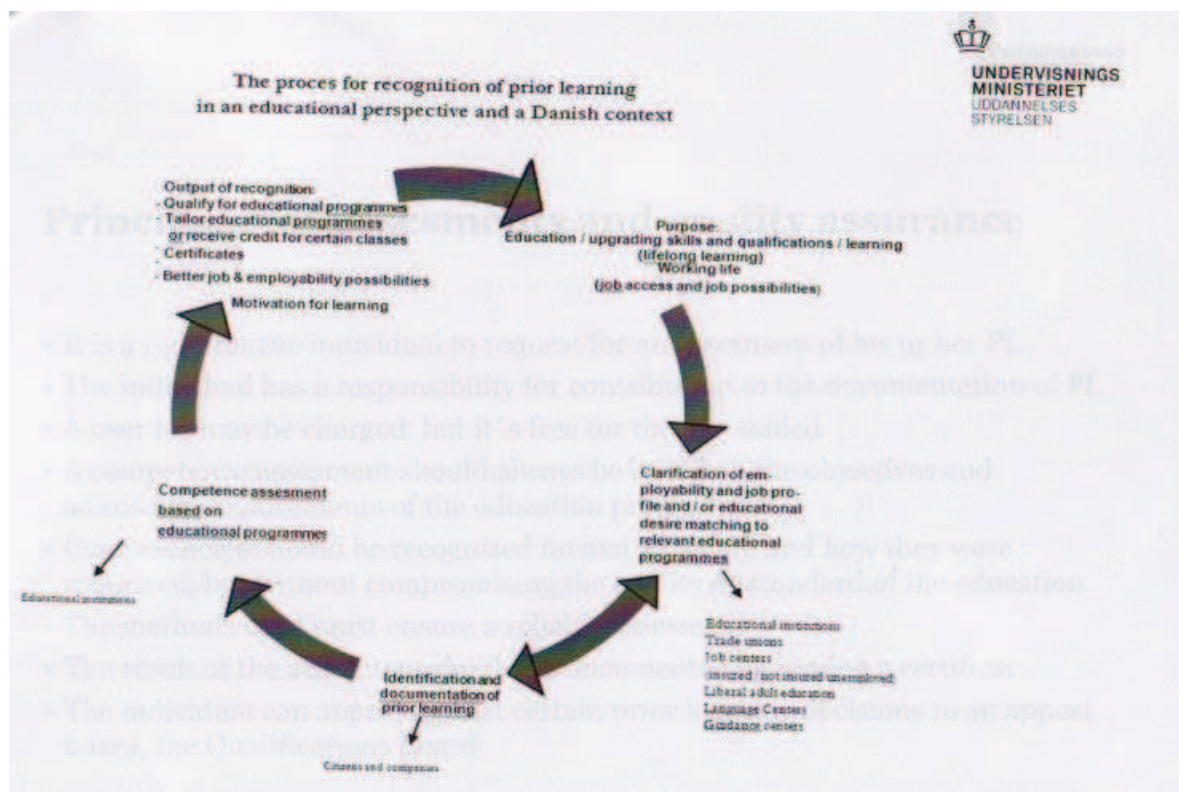
³ Quoted in 2008, National actions for promoting recognition of prior learning

A TV campaign aired on Danish National TV, conferences, seminars and meetings, were also spread.

Social partners were also involved within this spread process. They wanted to develop through this way learning and qualification access for the workforce.

2.3. The process for recognition of prior learning

The process for recognition of prior learning is a “classical” process, from experience to competence assessment, going through guidance and specific works, to get a better identification of prior learning.



Source : Benedikte Maul Andersen, Undervisnings Ministeriet Uddannelses Styrelsen, 2012

The above diagram built by the Ministry of Education shows clearly that the awaited outputs of recognition are larger than certification: for example better job and employability possibilities, and motivation for learning are also expected outputs.

3. Social partners and training system: focus on the transport sector

This chapter illustrates the concrete architecture of one part of the adult and continuing education system: the sectorial level, where the social partners are directly involved within bipartite boards to follow non formal learning practices and prior learning recognition practices.

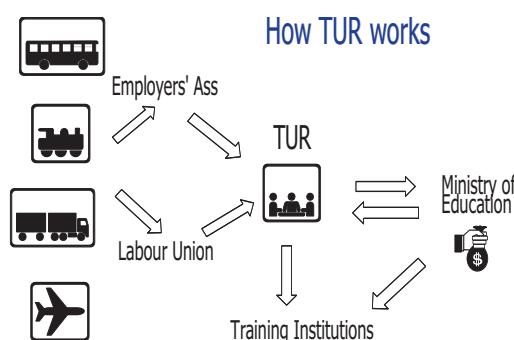
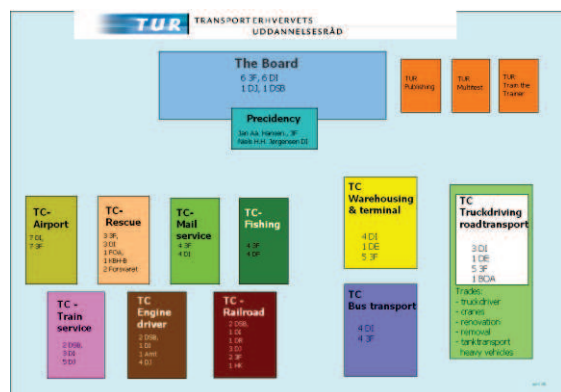
3.1. The context: need for qualification within this sector & the sectorial board

Since the last decade, the Danish transport industry needs more skilled workers to compete and survive in an international trade. On the other hand, workers of this sector wouldn't like to go back school for years. This is why employers and unions agreed with the building of a training system offering apprentice opportunities (for the youngest) but also specific labour market programs and vocational training for workers. For those last one, the prior learning recognition system is mobilised.

3.2. The National transport training board structuration and role

The National transport training board (TUR) is a non-profit organisation which is owned by the social partners and which works about training for adults and vocational education.

For each area of speciality, the Board makes the education programme and the Danish Minister has to approve it after its conception. The educations and courses are given by public and private schools and are financed by the public system (by the State). The learning centres have to follow the curriculum drawn by the board.



Source : TUR

TUR operates within 2 different programs:

- The AMU training program (labour market training for adults) contains more than 200 training plans, from 1 day to 10 weeks, attended by more than 70.000 persons a year
- The VET program (vocational training, in-company training and school based training), which produces skilled workers after acquiring a journeyman's certificate

For those two different programs, the Board tells training centres what they have to be able to do, using standards of quality: are the trainers able to teach? Is there a good cooperation between the training centre and the board? Are they facilities offered to the workers? Is there enough geographic proximity between training centre and workers?

3.3. The prior learning recognition implementation

Twelve years ago, the transport area has been one of the first sectors to use prior learning recognition. Theoretically, there is a large number of people inside the transport area who may be concerned by this way of achieving their status of (skilled) driver.

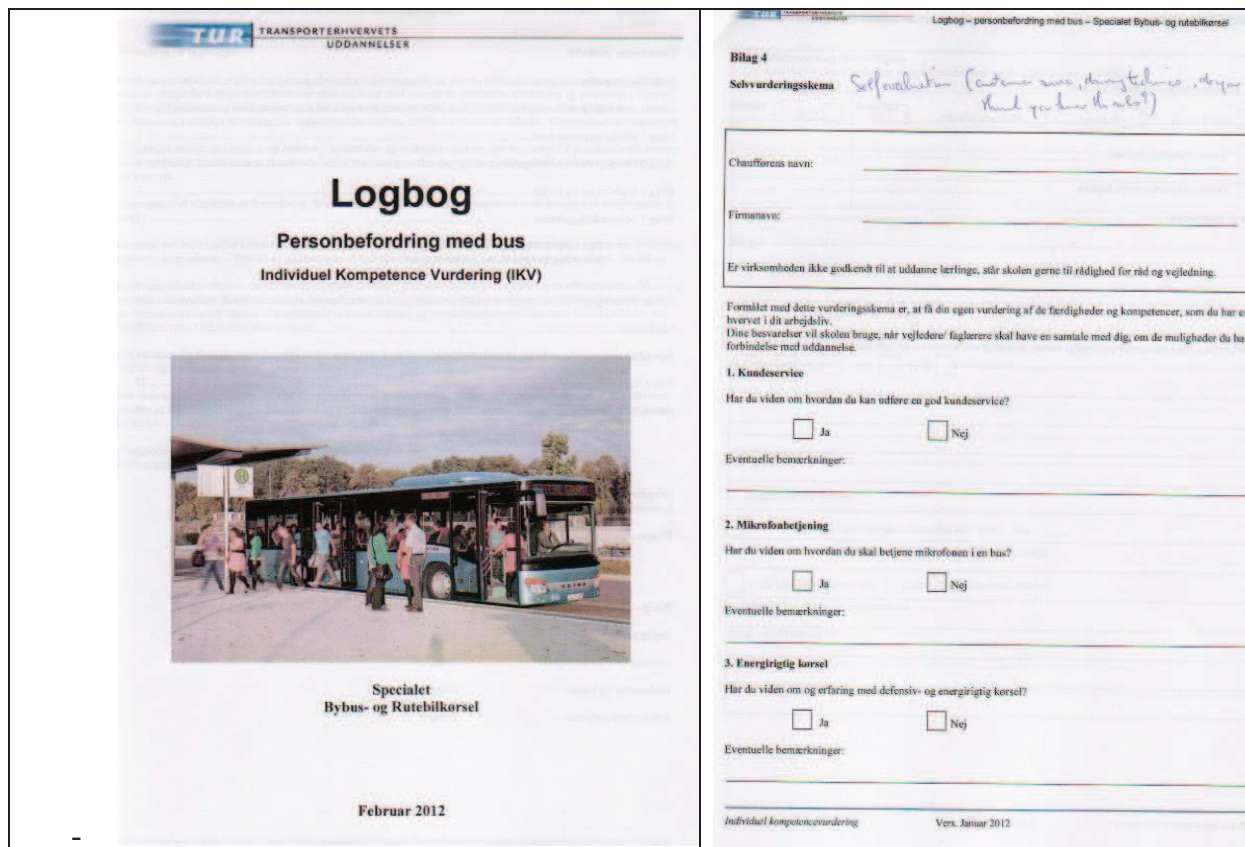
The vocational training program for core workers, called “The Credit Road” and mixing validation and training system, produced about 1000 skilled transport workers since 2001.

Workers have to be at least 25 years old (they are 42 years old on average) and to be employed 4 years in transport. The Credit Road is funded on the recognition of real competencies, acquired at school, at the workplace or in other life circumstances;

Each worker follows this process:

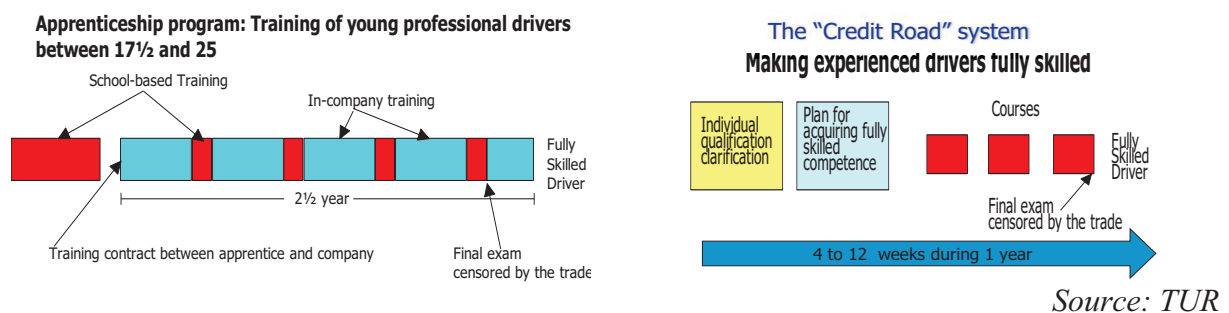
- Firstly, he goes to the training centre and asks for an individual competence evaluation of its formal and informal skills. Groups of 3 to 5 workers are together during the process.
- Trainers start to introduce them with the system. The TUR underlines people are often afraid about it because they didn't like schools and evaluations before coming. One of the roles of the trainers is then to make them confident.
- He is interviewed and tested about each part of its work corresponding to the credits of the certificate. Doing that, he goes with different trainers about different topics: basic competencies, technical skills, etc... Many workers without certification know how to do complex task: driving to foreign country, using legislation, dealing with firms, securing the trucks, etc...
- During the interviews, trainers have to explain to the worker, that for one part of his competencies, it seems ok and for another part, he will need to show and make practical exercises. During this evaluation, the worker may also have to do electronic tests in order to fulfil some questions

The duration of this first step is 2 or 3 days.



Source : TUR

After the evaluation, the candidate has to fulfil a training plan, which can be from 4 to 12 weeks during 1 year (comparing to an average of quite 3 years for new students following the entire apprenticeship program). The “road” is finished when the candidate passes a final exam:



Source: TUR

The training is paid by the State but the compensation is not attractive for the training centre. On the other hand, training centres say people coming first through prior learning recognition come back for other courses after that. Indeed, the task for learning is re-activated.

The impact on the wage is real even if it's low: a skilled driver earns 1 euro more per hour. It means there can be pressure on training centre (coming from workers) in order to get quickly the certification.

From the TUR point of view, this tool is important in order to keep the workforce within the transport sector, for people who don't want to go back school for a long time to be recognised as fully skilled driver, and to be more attractive for people coming from other sectors. The employers have also a global satisfaction about this system, but don't want to generalize it (taking into account the wage impact).

4. Limits and difficulties of the current system of prior learning recognition

The involvement of social partners about prior the recognition of prior learning is real, from the beginning of the assessment of skills promotion at the early 2000's. But it is not a homogeneous investment. It depends of course of the sector and the type of skills concerned. Some sectors as electricians or health do prefer to preserve the classical way to get degrees. One way to develop learning access and to promote RPL was the development of education ambassadors (implemented at a first time by the former Women Workers' Union (KAD) and adopted by the Danish Commercial and Clerical Employees Union (HK). But this practice is still limited and is quite not developed within small and medium size firms.

Good practices of collaboration between institutions are identified by the Danish Evaluation Institute (evaluating the Act n°556)⁴: Collaboration with other institutions provides good opportunities to discuss which tools are relevant, and it ensures a sort of alignment in the tools institutions use in a prior learning assessment. Therefore, collaboration can potentially enhance confidence in, and the legitimacy of, prior learning assessment. According to the focus group interviewed for evaluation, collaboration and knowledge-sharing with other institutions about prior learning assessment is particularly widespread within Diploma programmes, where providers meet each other in a networking group several times a year.

But, there is a lack of information about prior learning recognition: "Not all institutions have a documented system to ensure the quality of prior learning assessments. The percentage of institutions with a documented system fluctuates from 43% within VVU and 48% within AMU to 61% within GVU, 69% within general adult education and general upper secondary subjects at VUC and 89% within Diploma programmes. Therefore, there are some institutional differences in how widely a quality assurance system of prior learning assessment is used, and a Diploma programme stands out in particular compared to other education areas".

From the point of view of Educational institutions, one can also explain the lack of development of prior learning recognition taking into account "internal barriers": it is difficult to plan possible individualised subsequent courses, and it is difficult to tell applicants what prior learning actually is, and how it can be documented and assessed⁵

⁴ "Validation of prior learning within adult education in Denmark. Status report regarding Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007. Summary and perspectives". The Danish Evaluation Institute, 2010

⁵ "Validation of prior learning within adult education in Denmark. Status report regarding Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007. Summary and perspectives". The Danish Evaluation Institute, 2010, pp.216-218

This is why national initiatives are activated by the ministry of education since the beginning of 2012 and for a 3 years plan:

- **Local information campaign and activities**, focusing on RPL as a way to increase job access and employability. Local information campaign will try to reach target groups as seniors, women, low skilled workers, etc... Best practices returns will be used to support the ideal that recognition of prior learning (RPL) is possible and useful. The links between credits and RPL will be clarify when it's not understood, and school associations will be aware about RPL.
- **Initiatives within adult vocational training (AMU)**. To improve the commitment of Learning centres, the recognition of prior learning will be one of the terms of their performance contracts.
- **Initiatives within general adult education (AVU) / higher preparatory exams (HF)**. One will produce a handbook of prior learning, which will have to be used by the staff.
- **Initiatives within higher education programmes and diploma level**. Ministry of Science Innovation and Higher Education will have to begin a dialogue with school associations and Danish Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning to improve RPL for high level diplomas

Conclusion: prior learning recognition, and the evolution of the Danish “model”

Since the beginning of the crisis, one can say that the flexi-security Danish model is in crisis. The increase of unemployment makes difficult to maintain long secured unemployed status. Governments and employers seem to look for more flexibility and less security for the workers.

Following this statement, two Danish analysts Ove Kaj Pedersen, (Copenhagen Business School, CBS) and Søren Kaj Andersen (FAOS, Employment Relations Research Centre, University of Copenhagen) emphasis on another specificity and resource of the country: the investment in the raise of skill and qualification level. They suggest a change of paradigm within the Danish economy, where social partners may deal the improvement of a higher level of qualification with mobility. The new model, called “mobication model” (*mobility and education*) means that people receive training and increase their skill before the unemployment situation, facilitating transition for one job to another.

From our point of view, prior learning recognition may be a good way to improve this “mobication”.

APPENDIX – visit agenda

Tuesday, 21th February

- Hans Christiansen Managing Director, TUR Transporterhvervets Uddannelser
National transport training board
- Ann Poulsen, Chief Consultant, Danish Employers (DA) Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening
- Erik Schmidt, senior advisor, FTF- Confederation of professionals in Denmark,
Hovedorganisation for 450.000 offentligt og privat ansatte
- Jørgen Pater, senior advisor, FTF- Confederation of professionals in Denmark,
Hovedorganisation for 450.000 offentligt og privat ansatte

Wednesday, 22th February

- Heidi Rønne Møller, EU senior advisor LO – Landsorganisationen i Danmark
- Morten Smistrup, adviser in the department of education LO - Landsorganisationen i Danmark
- Kirsten Aagaard, Head of Centre, National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning, Nationalt Videncenter for Realkompetence
- Benedikte Maul Andersen, Head of Section, Ministry of Education (Ministeriet for Børn og Undervisning), Department of Youth Education and Vocational Adult Education and Training

Thursday, 23th February

- Poul Christensen, Advisor in professional education and training at 3F / Fagligt Fælles Forbund (The United Federation of Danish Workers)

Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in Spain
Synthesis of the study visit in Spain (20th February – 24th February 2012)

Jacky Fayolle

May 2012

Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission



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Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in Spain

The last CEDEFOP-GHK inventory on Validation of NFIL indicates that “in Spain, some limited forms of non-formal and informal learning have been recognised in the national legal framework for decades” and that “the most [recent] developments have related to the validation of professional competences”¹.

1. The last decade: a significant adaptation of the training and qualification system

These developments are to be placed in the general evolution of the continuous vocational training and qualification system, which shows important changes during the last decade, on the basis of a fundamental consensus between social and governmental actors. This consensus allows a balanced mix of continuity and change. The civil servants of the Education Ministry consider that the system proves a good ability of adaptation to the contemporaneous needs.

1.1. A reinforcement of the national legal framework

A reinforcement of the national legal framework organizing the system and common to all Comunidades Autonomas (CC.AAs) characterizes the last decade: a range of laws and decrees was adopted since the Qualifications and Vocational Training Act of 2002 (ley organica 5/2002, de 19 de junio, de las Cualificaciones y la Formacion Profesional), which defines basic principles in direction of an integrated system (Sistema Nacional de Cualificaciones y Formacion Profesional):

- Professional qualifications consistent with the European Qualification Framework (EQF);
- Reference to the *Catalogo Nacional de Cualificaciones Profesionales* (CNQP) for the diplomas of vocational training (*titulos de formacion profesional*) and occupational aptitude (*certificados de profesionalidad*), on the basis of the participation of social partners to the definition of the occupational profiles and to the design of each qualification ;
- Universally accessible Accreditation of NFIL ;
- Closer link of vocational training with the labour market and the companies’ needs, thanks to a training offer more efficient and flexible.

The further laws and decrees precise and detail the implementation of these principles. An important recent step is the royal decree 1224 of 2009, which establishes the procedures and requirements for the validation of NFIL (procedimiento de reconocimiento, evaluacion, acreditacion y registro de las cualificaciones profesionales). These procedures are selective: the decree is restricted to some levels of competence that the yearly calls for examination

¹ Noel Alonso, *European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning 2010. Country Report: Spain*, CEDEFOP and GHK, 2010.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=%28wjr=european%20and%20wjr=inventory%20and%20wjr=validation%29&local_base=ced01

(convocatorias) will only apply to certain economic sectors. The regional competent authorities, in the *Comunidades Autonomas* (CC.AA), decide and inform on these calls and carry out the procedures. The references for modular evaluation and accreditation are the capitalizable competence units of the CNPQ, regularly updated by the *Instituto Nacional de Cualificaciones* (INCUAL). The INCUAL is also responsible for the methodological normalisation of the process. The obtaining of these units requires precise numbers of work experience years and training hours, depending on the level of the competence unit (level 1, 2, or 3). Complementary training is recommended when some competence units lack to obtain a complete qualification. Normal training hours at the disposal of the workers in the firms can be legally used for this process.

1.2. *The growth of the vocational training programs*

These legal developments go hand in hand with an effective growth of the vocational training programs during the last decade, under the monitoring of a consultative Council (Consejo General de Formacion Profesional, CGFP), which associates the social partners and the CC.AAs. The rate of firms training their workers passed progressively from 4,3% in 2004 to 24,6% in 2010 ; from 2,4% to 20,5% for the micro firms (1-9 workers) ; from 15,7% to 52,8% for the small and medium ones (120-249 workers); from 68,3% to 89,7% for the big ones (250 workers and more). The number of workers participating to training programs organized by firms passed from less than 500000 to more than 2100000 over the same period. But the rate of workers participating in such programs remains unequal from one region to the other: now, about 25% (more or less) in Madrid, Castilla y León, Asturias, Cataluña, less than 20% in Canarias, Rioja, Melilla².

1.3. *Training for employment: a cooperative institutional framework*

The Fundacion tripartita para la Formacion en el Empleo offers a cooperative institutional framework to support the development of the “Training in Employment”, considered as a sub-system of the vocational training system. This Foundation is located in the state public sector and its leadership is shared between the Ministry of the Labour, the employers’ organisations and the three Trade Unions Confederations UGT, CCOO and CIG. The Foundation manages the State training initiatives in direction of the workers employed. It supplies also a technical support to the CC.AAs for their own initiatives, through collaboration agreements. The initiatives of the Training System for the Employment (sistema de formacion para el empleo) combine:

- The support supplied by the State Employment Public Service and by the Foundation to the training demand directly expressed by firms (this kind of training is not, a priori, integrated in a process of certification);
- The training programs’ offer jointly proposed by the State Employment Public Service, the Foundation and the CC.AAs.

The two tables below present, for the year 2011, the origin and the distribution of the resources between the initiatives of the firms, of the State and of the CC.AA. So, the

² The numbers are extracted from Formacion para el Empleo, Balance de resultados 2010, Observatorio de la Formacion para el Empleo, Fundacion Tripartita para la Formacion en el Empleo, May 2011.

Foundation plays an important role to regulate the mutualisation and the distribution of the resources available for the vocational training in Employment.

Origin and distribution of the funds available for the training of employed and unemployed workers

Origen de los fondos	Presupuesto 2011 (en euros)
Cuota de Formación Profesional	1.979.778.300
Ayuda Fondo Social Europeo	158.694.403
Aportación del Estado	474.028.017
Total	2.612.500.720

Para la Formación de empleados y desempleados

The “Cuota de Formación Profesional” corresponds to the legal contributions from the firms, defined by the application of a rate of 0,7% to the contribution basis and collected by the Social Security.

Conceptos	Distribución 2011
Gastos de funcionamiento e inversión de la Fundación Tripartita	39.406.580
Formación del personal de las Administraciones Públicas	127.695.700
Acciones de formación en las empresas (bonificaciones)	507.820.370
Formación de Oferta y Acciones Complementarias (ámbito estatal)	514.881.850
Ocupados	412.747.710
Desempleados	102.134.140
Formación de Oferta y Acciones Complementarias (ámbito autonómico)	1.105.521.720
Ocupados	332.315.620
Conferencia Sectorial	332.315.620
Desempleados	773.206.100
Conferencia Sectorial	744.327.350
Otras Actuaciones fuera de Conferencia Sectorial	28.878.750
Programas de formación o empleo (flexibilidad)	317.174.500
Reserva de gestión directa. Gestión Plurirregional (ámbito estatal)	57.000.000
Políticas Activas de Formación y Empleo Gestión CC.AA (ámbito autonómico)	260.174.500
TOTAL	2.612.500.720

Gestión INAP

Ámbito Estatal

CC.AA

Source: *La financiación 2011 de la Formación para el Empleo paso a paso*, Fundación Tripartita para la Formación en el Empleo, Noviembre de 2011

1.4. A critical assessment by the social partners

But, after these ten years of change in the landscape of vocational training, the assessment by the social partners is critical. The CNQP is completely finalized (about 650 qualifications) but the effective offer of certifications (*titulos de formacion profesional* and *certificados de profesionalidad*) and of joint training is considered as too rigid, not sufficiently “agile” (word frequently used by the Spanish social partners) to satisfy easily and rapidly the needs of the firms: the modalities and the contents of the training did not follow the development of the formal reference established by the CNQP. The matching between offer and demand of training is not efficient and the link with the detailed needs expressed by the firms remains too weak. It is difficult to take into account the specific needs of the small firms.

However, the civil servants of the Ministry of Education and of the INCUAL consider that it is a normal work in progress: the CNQP should become progressively a practical reference used in the collective bargaining and agreements. The priority is to consolidate the national system of vocational training and qualifications. The European tools, as EQF, are not always perceived as a concrete help to complete and achieve the national system of qualifications: the descriptors of EQF are very generic, specially in the case of the medium levels of

qualification, which have a central place in the transformation of the socio-economic structures. The full convergence with EQF should be only a long term objective.

The legal changes try to unify the language and to integrate the system: a normative reference basis common to all actors, in order to guarantee the reliability of the certifications and their currency value on the national labour market. But the system remains too complex: there are duplications between organisms and territories, what does foster neither the saving of resources, nor the control of quality. The leadership exercised by the CGFP is weak, in despite of its useful consultative role. The coherence between the sector and territory approaches and the harmonisation between the initiatives of the territories are limited. The lack of State leadership and the difficulties of coordination between the Ministries of Education and Labour are a factor of explanation. New institutions, as Centros Nacionales de Referencia (CNR) y Centros Integrados de Formacion Profesional (CIFP) have difficulties to find their place and to affirm their role. The CNR have a mission of observation and experimentation for specific professional families and areas: they could test methodological innovations in the training and accreditation processes. The mission of the CIFP is to react to the training demand expressed by the firms and to help them to innovate in this matter. The consolidation of these centres is a work in progress.

2. The NFIL recognition, evaluation and accreditation process

2.1. An embryonic process : political, administrative and financial obstacles

This critical assessment concerns particularly the process of NFIL validation (procedimiento de reconocimiento, evaluacion, acreditacion y registro de las cualificaciones profesionales), legally defined and implemented in 2009 to certify the work or other non-formal experience. Small scale and local experiences pre-existed, such as the pilot project ERA in 2003 (Evaluacion, Reconocimiento y Acreditacion de las Competencias Profesionales), which included seven CC.AAs and a small number of occupations: it concerned over 300 candidates. For the Trade Unions, the legal initiative of 2009 satisfies a more general claim, expressed as a priority objective by the Trade Unions for many time. The present challenge is to amplify and to consolidate its implementation³.

But it took many time, since the ley organica of 2002, to start this process and the initial experience was mainly limited to some occupations (socio-cultural services like care to dependence and child education; specific industrial occupations as renewable energies). There is not yet a generalized system, but partial experiences at the level of the CC.AAs: the State is late to develop significant experiences at national level. For Trade Unions, there is a lack of financial support by the State, comparatively to the needs: in 2011, there are 3,5 millions of workers without any recognition of their professional competences. The civil servants of the two Ministries of Education and Labour work together but don't have exactly the same conceptions, what slows down the implementation of a single effective and normalized process (the unico procedimiento planned by the Royal Decree of 2009). The Royal Decree defines single standards and norms but the practical implementation is more complex. The existence of a joint Committee of both ministries to guarantee the development of the validation process is useful but not enough to fill the gap. The State lacks unified leadership to foster the process of validation of the non-formal and informal competences.

³ This report presents the main and recent NFIL validation process, but more specific processes exist. There is a process for the recognition of the basic key competences of persons placed at the lowest level of qualification, without professional formation, but it does not work really, according to UGT ; proposals to speed it up, in a perspective of Lifelong Learning, exist in the Ministry of Education. There is also the Pruebas libres (Free Proofs) process to obtain an educative recognition of the prior learning and of the work experience, at different levels. At the higher level, each University can decide, in some limits, how to validate training modules or competence units for their own courses and diploma. The access to the University on the basis of the prior learning experience is yet a narrow gate.

It is a problem more political than technical: guias of evidencias define clear, convenient and practical guidelines for the experts of the advice, evaluation and accreditation process (notably professional experts of the competence units to be evaluated according to different appropriate methodologies: interviews, professional proofs, simulation of professional situations, observation at workplace). The Trade Unions support the objectives of the process, without interfering with the work of these experts.

So, a framework exists, but its effective current implementation does not satisfy the social partners. The Ministry of Education anticipated that 8000 individuals would apply to the first call for validation (2011), 25000 to the second call and 50000 to the third one. The Ministry has a “program of territory cooperation”, which planned for the year 2011 the funding of the CC.AAs (20 millions Euros), proportionally to their population, to implement the process. It is yet an embryonic and experimental process. But the system is open to initiatives. For the staff of the Education Ministry, it is desirable to use the existing structures in order to extend the implementation of the process economically.

For UGT, there are obstacles in the society: a general lack of sensitivity and information on the Lifelong Learning issue, including among the workers and the Unions. It is not the first issue of the collective bargaining. Cultural changes are necessary. For the civil servants of the Education Ministry, the Unions could play a more important role in the detection, information and orientation of persons able to entry into a process of training and accreditation.

For the trade-unionists, the attitude of the employers is ambivalent. The employers recognize the training and qualifications needs but they are afraid of the possible impact of official validation on classification and wage claims. There are some interesting pilot experiences of firms involving a group of their workers in a collective process of accreditation, with complementary training. Agreements between the Ministry of Education and firms organise such collective processes. For the expert met in CEOE (employers’ organisation), these initiatives are interesting, but it is necessary to look after their compatibility with the common national framework (competence standards and quality criteria). In a period where the current reform of the labour market is going to foster mobility, the transferability of the skills recognized or certified, outside the firm, becomes a priority. This transferability supposes a convenient mix of polyvalence and specialization. The reform plans a personal “training capital” transferable between companies, on the basis of 20 yearly training hours. It opens also the way to labour contracts mixing work and training (dual training), what would suppose an adaptation of the training standards and a commitment of the employers to financial support and quality criteria.

2.2. The implementation depends on the initiatives at CC.AAs’ scale

A website managed by the Ministry of Education (<http://todofp.es>) announces the yearly convocatorias for the distinct professional families, in the different CC.AAs, which emit these convocatorias. The CCAA’s Education Authorities are responsible for undertaking assessment and setting up Evaluation Committees which will carry out the process of validation. Some CC.AAs show more dynamism to take initiatives and to plan convocatorias in specific professional areas. The definition of the convocatorias having priority – professional families and targeted people – is not really concerted at the national level, in relation with the sector needs, and raises a challenge of fair treatment of the Spanish citizens over the whole national territory. The clarification of the responsibilities and funding (for example, for the recruitment and the training of the evaluators) between State, CC.AAs, Sectors is desirable, in order to assure a uniform quality of the process. The emission of convocatorias seems easier for social occupations protected from international competition

than for occupations directly facing this competition (see below the page of presentation on the site <http://todofp.es>). But the extension to industrial occupations is in progress (see below, as example, the table of the convocatorias emitted by Galicia, CC.AA actively involved in the process, in 2011 and 2012).

The site of the Education Ministry puts a personal and practical guide at the disposal of the candidates (see below the table extracted from this guide). This guide describes the complete process, until the final step of accreditation (Titulo de Formacion Profesional or Certificado de Profesionalidad). A personal plan of further training can be elaborated at the end of the process to develop the skills of the certified candidate, in a perspective of Lifelong Learning (aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida).




The page “Acreditacion de Competencias profesionales” on the site *todoFP* of the Ministry of Education






Source: <http://todofp.es/todofp/formacion/acreditacion-de-competencias.html>, 8 mars 2012

Convocatorias (calls for examination of the professional competences)

Año 2011

Administración convocante	Unidades de Competencia convocadas	Texto de la Convocatoria	Fechas de inscripción
GALICIA Consejería de Trabajo y Bienestar	Unidades de competencia correspondientes a las cualificaciones profesionales: - Atención sociosanitaria a personas en domicilio - Atención sociosanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales - Confección y mantenimiento de artes y aparejos	Convocatoria  Corrección de errores 	(I) Del 1 al 31 de diciembre Plazo de presentación finalizado
GALICIA Consellería de Educación e Ordenación Universitaria	Unidades de competencia asociadas a títulos de FP de grado medio y superior: - CM Carrocería - CM Cocina e gastronomía - CM Emergencias sanitarias - CM Farmacia e parafarmacia - CM Instalacions eléctricas e automáticas - CM Servicios de restauración - CS Educación infantil	Convocatoria 	Del 26 de marzo al 14 de abril Plazo de presentación finalizado

Año 2012

Administración convocante	Unidades de Competencia convocadas	Texto de la Convocatoria	Fechas de inscripción
GALICIA Consejería de Trabajo y Bienestar	Unidades de competencia correspondientes a las cualificaciones profesionales: - Fabricación y montaje de instalaciones de tubería industrial. - Operaciones básicas de restaurante bar.	Convocatoria  Corrección de errores 	Del 1 al 31 de marzo de 2012
GALICIA Consellería de Educación y Ordenación Universitaria	Unidades de competencia correspondientes a las cualificaciones profesionales: - Administración y gestión *Actividades de gestión administrativa - Electricidad y electrónica *Montaje y mantenimiento de infraestructuras de telecomunicaciones de edificios *Montaje y mantenimiento de instalaciones eléctricas de baja tensión *Montaje y mantenimiento de infraestructuras de telecomunicaciones de edificios *Montaje y mantenimiento de instalaciones de megafonía, sonorización e locales y circuito cerrado de televisión *Montaje y mantenimiento de sistemas de telefonía e infraestructuras de redes locales de datos - Energía y agua *Eficiencia energética de edificios - Fabricación mecánica *Soldadura *Fabricación y montaje de instalaciones de tuberías industriales - Hostelería y turismo *Panadería y bollería *Cocina *Pastelería y confitería *Repostería *Servicios de restaurante *Recepción - Industrias alimentarias *Elaboración de vinos y licores - Madera, mueble y corcho *Mecanizado de madera y derivados - Química *Análisis química - Sanidad *Transporte sanitario *Atención sanitaria a múltiples víctimas y catástrofes *Farmacia - Servicios socioculturales y a la comunidad *Educación infantil - Textil, confección y piel *Ensamblaje de materiales - Transporte y mantenimiento de vehículos *Mantenimiento de sistemas de transmisión de fuerza y trenes de rodaje de vehículos automóviles *Mantenimiento del motor y sus sistemas auxiliares *Mantenimiento de los sistemas eléctricos y electrónicos de vehículos	Convocatoria 	Del 16 de enero al 15 de febrero Plazo de presentación finalizado

Source: <http://todofp.es/todofp/formacion/acreditacion-de-competencias/convocatorias.html>, 8 mars 2012



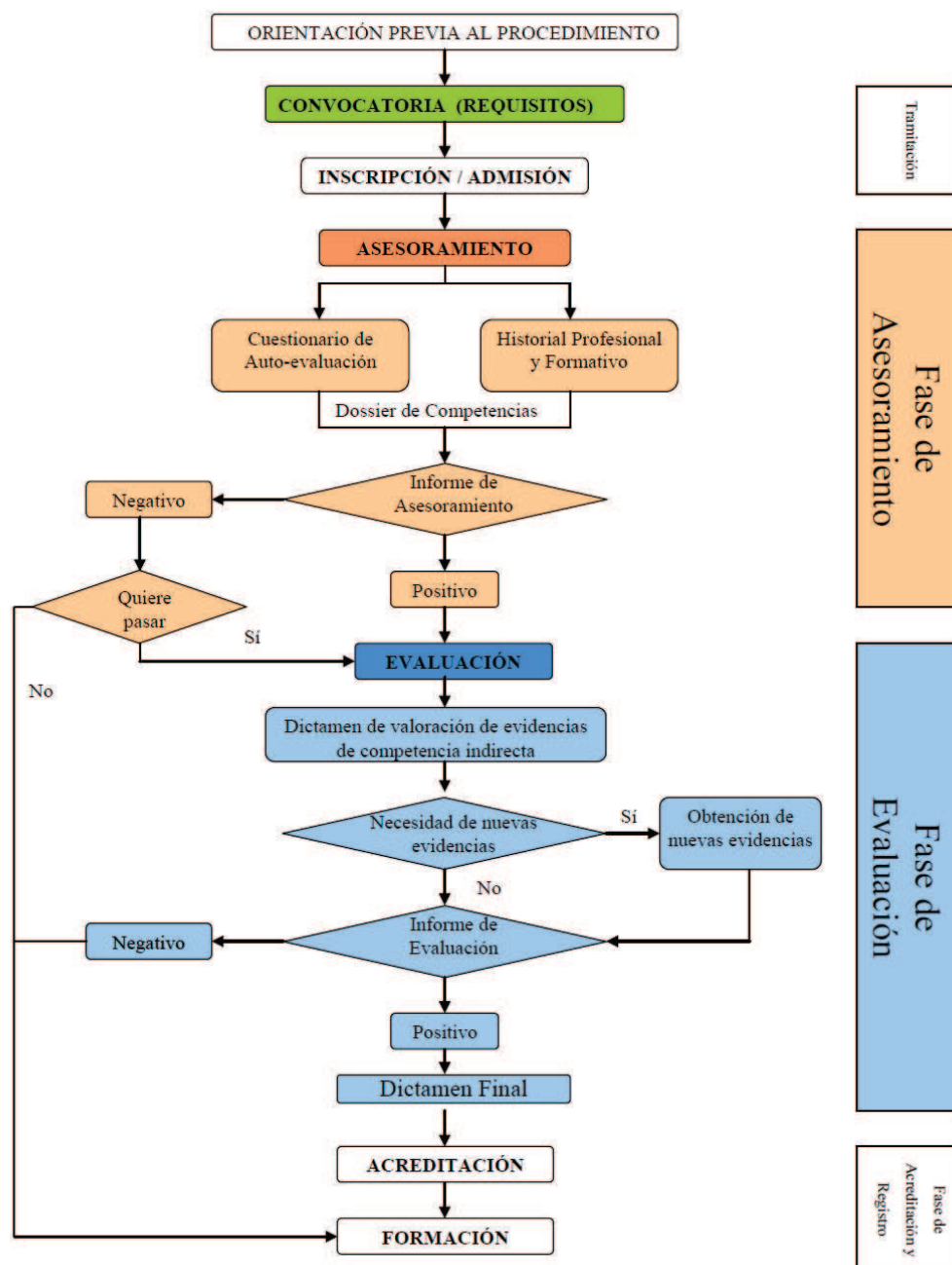
MINISTERIO
DE EDUCACIÓN

SECRETARÍA DE ESTADO DE
EDUCACIÓN Y FORMACIÓN
PROFESIONAL

DIRECCIÓN GENERAL
DE FORMACIÓN PROFESIONAL

INSTITUTO NACIONAL
DE LAS CUALIFICACIONES

APÉNDICE. DIAGRAMA DE FLUJO DEL CANDIDATO EN EL PROCEDIMIENTO



Source : Manual de Procedimiento para el Reconocimiento de las Competencias Profesionales Adquiridas por Experiencia Laboral, Guía de la Persona Candidata, Ministerio de Educación
<http://todofp.es/todofp/formacion/acreditacion-de-competencias.html>, 8 mars 2012

3. Experiences in CC.AAs: two examples

The table below presents the most recent situation of the “convocatorias” (april 2012) in the different CC.AA for the occupations concerned. Then, two regional cases (Galicia and Aragon) are commented.

	Transp. Sanit.	Emerg. Sanit.	At.S.S. dependencia en domicilio	At.S.S. dependencia en I.L.S.S.	Ed.Infantil	Otras	TOTAL
Andalucía	1.000	700	4.900	3.000	2.400	-	12.000
Aragón	-	-	-	540	225	150	915
Asturias	-	-	50	100	50	-	200
Baleares	-	-	200	200	50	300	750
Canarias	300	300	300	300	500	-	1.700
Cantabria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-----
Castilla y León	-	-	1000	1000	600	55	2.655
C. La Mancha	-	-	693	900	553	-	2.146
Cataluña	300	-	2.700	3.518	500	1.100	8.118
Com. Valenciana	200	200	-	200	-	-	600
Extremadura	-	-	405	600	100	-	1.105
Galicia	-	1.700	1.500	1.300	975	8.030	13.505
Madrid	-	-	-	-	-	-	-----
Murcia	-	-	150	150	150	-	450
Navarra	60	30	165	165	120	270	810
País Vasco	350	-	950	1300	-	320	2.920
Rioja	40	-	90	210	65	40	445
Ceuta	30	30	60	60	60	260	500
Melilla	30	30	60	60	60	260	500
TOTAL	2.310	2.990	13.223	13.603	6.408	10.785	49.319

Source : CCOO, Secretaria Confederal de Formacion para el Empleo

3.1. Galicia

Galicia is considered as one of the CC.AAs in the vanguard of the implementation of the process of NFIL recognition, evaluation and accreditation (in Galician language, *Procedemento de reconecemento das competencias profesionais adquiridas pola experiencia laboral*), even before the State decree of 2009, thanks to small scale pilot projects. Galicia has a low-skilled labour intensive economy, with a bad specialisation vulnerable to international competition, and there is a common consciousness of the necessity to make the productive model more efficient: training is a crucial part of the improvement. The Galician efforts benefit from an active social dialog. Galician plans of professional training were elaborated in order to do the link with the expected economic needs. An agreement on training and employment was signed in June 2010 by the social partners (*Acordo en matria de formacion para o Emprego*). A set of partnership institutions lead this social dialog: *Consejo gallego de Formacion Profesional*, *Comision gallega de Formacion Continua*, *Fundacion gallega de Formacion para o traballo*, *26 Comision Sectoriais de Cualificacion e Formacion Professional*.

The Trade Unions CCOO and UGT support actively these efforts and are involved in this network of institutions. They contribute to specific programs (for example, a specific program of professional insertion for the young in priority occupations, through dual training and incentives on firms to conclude such contracts). The Unions have their own foundations, centres and plans for training, in partnership with public institutions, including for the unemployed people. But they are not operational actors of the processes organised by the public institutions, such as the *convocatorias* for the recognition and accreditation of the competences. They have access to the relevant information and they have an effective ability of influence. They integrate these issues in their own agenda. So, they hope a better integration, in the process and in the juries, of experts having background work experience in firms. They contribute to the information of the workers.

It is the second year of the *convocatorias* planned in the framework of the decree of 2009, by the administrations of Education, for the formal vocational training, or Labour, for the training in employment (see the table above): the coordination between the two administrations is not always easy. The Unions wish a bigger role of the Labour administration. The *convocatorias* for the areas “care to dependent persons at home or in institutions” attracted in 2011 a number of candidates (about 8000) superior to the offer of certifications (300): the process is selective. But the candidatures were fostered by a normative rule which requires, for the year 2015, a minimum certification for persons working – often informally – in the area of care to dependency. This formalization is welcome and useful for the persons concerned (many women, frequently aged between 45 and 55 years, with a work experience between 10 and 15 years). The delivery of the diploma is a public and symbolic event, where the Unions are present.

In 2012, the *convocatorias* extend to other qualifications, including industrial qualifications (what is important for a region having industrial traditions). The objective is an extension to the occupations (often largely female) where the training is mainly non-formal and where the apparent qualification levels of the workers are low. The recognition is a way to access to complementary training (including during the process itself, in order to have the competence units necessary for a complete qualification).

It is a positive process. But it remains too narrow, too long, too bureaucratic for persons who are not used to such process. A process more simple and open would be welcome. The recognition of the work experience is attractive for the workers but too administrative obstacles could discourage them. The rising fiscal constraints could make the process still more selective.

3.2. Aragon

The process is clearly organized by the government of Aragon, under the monitoring of the *Agencia de la Cualificaciones Profesionales* de Aragon and with the involvement of consultative institutions, as the *Consejo de Formacion Profesional de Aragon*. The social partners of Aragon are actively involved in the training issues⁴ and respect the national framework. Like in Galicia, the implementation of the process of recognition of the competences, through *convocatorias*, starts with socio-cultural occupations (care to dependency and child education) and extends to other, in services and industrial fields. The

⁴ The meeting with representatives of Aragon’s social partners (see annex) happened in *Centro de Formación Arsenio Jimeno*, important training centre managed by UGT in Zaragoza. This centre offers a large set of training courses to the workers.

social partners play an active role for informing and orienting people potentially interested. But the effort of public information by media is still too limited.

The financial constraints have been becoming harder during the two last years: it is a brake, as the evaluation and accreditation process is slow, complex and costly (notably, because of the necessity to mobilize high-skilled experts). The coordination between the two administrations of Education and Labour is difficult. The complexity weakens the impact of the process. It would be desirable to have a much more “agile” process, in order to make the final step (accreditation) a more tangible expectation for the workers motivated by this possibility. The training offer is not sufficiently flexible to fill rapidly the lacking competence units necessary to a complete qualification.

The companies hope the process proves and accredits the practical abilities of the candidates at workplace, but such proof process raises the cost. It is necessary to plan the next *convocatorias* in close relation with the needs expected by the firms, including the small ones, which need polyvalence. A stake, for the Trade Unions, is the impact of the accreditation on the situation of the workers in firms and sectors, through the collective agreements. The employers are a little afraid of this eventual impact... It is difficult to measure the impact of such process of recognition on the productivity of firms and on the quality of their services.

The critics expressed against the limits of the present evaluation and accreditation process (*convocatorias*) are similar to the ones expressed in Galicia, but the scepticism concerning the impact of this process on the improvement of the matching in the labour market seems higher in Aragon. For the Unions, all workers should have the opportunity to make the value of their professional experience recognized, as component of Lifelong Training. The process should be improved in this direction.

Conclusion

The process of evaluation and accreditation of the competences, initiated by the Royal Decree of 2009 and implemented by the CC.AAs, through the *convocatorias*, can arouse two distinct points of view:

- A too limited, too selective, too bureaucratic process, which faces financial and administrative obstacles and which does not allow a flexible answer to the needs of the individuals and of the firms.
- An emerging and experimental process, progressively open to more large fields of occupations, which permits to test the social demand of NFIL recognition, as a mean to mix work and training and as an entrance gate to Lifelong Learning.

The bifurcation between these two points of view is not only a question of belief but raises the issue of the impact of the labour market’s current reform. Today, this reform and the fiscal constraints have an uncertain impact on the NFIL evaluation and accreditation process and on its place in the pursued adaptation of the vocational training system, specially the sub-system “Training in employment”. The deregulation of labour market could go against the certified recognition of skills and competences, by weakening the role of the professional categories in the collective agreements. This contradiction should be underlined: in the same time, training and certification demand from unemployed persons, young people with difficulties of professional insertion, etc... is going to rise. The European policy endeavours to found the mobility on the certification of the professional skills and competences. The paradox is that the excessive deregulation of the labour market could have the contrary impact.

Annex: meetings

UGT Headquarter, Madrid (20th February 2012)

D. Mario Rodríguez Alvariño, Secretaría Confederal de Formación

Instituto Nacional de Cualificaciones, Madrid (21th February)

M^a Teresa Ogallar Aguirre, Head of Department for Qualification Design

Alfredo Liébana Collado, Jefe del servicio Acreditacion e Integracion

José Luis Palomar Galindo, Head of Profesional Observatory

UGT Galicia (Unión Xeral de Traballadores de Galicia), Santiago de Compostela (22th February)

Juan Domingo Barros Montáns, Secretario de Formación e Emprego

CCOO Galicia (Sindicato nacional de comisións obreiras de Galicia),

Santiago de Compostela (22th February)

Marisa Estalote Suárez, directora de FOREM Galicia (Fundación para la Formación y el Empleo de Comisiones Obreras).

Ministry of Education, Subdirección General de Orientación y Formación Profesional, Madrid (23th February)

Maria Berenguer Pont, Jefa de servicio

Antonio Gil González, Jefe de Area

Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales, CEOE,

Madrid (23th February)

Susana López Martín, Social Affairs Department

Centro de Formación Arsenio Jimeno, UGT, Zaragoza (24th February)

Gloria Muñoz, Secretaria de Formación de UGT Aragón

Antonio Carvajal, Secretario de Formación para el Empleo de CCOO en Aragón

Carolina Álvarez, Confederación Regional de Empresarios de Aragón (CREA)

Boris Giambanco, Confederación de Pequeña y Mediana Empresa, CEPYME Aragón

Validation of NFIL: Finnish experience and trade union practices
Synthesis of the study visit in Finland (12th – 16th December 2011)

Nicolas Fleury

May 2012

Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission



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Validation of NFIL: Finnish experience and trade union practices

Introduction: the long experience of Finland in validation of NFIL

Finland has a very long interest in Education and Training, and a long experience of validation of non-formal and non-formal learning (NFIL). The ideas of consensus and social dialogue are very important, as well as education, for the foundations of the Finnish society. The tripartite cooperation in training and training assessment exists since the 1960's. Education is something which is seen as necessary to stay competitive in a globalized economy. The validation of learning in Finland mainly occurs inside the CBQ system (adult education), even if some initiatives outside this specific framework may also take place. For instance, there exists some experiences lead by the 'Polytechnics'¹ ('Universities of Applied Sciences'). Whatever the process used for validation, at the core of the system is the principle of "recognition of prior learning". A national qualification network, based on the 8-level European Qualification Framework (EQF), was expected to enter into force in 2011. It has not been yet accepted at the Parliament level².

This document firstly presents the Finnish system of validation and the involvement of trade unions (section 1). Then, the activity linked to training and validation of three education centres is exposed (section 2). Finally, the impacts of the validation system, and the possible evolutions of this system, are questioned (section 3).

1. The system of validation and the involvement of trade unions

1.1. The CBQ system: a central role for validation in Finland

The competence-based qualification (CBQ) system allows every adult to have his prior learning validated by demonstrating his skills, *at workplace*. This system exists since 1994, even if it has only recently been codified for the 'vocational basic' level in a law passed in 2006. The possibility of recognition of competences whatever the place they have been acquired (recognition of prior learning) is a 'core principle', in the CBQ system (in the field of adult education), but also in the field of higher education (universities). The main principle behind the CBQ system is the demonstration by the individual of his own learning outcomes at workplace. Each part of a given qualification in the CQB system can be acquired after a 'competence test' which can be performed inside a training school. The qualification belongs to one of the following levels: *vocational* qualification, *further vocational* qualification, *specialist vocational* qualification³, but all the tests for the other modules normally occur inside a firm. The Finnish system of validation is a flexible one: modules (part) may be

¹ The document 1 in Appendix presents the Finnish Education System.

² *Act on the national framework for qualifications and other learnings*.

³ Cf. document 2 in Appendix: the process for the 'specialist in Competence-Based qualification' qualification.

acquired separately. Once all the modules are completed, the individual gets his qualification. It is theoretically possible to go directly to the exam to take the competence test, but very often, an individual takes an exam after a preparatory training. The final certificate obtained by the individual is the recognition of his validated learning. It may correspond to a certificate for only a part or for the whole qualification⁴.

Apart from the CBQ system, validation may also take the form of recognition of prior learning at university, in the field of 'higher education'. There is no unified framework in this field, where the initiative depends of autonomous decisions of universities.

1.2. The role of social partners in the institutional architecture of validation of NFIL

The Finnish system of validation in the field of adult education is strongly based on tripartite collaboration: social partners are involved in validation from the local to the national level. This tripartite involvement is a very relevant principle in the eyes of all interviewed people. It applies in the National Board of Education, in the qualification committees, as well as in the assessment groups.

The national board of education (NBE) is at the top of the 'adult education' and the CBQ system. The NBE monitors the work of the qualification committees. The NBE decides the number of qualifications and committees in the system. This institution collects the validation fees and organises the budget of the qualification committees. The NBE also makes other important tasks for validation, by delivering the certificate (the NBE sign the final paper certifying the "partial" degree or qualification) and by approving the plans for the future demand of skills. The NBE meetings occur one or two times per month. The NBE also trains the members of qualification committees, five days per year. The system can't be 'dictated' by the NBE, the government, *etc.*, that is why the involvement of trade unions and firms is particularly important. The consensus between all parts is very important for the system to operate.

The social partners are involved in 26 sectorial *qualification committees*. The involvement of representatives of employers/employees attest the importance given to the working life in the system: indeed, they know well what is needed, required at the workplace in terms of skills. The qualification committees are in charge to anticipate sectorial needs for competences and qualification. In total, there exist 154 qualification committees composed of 1000 experts (representative of employers, employees and teachers). The qualifications committees lead other roles, as to define requirements for a qualification in the CBQ system, and approve the (individual) validation plans. Each committee is established for one or several qualifications. The selected members are selected for the qualification committees for a 3-year duration period. Tripartite groups are in charge of the assessment. In practice, it is not necessary for all members of the assessors group to be part of every step, only one should be present at each step of the process. Social partners plan and design the CBQ tests with training organisations, inform the authorities and organisers about the requirements of the working life. They participate to the (tri-partite) assessment of skills at the working place, in the assessors' group. Trade Unions also advertise the system to their own members.

In addition, in the perspective of public dialogue and collective bargaining, *etc.*, social partners participate in many workgroups or programmes⁵ linked to education and training

⁴ In Finland, a worker is classified in a 6-category (lower to higher levels) referential inside his firm, with the salary related to that level. To have a degree theoretically permits the worker to be better classified, even it is not automatic, as it depends of collective agreements.

⁵ Workgroups set up, or suggested (to further develop the CBQ system, to deal with information and guidance system, to make working life more attractive to young people, apprenticeship training for least advantaged groups, to increase motivation of girls in applied sciences).

stakes. For instance, the confederation of Finnish industries is running two projects in order to search for future needs for knowledge, skills and competences in the firms (Services 2020, Education Intelligence).

Finally, social partners have agreed to raise the grant given by the Educational fund to people who have undertaken CBQ system.

1.3. The involvement of trade unions of Employees in experiences promoting validation: the example of SAK in the Noste and Osaava Pärjää programs

SAK (*Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö*, Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions) is the most important confederation of trade unions in Finland⁶, that mainly represents manual workers (but not only: one third of its members corresponds to non-manual workers). SAK is very involved since the beginning in the questions of validation, and have experts in all that concerns adult education⁷. The validation of prior learning and the CBQ system are very important for SAK trade unions, especially because a very important share of the skills of the SAK members is acquired at work (their experience). SAK gives support to some members of the qualification committees to participate and to organize the voluntary work in qualification committees, in national board of education, in the assessment groups, etc. The CBQ system is also important for SAK's members, as it represents a flexible way to acquire skills (modules, possibility of apprenticeship: it is important too for SAK members to learn while working ["at workplace"]). One of the main motivations to favour the CBQ system is the equalization of opportunities, to offer a 'second chance' to some workers, or even 'endless chances' for lifelong learning. It also favours 'every day's innovation' (or the 'employee-based' innovation).

The involvement of members SAK in the training and in the CBQ system also allows them to have some elements of diagnosis regarding this system, and to participate to the proposals to make the system to evolve (see section 3).

SAK is involved in many programs in the field of training and validation, as illustrated by the *Noste* experience. The *Noste* programme launched by the Finnish Government, implemented on the 2003-2007 period, was designed to raise the education and training level of adults with low basic education⁸. The education and training experts of SAK have prepared their own project to support the *Noste* Programme: *Osaava Pärjää* ("the competent will cope"). The target group defined by the Parliament Adult Education Committee for the *Noste* Program was the 30-50 years old people without any secondary education⁹. This programme was divided into four main activities: 1-qualification of the CBQ system, 2-training for computer license qualification, 3-studies promoting educational guidance, etc., 4-outreach activities, information and counselling, and other measures promoting access to education and training.

Programmes include for instance the *Karttue* research and development project, *Tykes* for the development projects of working communities, *Oivallus* project at the initiative of trade union of employer to think about future needs in training (cf. infra for a presentation of the project).

⁶ The other confederations of trade unions are STTK (*Suomen Toimihenkilökeskusjärjestö*, the Finnish confederation of Professionals, that gathers the majority of non-manual workers together), and AKAVA (Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland, mainly composed of graduate workers).

⁷ In particular, the staff from SAK involved in adult education knows the key people in national board of education, ministry, in a tradition of long-run relationship.

⁸ Cf. the report by Markku Liljeström (2010), "PROMOTING COMPETENCE AMONG ADULT EDUCATION. Programme for raising the education and training level among adult population in Finland 2003-2009 and Trade Unions Activities", the central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK.

⁹ In Finland at the time, it was reported that 400 000 adult in their 30-50 years age were without any secondary education. SAK was notably involved in the Parliamentary committee to define the target group.

The *Osaava Pärjää* project, launched in 2003, was based on these last activities, and was the only one launched by a labour market organization, at a national scale. The project was focused on SAK members. The so-called “competence pilots”, (voluntary) peer support persons¹⁰, were activists from the Union in charge of encouraging employees to education and training, counselling and networking in that field. About 26 000 adults participate in the *Noste* Programme, and 10 000 vocational qualifications (wholly or partly) were passed. Surveys or observations made regarding the particular impact of the *Osaava Pärjää* programme suggest it “*had a significant influence on employees’ decisions to take up studies, although in most cases it seems to have been indirect*”. It also permitted a better cooperation between trade unions and education providers. Finally, in 2010, SAK launched a new project which extends the *Noste* programme. It aims to create a permanent network of education councillors, in collaboration with TSL association (*cf. infra*).

1.4. The employer side: the experience of EK (Finnish construction Trade Union)

1.4.1. The activity of the union

The confederation of Finnish Industries EK (*Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto*) is the leading business organisation in Finland, representing the private sector with 16 000 member companies (95% of them are small and medium-size enterprises).

Ca. 100 members of the Finnish Industries Business (FIB) work in the qualification committees¹¹. Some members of FIB have notably participated to the European social-funded AHOT project, targeting the staff from the higher education institutions (both ‘universities’ and ‘polytechnics’). The addressed question was: how could be assessed the types of skills learned by someone? A particular relevant question for FIB is: how may the skills of *young people* be assessed? At the basis of the AHOT project was the idea to favour people to acquire higher education, including people at work. Indeed, the needed skills for business evolve with time, and there exists a growing need of well-qualified people: what changes could be made in the studies, in the skills of the workers to make them ‘up to date’? This is the reason why every three or four years, qualifications are renewed, are opened up in the country. In particular, ‘Polytechnics’ are in the perspective to enhance the particular qualifications needed by companies. ‘Universities’ are less inclined, in that perspective, to talk about this or to evolve. For Trade Unions of employers, the CBQ system and validation are particularly important in the perspective to evaluate, to let workers know what they learn in their business life. One of the main goals is to make a worker not studying something that he already has.

At the European level, Business Europe has a high interest for the companies’ involvement in the question of validation of NFIL: what kind of competences should a worker validate? In addition, as some skills need to be very wide (*e.g.*, a manager) and some others need to be rather narrow (specialist, engineer, *etc.*), another relevant question is how wide/narrow should be the needed skills? And what is the benefit for the companies?

A particular project, the *Oivallus* Project, is a prospective study that focuses on the future needs of the Finnish Economy in 2020.

¹⁰ All activists from the Union were welcome to apply for training. 663 competence pilots were trained during the project, TSL (*cf. infra*), trade union institutes and SAK ‘education and training’ were responsible of that training.

¹¹ It represents, depending of the sector, 8 to 16 members per sectorial committees.

1.4.2. *The Oivallus Project: “What kind of education would prepare for work in the 2020’s*

The Oivallus or “competence needs of learning networks in tomorrow’s Finland” project has been run on the 2008-2011 period¹². This project was coordinated by the Confederation of Finnish Industries and financed by the European Social Fund, the National Board of Education and the Confederation of Finnish Industries. The core question addressed in the project was “what kind of education would prepare for work in the 2020’s?” in order to “*deliver a message from businesses to education policymakers regarding competence needs and education for the future*”. To intend some answers, companies, academics, teachers, and other experts have participated to deliberations. One of the central ideas of the project was to identify some trailblazers, characterized by a “*divergent thinking and doing*” as well as a network-like way of operating. The Final report exhibits some strong points or guidelines to provide the Finnish Economy the needed skills: “*the central issue will be whether people in companies know how to work in a new way, i.e. so that they generate renewed and new products and services.*”. The importance of social skills was particularly pointed up, as well as the need to develop collective intelligence¹³. Moreover, the importance of the acquisition of skills at workplace (learning by doing) was also enlightened. According to the report, individualization and flexibility in the training and education paths are also important points to make evolve the level and the content of needed skills.

2. Trade Unions and training system: example from three Finnish education centres

2.1. *TSL in Helsinki: non formal learning, notably for Trade Union staff.*

2.1.1. *The activity of the centre*

Työväen Sivistysliitto (TSL) or Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) is one of the biggest Finnish educational associations. The main proposed themes of popular adult education and training are often presented as non-formal learning¹⁴, ‘general education’, or ‘soft skills’. These skills incorporate team work skills, communicate skills, information technology skills and self-actualization, and promote educational activity in the Finnish society. This 90-year old organisation has strong links with the labour movement, in particular trade unions. For instance, SAK confederation is one of the members of the association. The content of the training is focused on some general skills provided notably (but not only) for labour representatives (see *infra*: the ‘developing people’s skills and competences’ project). For instance, the centre proposes a 6-days programme to become a ‘learning representative’ (an advisor in the CBQ system¹⁵), for the trade union activists that have this willingness: this TSL programme provides information and knowledge (regulation of work agreements, cooperation between employers-employees, learning possibilities at workplace, map the working environment as a network, how to create tools for networking, learning about the vocational education system).

¹² See Final Report of the *Oivallus* project (2011), Confederation of Finnish Industries.

¹³ “*We need education that supports and furthers working together*”.

¹⁴ Note that the CBQ system mainly permits validation for non-formal learning coming from work experience. But, in some cases, non-formal learnings coming from popular adult education may also be the object of validation.

¹⁵ These representative are volunteers, on the United-Kingdom model, and do not benefit from official support.

2.1.2. *The particular exemple of the ‘developing people’s skills and competences’ project*

The “developing people’s skills and competences” project is a running ESF (European Social Fund) funded project (2010-2013) with the goal to enhance the learning and communicating skills. Two major goals are pursued through this project: 1°) to build up and strengthen the learning network (labour market actors), 2°) to encourage and support workers to develop their learning skills and skills for work. The target groups are especially trade union activists at workplace, but also all salaries who want to develop their network at local or national level. The targeted networking in this programme corresponds to networking with unions of the central organisation of Finnish Trade unions, employers and shop stewards at workplaces, leaders of union organisations, vocational training centres, apprenticeship municipalities, *etc.*



2.2. *The ‘Siikaranta-opisto’ training centre of Espoo: vocational education and general education.*

Siikaranta-opisto is a college founded in 1964 by Rakennusliitto, the Construction Trade Union, which provides vocational training and education and free adult education for construction workers. The training center has the folk high school status since 1981, which permits a 50% state funding for free adult education (the rest coming from support from the confederation [SAK] and from student fees).

The centre arranges further and specialist vocational qualifications in construction and related works. It represents a significant adult educational institute in the field of construction, with over 250 qualifications in 2007 and about 700 different competence tests. It mainly focuses on further and specialist vocational qualifications / competence based tests.

Students are professional craftsmen “*who don’t necessary need long ‘theory-based’ studies*”. Hence, the centre focuses on competence tests that take place on their own working sites (“real working life conditions and situations are required”). Teachers are doing their job mostly in working sites arranging competence together with the student and the employer¹⁶.

The centre also provides general education for shop stewards, labour protection delegates and for the Construction Trade Union (legislation, negotiation skills, meaning of collective agreements, risk evaluation, social issues, *etc.*).

¹⁶ “*The more the teachers are absent from the college, the more I’m happy*” (principal Markku Hiltunen).



2.3. TAKK, one of the leading (vocational) adult education centres in Finland

TAKK (*Tampereen Aikuiskoulutuskeskus Kuvat*) is one of the biggest Adult Education centres in Finland. TAKK is located in Pirkanmaan, near Tampere, and operates mostly locally (the Tampere region), but also nationally and internationally. It has a foundation status, whose board is composed of members from the Tampere City council, the Tampere Chamber of commerce and by leading labour organizations: from the central organization of Trade Union (SAK), and from the confederation of Finnish Industries (EK).

The training courses offered by TAKK aim at vocational, further and specialist qualifications. These courses are based on national curricula approved by the National Board of Education. The Centre notably offers preparatory training and possibility to take 100 qualifications, work life test, passports (*e.g.* hygiene, first aid, fire, safety, *etc.*, that could be also represent a part of a qualification) and certificates (to be able to go after to university or polytechnics). The things intensively discussed in TAKK in the field of lifelong learning include, for instance, how to plan education on a more long-term basis, how to develop counselling and improve relations with working life. At the end of training, it is usual to have visit of trade unions that explain to the trainee the situation of the labour market, common salary, *etc.* In certain fields, some “working groups” are set up, and discuss about forecasting (social fields, logistics, technology...).

TAKK’s instructors are involved in teams and qualifications committees preparing for the basis for qualifications. Around 200 of TAKK’s instructors are specialists in competence-based qualifications.

Finally, some important issues related to the training activities of TAKK:

- The *Age* parameter represents important stakes, because of the probable lack of labour in some fields in Finland in the years to come. Moreover, the unemployment rate of older people in the region of Tampere is significantly higher that at the national level (ca. 14% versus ca. 8%).
- *About migrants*. Most of migrants in Finland have language problems, and do not have any education certificates¹⁷. The TAKK centre notably provides immigrant education.



¹⁷ However, it shall be noted that in some cases, formal learning by migrants acquired abroad may be validated by the National Board of Education.

3. Questioning the impact of the system of validation: diagnosis and propositions of actors of the system to make it to evolve

The Finnish system of validation is known for its very good quantitative results¹⁸. The number of workers that benefited from validation is very important. Furthermore, women seem to be the main beneficiaries of validation. Looking further at the results in qualitative terms allows qualifying these results. First, we may question who are the main beneficiaries of the validation experiences (target population), and to what extent the obtained results may be qualified in the perspective on lifelong learning. Then some possible limits of the current system of validation or of its application are addressed, and some proposals to make it evolve are also pointed out.

3.1. *Qualify the results of the system in terms of training and validation of NFIL: rather good quantitative results hide somewhat disappointing effects?*

3.1.1. *Some disappointing results in terms of training and validation of NFIL?*

What happened in Finland in terms of training and validation of NFIL may appear somewhat disappointing from a certain perspective. Indeed, the search for rise in higher education wanted since the 1990's for economic reasons (crisis, *etc.*) has not worked so well, to a certain extent. One of the problems is that that social bargaining is focused on labour market concerns and does not include training. Indeed, collective bargaining includes wages, working time, working conditions, but not training. Now, an important research work suggests that wages returns to training are substantial, and even very substantial, for Finland¹⁹.

The need for training as a joint idea between employers-employees dates back from the last 1970's in Finland: the idea was to build some education plans, with some jointly assessed needs of training should be. This has worked rather well in the 1980's, but this philosophy has been somehow lost in the 1990's with the crisis. Indeed, firms do not actually behave like this: on the 1995-2008 period of time, only 50-60% of the firms have such plans. Statistics of Eurostat show that for Finland, but also for all European countries, the time devoted to Lifelong learning has started to decrease²⁰. In addition, the firm-financed training has decreased while jointly financed (*i.e.* both by government and firms) training has started to rise.

Moreover, the results of the CBQ system may be disappointed to the extent that the (Ca.) 20% of the occupied finish population is without any basic or vocational education didn't really benefit from the system, which signifies that this system has rather benefited to higher-skilled workers.

¹⁸ Cf. the statistics presented in Anna-Mari Nevala (2010), *European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and informal learning 2010. Country Report: Finland*, CEDEFOP and GHK.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/F/TK53CM8NUI855RIEG4Q79J4CCPC9K29XMJ1AJIGRHHQRBYXB8A-07350?func=full-set-set&set_number=000598&set_entry=000041&format=999

¹⁹ Erkki Laukkanen (2010), *Wage returns to training: Evidence from Finland*, The Labour institute for Economic Research, Finland.

²⁰ But, according to the available data, it also permits a more balance of training between low skilled and high skilled workers.

3.1.2. *About the targeted populations of the process of validation*

In Finland, women attend more education and training than men. In particular, more than 50% of the beneficiaries of the Finnish validation system of NFIL are women. But looking further the gender parameter allows also to point out a somewhat “paradox”, as male tend to be more passive in adult education, but benefit more in terms of salary if they obtain a rise in their qualification. Meanwhile, surveys in that field point out that women search firstly a better work. A large share of women works in the public sector, which may partly explains why they benefit less than men from validation, in terms of salary. Some particular sectors reveal some potential substantial need of validation for women, as the construction work sector, when women mainly work in some cleaning and low skilled jobs.

Moreover, others important populations that could largely benefit from validation of NFIL are the young uneducated people and the migrants²¹. An important and recurrent discussion in Finland concerns the large number of drop-out of young people without any diploma, each year. In the beginning of the 2000's, the population of young people without any diploma was estimated to 40 000-50 000. This population is a major concern for public policies. Furthermore, immigrant workers are also a very important population that could be targeted by actions of validation. They are very well represented in the construction work sector: mostly of them are low skilled workers, are not members of trade unions and are not paid above at the minimum wage of the collective agreements, especially in the construction work sector.

Finally, another potential and important target for the system of validation could also be some of the workers of the traditional industries sectors. It mainly concerns paper and metal industries in the northern Finland area. The collapse and restructuring experience of these industries²² represents an important concern for public policies²³.

3.2. *Limits and difficulties of the current system*

The current system of validation and the institutional framework are now nearly 20-years old. That corresponds to a long experience in validation, with some possible limits that have been exposed in the previous sub-sections. Some interviewed actors of the training and validation system have helped to identified and to expose some limits or difficulties of the existing ‘administrative’ framework.

One of the reported difficulties is that the current system is based on voluntary work (for instance, for the work as assessor, in the qualifications committees, or in the administration of the system). The open question is so: how much time can they take for that? The free time that can be taken by the representative depends of his specific role. ‘Normal’ employees have to ask to their employers. That involvement requires much time (evenings, *etc.*), and denotes the need to be deeply committed to the system.

Another pointed out recurrent problem is that of the resources, notably in a system that requires voluntaries work. Hence, secretaries of the qualification committees should (could) have more resources for administration (what is paid corresponds to the fee for validation, which represent a rather ‘small’ amount).

²¹ Note that there exist, for these populations, some policies or programmes lead by public authorities or trade unions.

²² For instance, some important restructuring in the paper sector is currently taking place now, because of the competition of South America.

²³ Notably by the fact that many salaries worked from father to son in many of these industries.

It is also frequently pointed out that it is not always easy to organize the assessor's work, which is particularly difficult for an individual worker.

Other difficulties that are frequently pointed out include:

- *On the experience of validation for adult students*: the fact that many adult students do not behave as very autonomous. They often think that they need some preparatory training, even their own learning make there is no need for that, and feel somehow 'insecure' to see reduce the duration or the content of their studies. The validation of prior learning also make individuals to avoid studying inside a group, while collective study is important, especially for men.
- There may be some kind of competition of validation between the validation process in the CBQ system with the VET providers. Indeed, training institutions get better financing if they got more students. Finally, after discussion between advisor, teacher and learner, the learner decides.
- Another difficulty is that trade unions and employers should be deeply committed to the system to make it well work (note that is also represents a 'guarantee', or a good practice of the current system).
- The resistance from universities (professors) to the CBQ system, even if some polytechnics have their own kind of systems of validation. The recognition of prior learning, in that perspective, depends of the teachers' willingness.
- The current process of validation is often seen as a bureaucratic way to get recognition of prior learning ("too many papers").
- The necessity to take care of the viability of the assessment (rely that in every case, people assess the same way, which represents a quality assurance).
- *About the impact on salaries for employees that benefited from validation*: theoretically, if qualification rises, you may benefit from rise in the salary. But, in many branches there are no collective agreements: it depends of the sector, or of the good will of the firms.
- *On the particular learning that actually benefited from validation process*. Theoretically, validation of prior learning is possible whatever the way they are acquired, but in practice, this mainly concern learning acquired in working situations.
- The possibility of validation is very much related to the good will of the firms, as the competence tests occur at workplace.
- The system has not worked too much good for migrants, especially because of the language problem (it is necessary to speak Finnish to pass the qualification).

3.3. *Some proposals to make the system to evolve*

Some actors of the current system of validation, notably trade unions, have their own proposals to make the system of validation or its practical appliance to evolve. If the system could be questioned not only in its quantitative objectives but also in its qualitative objectives and more oriented towards some specific target group (see *supra*), some possible improvements for the daily functioning of the system have been pointed out.

We list below some of these proposals:

- The best practices should be enlightened, notably by making benchmarking surveys/studies (forums, seminars, *etc.*).
- Qualification committees should have more common methods.
- Administrative burden should be alleged in order to simplify the system ("too many papers"), notably in the relations with the national board of education.

- To stress more the information and the possibilities offered by the validation to employers but also to teachers, notably in polytechnics.

Some other proposals take the form of ‘questions’ about the changes that could occur to benefit more to the firms or to the employees, to make the system more readable or more fitted to the needs of the Finnish economy:

- The given degrees tend now to be more general than some years ago. Should the degrees be more specialized²⁴? It could also be possible to reduce the number of available titles: there is currently around 400 different degrees. A reduced number of degrees could notably allow an easier way to classify the worker in the “1 to 6” category of worker inside the firm.
- Finally, the system of requirement could also be renewed, by questioning the type of skills that fits for a certain qualification: how narrow or wide are the skills required²⁵?

Conclusion: A mature system of validation, but that could evolve

Finland benefits from a mature system of validation. The institutional framework is built since nearly twenty years and the participation of social actors as well as voluntary workers renders necessary the ‘good willingness’ to involve and also the consensus which represents a very important value in the Finnish society. Finland benefits from a mature system of validation, but as exposed in the previous sub-section, this system could possibly evolve, as suggested by some of its actors, both in the definition of objectives (target populations) and in the practical ways. The recent development include, a proposal in June 2012 for a law on ‘competence development’ with quantitative and qualitative guidelines (about, notably, at least 3 mandatory annual training days, and on the process for assessment at workplace).

In the context of the economic crisis and with the current stakes for Finland, validation may be assumed as needed most than ever. Indeed, more and more, enhanced by the crisis, there is a growing trend, as well as in other European or OECD countries, to the polarization of the labour market in Finland (good jobs vs bad jobs: low-paid and precarious jobs versus good-paid jobs).

Finally, the validation of prior learning seems to stay a very relevant question for the Finnish society as shown by the programme of the new Finnish government (June 2011), which points out some relevant points regarding the validation of NFIL and in particular recognition for migrants: *“The recognition of prior learning and learning acquired abroad will be made part of all education from the basic level to adult education. A competence-based definition of qualifications will be endorsed.”*; *“The integration and employment of migrants (...) will be promoted through education. (...) The recognition of existing competencies, language skills and vocational skills of migrants will be developed.”* (Programme of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen’s Government, p. 51).

Finally, we would like to relay a message from some actors of the Finnish National board of Education which are very inclined and interested in the possibility to share experiences in the field of validation of prior learning, and ready to welcome interested people or institutions from foreign countries in that perspective.

²⁴ For instance, the requirements for the ‘specialist vocational’/expert level qualifications would be, in that perspective, too narrow.

²⁵ e.g., very wide skills may be needed for a manager, while rather narrow skills may be required for more specific occupation.

Appendix: meetings

Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö (SAK, Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions) Headquarters (12th and 13th December 2011)

Kirsi Rasinaho, Adviser Education and Training

Markku Liljeström, Head of Unit

Erkki Laukkanen, Economist

Työväen Sivistysliitto (TSL) - Workers' Educational Association (13th December 2011)

Katri Söder, Information and International Issues

Mervi Ylitalo, Training Planner

Suomen toimihenkilöiden (STTK) Headquarters (13th December 2011)

Mikko Heinikoski, Senior Adviser Education Policy

Siikarantaopisto Institute (Rakennusliitto, Construction Trade Union, 14^h December 2011)

Kyösti Suokas, Rakennusliitto Second Chairman

Vesa Holappa, Siikarantaopisto Principal

Ministry of Education and culture (15^h December 2011)

Petri Haltia, Counsellor of Education

Elinkeinoelämän Keskusliitto EK (Confederation of Finnish Industries) (15^h December 2011)

Tarja Tuominen, Senior Adviser

National Board of Education (15^h December 2011)

Markku Kokkonen, Counsellor of Education

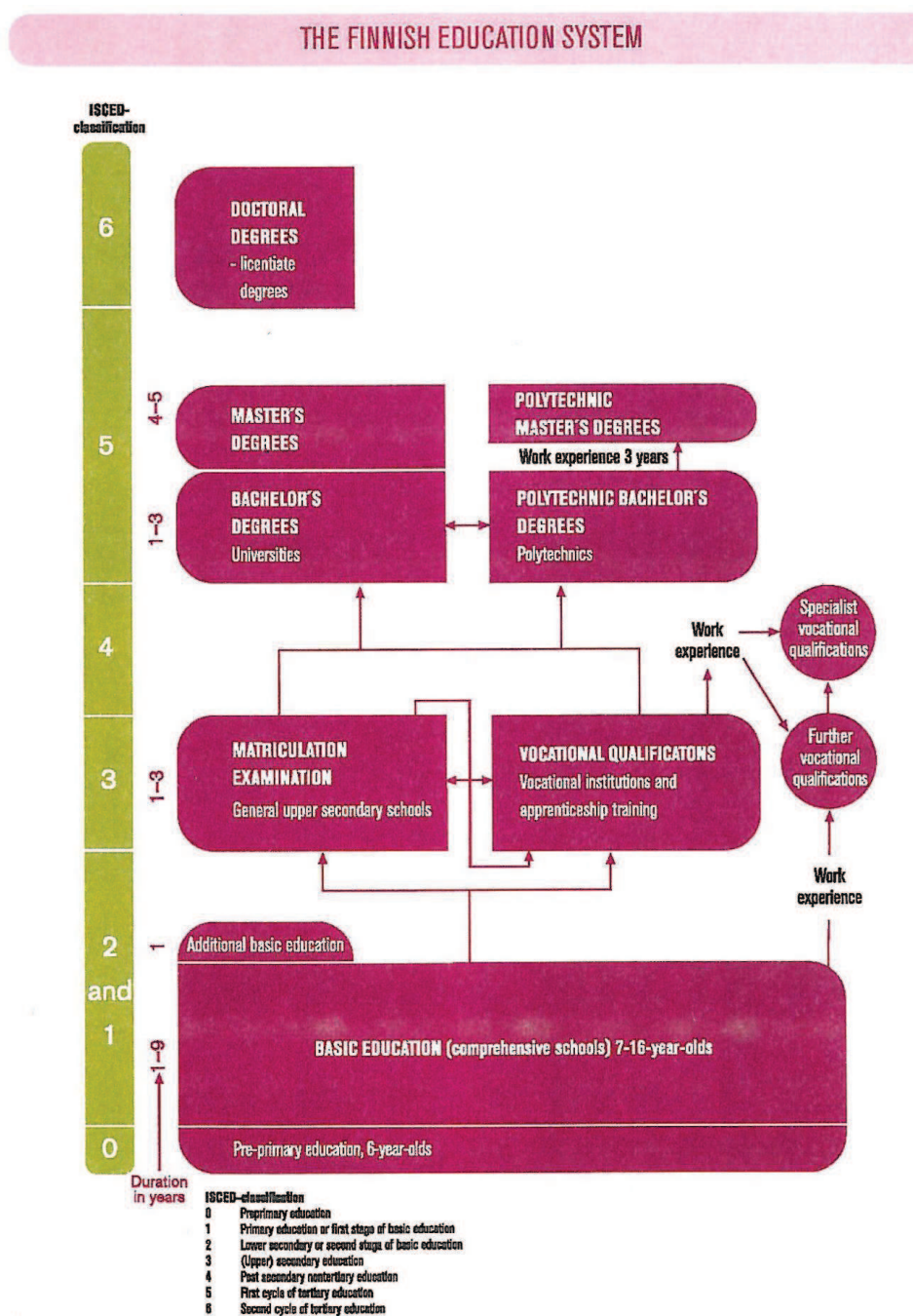
Tampereen Aikuiskoulutuskeskus Kuvat (TAKK) (16^h December 2011)

Päivi Puutio, Project Director

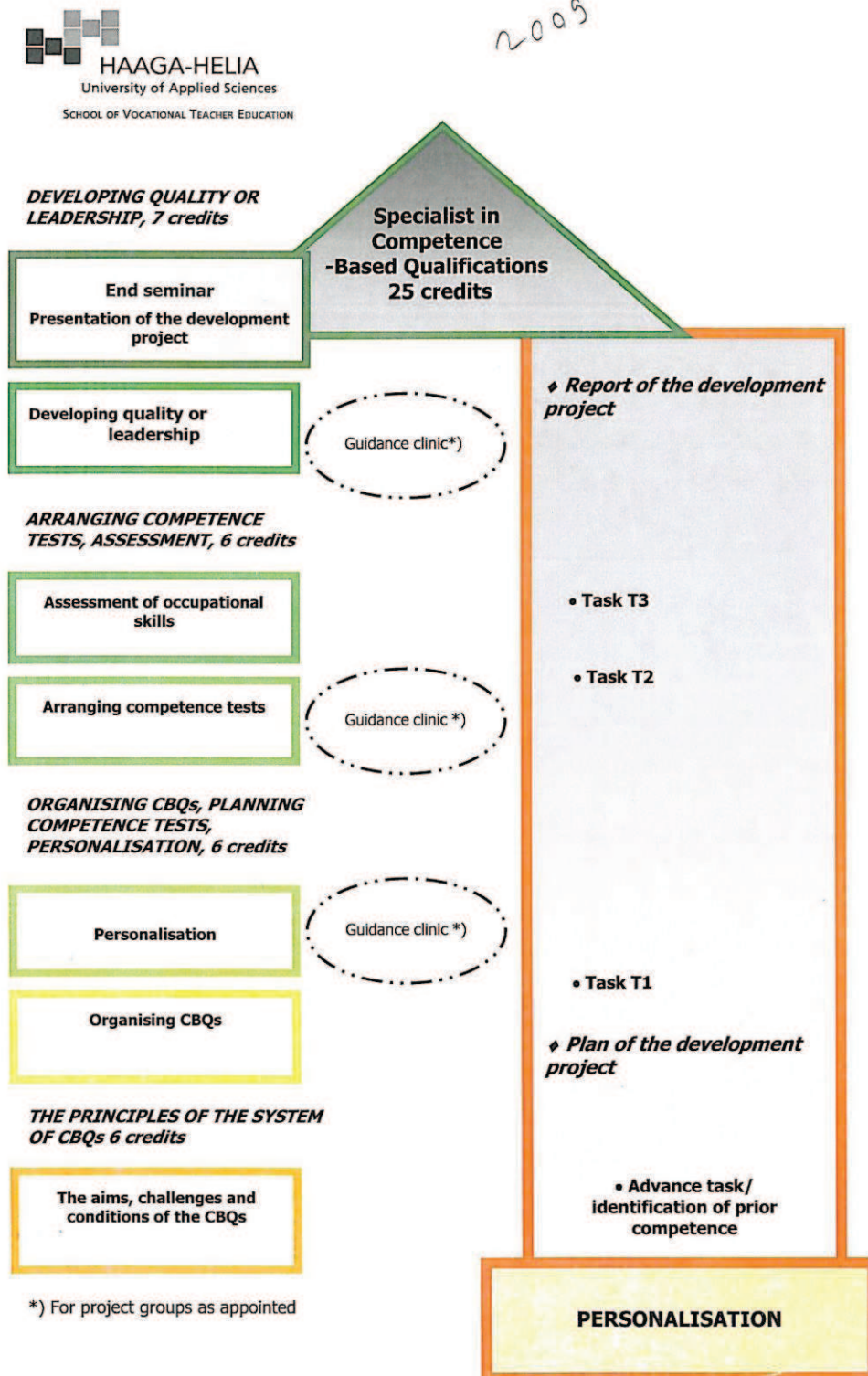
Eeva-Kaisa Mäkinen, Vice-Chairman

Appendix: documents

Document 1: The Finnish Education system



Document 2: The 'specialist in Competence-Based qualification' qualification



Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in France
Synthesis of the study visit in France (January – February 2012)

Mathieu Malaquin

May 2012

Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission



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Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in France

Validation of prior experiential learning (*Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*, VAE)

Scope and reach of a legal provision

1. Recognition of prior experiential learning in France

1.1 A legal provision that lacked unanimous support at the outset

a) Legal provision for the validation of experience

In France, non-formal and informal learning practices have, in part, been institutionalised in a legal provision. The *French Social Modernisation Act* of 17 January 2002¹ created the right to VAE (*Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*; *Validation of Prior Experiential Learning*), which allows anyone, on the basis of at least three years' salaried, non-salaried or voluntary work, to acquire a full or partial recognised professional qualification. This law also introduced the RNCP (*Registre National des Certifications Professionnelles*; *national registry of professional qualifications*), for registering professional qualifications recognised by the State and the social partners. To appear in this registry, they must be accessible via VAE, and therefore include a validation procedure based on, among other things, a system of modules. The national registry is managed and controlled by the CNCP (*Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle*; *National committee for professional qualification*), comprising Trade Unions and employers' organisations. In 2010, the registry contained approximately 7,088 professional qualifications that are accessible, for the most part, by VAE. They represent more than 96% of all nationally recognised qualifications, excluding higher education qualifications, of which there are still few in the list.

b) Reluctant stakeholders at the outset

The initial proposal, which was mainly aimed at those with few qualifications and jobseekers, was ultimately extended to the entire workforce in order to avoid the stigma of qualifications acquired via this route. However, it still received some negative reactions, particularly from the French education system, which felt that the diploma must remain the main route to qualification. In turn, Education Trade Unions federations, such as the CGT (*Confédération générale du Travail*) and CFDT (*Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail*), backed this opposition to the process. Employers, on the other hand, contested the authority given to the CNCP, as they saw in it the State's desire to standardise all qualifications. Lastly, in the job search field, the regional directors of the ANPE (*Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi*; French national employment agency) considered VAE equivalent to training, and that, in this respect, it was out of touch with the labour market.

However, these various positions rapidly changed. The education system, despite its initial reservations, is now a staunch supporter of the process: it alone accredits more than two thirds of the qualifications. As for the Trade Unions, they quickly realised the benefit to employees of becoming involved in the system. Employers also came to recognise the benefits of VAE in their employee development processes and, faced with rising unemployment, the national employment service also changed its stance.

¹ French Social Modernisation Act (LMS; *Loi de Modernisation Sociale*) no. 2002-73 of 17 January 2002.

1.2 A simple process, but involving multiple stakeholders

VAE is an individual right exercised through a relatively simple process. The employee identifies the qualification sought and then contacts the accrediting body which provides a list of documents required to prepare an eligibility application. If the body deems that the application for validation is eligible, the employee prepares a claim describing his or her experience. At this stage, the law provides employees with the possibility of taking twenty-four hours of leave from work and of receiving support from the accrediting body. Once the claim has been put together, the candidate presents it before an assessment panel, which may award either a full qualification or a partial qualification. This panel also specifies the skills that must be acquired, through experience or training, within the next five years.

VAE is a fourth route to professional qualification alongside initial training, lifelong learning and apprenticeships. It differs from the other routes in that it is based on the recognition of prior experience. However, as the stakeholders remain much the same, the VAE process replicates the complexity of the training system. A set of entities is involved:

- **Awarding bodies:** these are responsible for implementing the validation procedure (receiving and studying claims, organising panel meetings, administrative aspects, etc.), and issuing qualifications after the panel has given its decision. These are, for the most part, public authorities² which award professional qualifications accessible via VAE. In addition, there are two categories of private stakeholders: the occupational sectors, which may award CQPs (*Certificat de Qualification Professionnelle*; *Professional qualification certificate*), and private training bodies, which award CCEs (*Certificat de Compétence en Entreprise*; *certificate of on-the-job competence*) on the basis of work-based assessment.
- **Financers:** As the Act of 2002 did not provide for a budget, the VAE process must be paid for. Individuals may receive funding depending on their status. The FONGECIFs (*Fonds de Gestion du Congé Individuel de Formation*; *Individual Leave Training management funds*)³ may cover expenses incurred by an employee in the private sector. Likewise, as VAE processes now fall into the field of company training, they can be financed by OPCAs (*Organisme Paritaire Collecteur Agréé*; *Accredited fund collection agency*)⁴. Lastly, the French State, the public employment service *Pôle Emploi*⁵ and the regional authorities may support jobseekers in the VAE process.
- **Information and guidance services:** information and guidance have been provided at regional level since 2006, under the supervision of the regional council in partnership with the decentralised government offices responsible for qualifications, the public employment service and the sector's social partners. These services are structured around three relatively autonomous networks, the *Réseaux d'accueil-information-conseil* (information-advice networks), the regionally approved PRCs (*Points Relais Conseil*; *Information offices*), and the network's awarding bodies.

² The French ministries responsible for Education, Employment, Health and Social Affairs, Youth and Sports.

³ FONGECIFs are joint labour-management bodies tasked with financing CIF (*Congés Individuels de Formation*; *Individual training leave*), and leave for skills assessments, with funding obtained through compulsory contributions paid by companies.

⁴ OPCAs are bodies jointly managed by representatives of the Employers and Trade Unions that collect, manage and distribute the compulsory financial contributions paid by member companies for professional training.

⁵ *Pôle Emploi* is the French public body responsible for assisting the unemployed in their search for employment.

2 VAE practices

2.1 A representative sector: home and personal care services sector

a) The sector and its context

The home and personal care services sector appears to be the predominant user of the VAE process, with 21% of all qualifications presented via VAE⁶. This is a sector that has gradually developed, over time, through the merger between personal care services (for the elderly, or people with disabilities, excluding health care services) and domestic services (housework, child care, gardening, etc.), with the governmental 'Borloo' plan as the most recent manifestation. This structure, formed by different types of activity, makes it a fragmented sector in which multiple collective agreements coexist. The cases we studied, therefore, cover three branches of the sector, with different collective agreements.

Home and personal care services have seen strong growth over the last few years due to increased demand (due to population ageing, increasingly individual lifestyles, and the increase in female participation in the workforce). The sector had approximately 1.6 million employees in 2008, up 16% on 2005.

The VAE process is of interest in the sector for more than one reason:

- There are strong recruitment needs.
- Employees, for the most part women, are recruited with few or no qualifications⁷.
- The business is largely dependent on certifications which lay down requirements for employees' qualifications.

As a result, the three branches of the sector have fully adopted the VAE process. With 3,400 qualifications awarded per year⁸, this route is on a par with a formal learning pathway for access to the DEAVS (*Diplôme d'Etat d'Auxiliaire de Vie Sociale*; Diploma in home care assistance), the prime qualification in the sector.

b) A sector with contrasting VAE practices

While the challenges of VAE may seem relatively similar for employers, its implementation varies somewhat depending on the branch of the sector concerned.

- **Domestic assistance** (220,000 employees): this is mostly made up of community organisations. VAE was introduced on a pilot basis at the beginning of the 2000s, under the influence of a convergence of factors: the French Ministry of Social Affairs was reforming the diploma, the VAE process was being introduced, and the social partners were negotiating a new classification system. The process, which aims at obtaining the DEAVS, follows the statutory format. The employee completes an eligibility application which covers several criteria. Then, if the criteria are met, the DRASS (*Direction Régionale des Affaires Sanitaires et Sociales*; Regional department of health and social affairs), which represents the awarding ministry, provides a VAE claim form to be completed and then presented before an

⁶ Besson E. (2008), *Valoriser l'acquis de l'expérience : une évaluation du dispositif de VAE (Developing experiential learning: An evaluation of the VAE process)*, Report to the Prime Minister, September

⁷ In the proportion of 80% to 90%.

⁸ Drees (2008), "Préparer le Diplôme d'Etat d'auxiliaire de vie sociale par la validation des acquis de l'expérience" (Preparing for the diploma in home care assistance through the validation of prior experiential learning), *Etudes et Résultats*, no. 658, September.

assessment jury. At this stage, the candidate has the right to the statutory minimum of twenty-five hours of support. In total, the time between registering a VAE claim and the jury's decision is approximately six months.

The jury comprises employers, trainers and employees in the profession who hold the diploma. It makes its decision on the basis of the written description of the experience given in the claim, and its oral presentation by the candidate. The interview lasts approximately one hour, during which the jury, which has read the claim, may ask questions. If a partial qualification is awarded, the candidate has five years to achieve the missing modules. Following the pilot project, approximately 70% of candidates were awarded the qualification, with 24% the first time around and 66% following a partial qualification.

This branch of the sector, through the CPNE (*Commission Paritaire Nationale de l'Emploi*; National labour-management committee for employment)⁹, played a significant role in identifying VAE as a priority. This decision resulted in a budget from the OPCA, *Uniformation*, to finance employee support and their replacement at work. Moreover, the branch's trade union organisations, and particularly the CGT and CFDT, supported the process from the outset, deeming that the employees needed it and that this recognition of their experience was legitimate. They therefore carried out an information campaign across France to encourage employees in this branch of the sector to make VAE claims. In addition to this information campaign, the trade union organisations negotiated the reform of the old classification system, which did not make any distinction between qualified and unqualified employees and awarded them identical salaries, below the French minimum wage. They obtained salary recognition for qualifications, particularly those achieved via VAE. Ultimately, the DEAVS is the qualification most often presented (14.7% of all claims examined by the panels).

- **Personal care** (86,400 employees): this branch of the sector is the most recent and was the result of the 'Borloo' Plan which aimed at structuring the range of services and developing the companies providing those services. After several years of negotiation, the collective agreement was signed on 23 January 2012. The branch had a professional training agreement in place for two years, which had made it possible to appoint an OPCA and set up various professional training bodies. This interest in training is easily explained by the employment issues common to all branches of the sector (high recruitment, weak qualifications, etc.), but which are exacerbated by the specific features of the branch, and particularly by the predominance of SMEs and micro-enterprises which are often organised into networks, much use of part-time work and a high staff turnover.

Unlike the domestic assistance branch, the professional designation ADVF (*Assistant De Vie aux Familles*; Family support assistant) issued by the French Ministry of Labour, is the prime qualification. It is, however, often perceived as onerous by the employers' federation, FEDESAP (*Fédération Française de Services à la Personne et de Proximité*; French federation for personal, home care and community services), as regards the number of initial training hours it requires (from 400 to 800 hours). Obtaining this qualification via VAE, which roughly requires financing just twenty-four hours of support, therefore appears particularly attractive for employers. This may explain why the branch rapidly introduced a

⁹ The CPNE is a branch-level body for consultation between employer representatives and employee trade union organisations. CPNEs define the training directions and priorities of their branch in connection with employment.

VAE qualification process. At present, the ADVF is the second most presented qualification (6.3% of all claims examined by the panels) in the VAE process.

The validation process, which follows the statutory framework, is very close to that of the domestic assistance branch. The main difference lies in the importance placed on work-based assessment in order to better meet the needs of a workforce with few qualifications. The training bodies therefore have the technical facilities for practical approaches (such as assisting elderly people to stand), particularly during VAE jury assessments. In addition, faced with the problem of making their employees available, small organisations require trainers to adapt their tools, and favour, in particular, training based on short modules. From this point of view, VAE would appear to be, for employers, a means of simplifying training pathways.

It must be highlighted that the certifications required in the sector do not so much demand that employees hold qualifications, as that they are undertaking a qualification process. To obtain them, evidence of the implementation of such a process must be provided. VAE therefore seems less aimed at acquiring a full qualification, than one of the three CCPs (*Certificat de Compétences Professionnelles*; certificate of professional competence), which make up the ADVF. Lastly, in addition to the outcome, supporting employees over a few modules for the three years of the VAE process is also, for companies, a lever for developing employee loyalty. The question is whether, in the long run, it is possible to aggregate these partial qualifications, and whether this is recognised, particularly in terms of salaries. The presence, in the recently signed collective agreement, of a classification system linking pay and qualifications seems to be heading in this direction.

- **Domestic employers** (1.03 million employees in 2008¹⁰): employees in this branch are employed by the person at whose home they work. To remain in this business sector and obtain a suitable level of pay, they themselves must promote their services among several employers. As in the other branches of the sector, the question of professional development is extremely important, but is complicated here by the nature of the many and scattered employers¹¹. This is one of the reasons why the branch's employers' federation, FEPEM (*Fédération des particuliers employeurs*; Federation of domestic employers), set up, in 1996, a training institute – IFEF, now Ipéria – tasked with coordinating a network of more than 200 approved training bodies across the country.

The branch adopted VAE very early on. From the end of the 1990s, initiatives were launched under the VAP (*Validation des Acquis Professionnels*; validation of professional learning) framework¹² to obtain the professional designation of *Employé familial polyvalent* (General home helper) and the CQPs *Garde d'enfants à domicile* (Home child minder) and *Assistant de vie* (Family support worker). Following the Act of January 2002, these qualifications were quite naturally registered in the RNCP. Today, the branch has a full logistics platform that can be deployed as part of the VAE process. The Institut Ipéria is the awarding body for three basic level professional designations¹³, it organises the application

¹⁰DARES (2010), "Les services à la personne : une croissance vive en 2007, atténuée en 2008" (Personal and home care services: buoyant growth in 2007, slowing in 2008), *Dares Analyses*, April, n°.020. DARES is the Research and Statistics Department of the Ministry of Labour.

¹¹2.1 million domestic employers in 2008 according to DARES.

¹²The Act of July 1992 on the Validation of Professional Learning (*Validation des Acquis Professionnel*) made it possible to accredit standards on the basis of professional experience in order to access national qualifications provided by the ministries of education, agriculture and youth and sports.

¹³ Level V of the qualification classification in France.

eligibility assessment committee meetings at national level, has a network of some hundred assistants across the whole of France and appoints the members of the assessment jury.

While the validation process follows the standard format, a set of methods has recently been applied to the support provided, the purpose of which is to prepare the description of the candidate's experience against professional and job standards. As contracting authority, Ipéria has requested support-providing training bodies to work Saturdays and to spread out the support module - lasting twenty-four hours - over one month, as opposed to three days, in order to make it more accessible to employees. Within this module, practices have been diversified, alternating between group work, individual work, writing and, if necessary, work-based assessment. Throughout this process, a skills portfolio is prepared which follows the candidate up to their presentation before the assessment jury. This is chaired by Ipéria, and includes an employer representative and, more rarely, an employee representative. The support provider assists the candidate, but does not take part in the panel's deliberation. It is in fact a defence process, during which the candidate orally defends his claim, which the panel has read, and must demonstrate his or her skills. Following this presentation, the panel decides whether or not to award a full or partial qualification. In the second case, it makes a number of recommendations to the candidate for obtaining the missing modules, taking into account that the use of training is not systematic. The candidate may start over with another professional experience.

2.2 VAE for jobseekers

The public employment service has also committed, through *Pôle Emploi*, to starting jobseekers on the VAE route. This commitment has taken several forms:

- The recruitment of a VAE manager to train and inform officers and to develop tools for jobseekers.
- The signing of two agreements between *Pôle Emploi* and the RNCP has created a link between the qualifications in the registry and ROME (*Référentiel Opérationnel des Emplois et des Métiers*; Job profile reference guide)¹⁴.
- The creation of a VAE space on the *Pôle Emploi* website.
- The certification of 180 to 200 regional branches to advise jobseekers concerning VAE.
- The signing of an agreement with the ANSP (*Agence Nationale des Services à la Personne*; French national agency for personal and home care services).

In addition, *Pôle Emploi* launched pilot projects across three regions (Limousin, Midi-Pyrénées, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur) working on the basis that jobseekers want to be able to quickly return to employment through VAE. These particularly aimed at reducing the time taken to examine VAE claims¹⁵, improving synergies to smooth relations between stakeholders, and reducing withdrawals of claims in process.

But the most tangible aspect of the implementation of VAE as part of the return-to-work process must be the creation of VAE workshops by the public operator. These can be broken down into two parts: while the first is traditionally dedicated to providing information on the

¹⁴ ROME is the job profile reference guide used by *Pôle Emploi* to help the unemployed look for work.

¹⁵ The awarding body may take two months to reply.

system, the second is an additional phase prior to putting the experience in writing. Initial work to identify the ROME records linked with the experience is carried out. Once this investigation has been completed, jobseekers have a summary sheet and an awarding body to contact. If the project is defined at the end of the workshop, they are put directly in contact with this awarding body, otherwise they may be redirected to the PRCs.

In 2010, 40,000 people were advised on VAE, and approximately 10% attended a workshop. However, since this is an individual process, *Pôle Emploi* has difficulties carrying out follow-ups and has no feedback on the exact number of jobseekers who have seen the process through to qualification. It is the awarding bodies that can identify the number of jobseekers from among those awarded qualifications.

2.3 Examples of group VAE initiatives

a) Orange

In 2007, the telecommunications company, Orange, began a pilot group VAE initiative aimed at recognising the skills of a target group: operation technicians. These linesmen (*“lignards”*) - the operator's historical business - were recruited during the 1970s-80s to install the telephone infrastructure across France, which was, up to that point, lagging behind. During this period, massive investments were being made and a great deal of recruitment was being carried out. However, at the time, the *Postes et Télécommunications*¹⁶, which was a public agency, was recruiting applicants with few qualifications through a competitive process. Over time, these technicians adapted to technological changes, gradually acquiring new skills without these being recognised by a qualification. These members of the workforce were also right at the heart of the major change in technical professions toward commercial professions when the telecommunications sector was opening up to competition.

The VAE pilot initiative was located in the North of France and concerned a limited number of employees¹⁷. They were supported by two awarding bodies: The French Ministry of Education, through GRETA (*GRoupement d'ETAblishissements de l'Education Nationale pour la formation des adultes*; Group of public institutions for adult learning)¹⁸, and the French Ministry of Labour, through AFPA (*Association pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes*; Adult learning association). Deemed conclusive, the initiative was rolled out further in February 2010 under the title *“Technicien d'intervention, mon expérience vaut bien un diplôme”* (“Operation technician, my experience is worth a qualification”). It was extended across the country and was offered to a potential target of 6,000 people. However, the initiative remained voluntary and there was no quantitative target. During this roll out, the company decided to work exclusively with AFPA whose experience had shown that the work-based assessment methods were more in line with the practices of operational technicians. The qualifications offered on validation were basic level (*Installateur de réseau câblé*; Cable network installer)¹⁹ or just above (*Technicien réseau et télécommunication d'entreprise*; Network and company telecommunication technician) and each comprised 3 CCPs, as required for registry in the RNCP.

¹⁶ The former name of Orange (e.g. France Telecom) and La Poste together.

¹⁷ It particularly involved taking into account the territory-based dimension of the operation technicians' work: they generally worked alone across a territory allocated to them.

¹⁸ The GRETA's are training bodies under the responsibility of the French Ministry of Education.

¹⁹ These are level V, the lowest in the French classification system, and level IV.

The process follows a standard VAE process, but includes group dimensions:

- The company carried out an information campaign on the pros and cons of the process among the targeted employees and their managers. Indeed, VAE, which is based on experience, is not obvious for a population more accustomed to following training courses.
- Candidates receive forty hours of support, almost double the statutory requirement.
- For partial qualifications, employees have one year to appear before the assessment panel again. They then receive, in addition to support from the AFPA expert, the support of their manager and the Skills Development Manager. Where necessary, the company training plan can be deployed for additional training.
- The Technical Department issued a communication to the Works Council containing the company's commitments in terms of time granted to employees, and the guarantee that any withdrawal from the process would not have any impact on career development. The support providers and the tools implemented were also presented.
- The process received a small amount of financing from the decentralised departments of the French Ministry of Labour, but not from the OPCAs.

These various dimensions stand out as constraints in this type of group process: management's involvement must be obtained, longer deadlines are required, and prior communication is key, particularly to employees and staff representative bodies.

Between February 2010 and January 2011, 174 technicians received full qualifications and from April to September 2011, 23 partial qualifications were completed. There were an additional 18 qualifications awarded under a second pilot scheme. The success rate is very high as 90% of the candidates achieved qualification. However, qualification has not changed the status of the employees in the classification system – which had been announced before hand to the Works Council – and therefore has not led to salary increases. The company considers that time has been offered to the employees. Some have also taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake higher level qualifications. The roll out of the next VAE initiative in 2012 at Orange should concern a potential public of 20,000 employees, for qualifications ranging from basic level to intermediate level.

b) *Club Méditerranée* and VAE internationally

Club Méditerranée, a tour operator that organises holidays in holiday villages around the world, introduced a VAE system at the beginning of the 2000s²⁰. The group has approximately one hundred professions, mainly in hotels and entertainment, for a primarily seasonal business. One of the factors that led to the initiative was the realisation that the experience acquired by the employees of *Club Méditerranée* was not recognised outside of the company. The project was put forward by a trade union, the CGT-FO (*Confédération Générale du Travail-Force Ouvrière*), but as there had always been initiatives for capitalising on expertise in the company, it was well received by management and all of the other trade unions.

To kick off the project, the trade union leader contacted the CAVA (*Centre Académique de Validation des Acquis*; Academic centre for the validation of learning) located in Creteil

²⁰ Originally a VAP process that was extended into VAE.

(Parisian suburb)²¹. The centre conducted a study, which lasted three to four months, of the 93 job profiles within the company to identify the possibilities for validation against State education qualifications. The people targeted were mainly those with no qualifications, recruited several years previously. They had long experience, not just in the profession, but also in mobility as they had generally worked in holiday villages in different countries. The objective of the process was that all 'holiday village' employees worldwide, whatever their employment contract²², be eligible to make a VAE claim, as long as they spoke French.

To launch the initiative, the Human Resources departments (HR) and the CGT-FO²³ carried out an information campaign among the employees at holiday villages around the world.²⁴. The VAE process was the same everywhere. Following the communication campaign, the people interested in VAE were identified and recruited through interviews carried out via video conference by a cell composed of State education representatives and the HR Departments of *Club Méditerranée*. In the first year, fifteen people were identified. As the initiative was implemented, *Club Méditerranée* gradually involved the AFPA, which made it possible to extend VAE to CQPs and to professional designations and to implement methods other than those of the French education system. In addition, higher education was asked to offer validation for the Master, particularly for holiday village managers.

Club Méditerranée then asked these partners to assist the project managers in the villages according to demand and numbers (a minimum of ten people was required). The visit lasted one week and was funded by the company. On site, all of the people concerned met and at the last meeting, each institution presented its process, the conditions for VAE eligibility, the claims preparation process, and the support available.

Bringing all the stakeholders together at the same time in the villages supported the process:

- The employees gave their availability for the duration of the stay.
- It was possible to identify their possible qualification.
- A work-based assessment could be carried out.
- The examination date could be set (at six months or one year).
- The documents required for any work-based assessments were on site.

At the end, candidates received an invitation to the exam, held in France for State education qualifications. An assessment panel comprising professionals and trainers met and decided on claims prepared by the employees. Full or partial qualifications were awarded, with additional units to follow. One of the main difficulties resided in following up with the people once the validation group had left the village and the employees had returned to operations as normal. Follow-up was carried out by the HR Department, trade union representatives and even the State education system, which had also set up support. In addition, if the employees required further information, they had the contact details of the people who had visited the site.

²¹ The *Centres Académiques de Validation des Acquis* (Academic centres for the validation of learning) come under the responsibility of the French Ministry of Education.

²² Fixed-term and open contracts.

²³ The CGT-FO union leader is also the project manager within the HR Department of *Club Méditerranée*.

²⁴ Information was provided on VAE at a seminar in Vittel for all employees.

OPCA financed part of the process, up to the statutory twenty-four hours. Employees who wished to acquire higher qualifications, requiring additional training modules, could receive an analysis of the training schemes available, particularly those in house. In this case, the trade unions supported the claims so that they could be funded or so that the managers helped employees in starting on the VAE route. However, in some instances, employees were required to top up with their own funds. Additional modules were carried out during the low season for people who were abroad, even in academic institutions in the country in which the village is located. Since 2002, 400 people per year have been through the VAE process. In the last two to three years, 100 people per year have been through the process.

There is no commitment on the part of the company in terms of salary recognition for qualifications acquired via this route, but trade unions are pushing to promote them during wage bargaining. Employees may still apply for positions based on the qualification acquired, but there is no obligation for HR to follow this through.

3 Lessons learned from the VAE process

3.1 Difficulties encountered by VAE

a) Below-expectation results

The first observation is that the results of VAE fall short of expectations. In 2006, only 26,000 VAE claims had been awarded qualifications and 77,000 since the implementation of the Act. The target of 60,000 candidates per year is far from being reached, given that the potential public is estimated at 6 millions. In terms of the level of qualification targeted, nearly four VAE candidates out of ten attempted, in 2004, to obtain a basic qualification²⁵, while the others targeted higher levels. In addition, two out of three candidates for qualifications provided by the French ministries of education, employment and agriculture had a job and nearly a third were jobseekers. It is therefore not necessarily the employees in the greatest need (the least qualified or jobseekers) who benefit most from the system.

b) Critical points in the validation process

To explain these results, the stakeholders interviewed highlighted several critical points in the validation process:

- **Upstream of the process**, the CGT and CFDT highlight a slowdown trend in the processes they have supported. The reason they give for this is that it has worked up to a point: the most motivated employees adopted the process first, and now greater effort must be made to interest and support others in the process. The CFDT even recognises that there is less investment in the system, in terms of the information provided to employees.
- **During the process**, two other problems emerge. The first concerns the significant number of qualifications accessible by VAE - all those listed in the RNCP - and the problems that poses for employees in terms of guidance. The second concerns the preparation of the eligibility application and validation claim which can cause problems for employees with poor writing skills.

²⁵ Level V, the lowest in the French classification system.

- **After the process**, nearly all those interviewed highlighted candidates dropping out following the award of partial qualifications by the assessment panels. The CGT of the personal and home care services sector, and also the CGT-FO at *Club Méditerranée*, are attempting to resolve this by regularly contacting employees faced with this situation. The Institut Ipéria highlights the role that the assessment jury can play in providing recommendations at this level.

At all three levels, lack of support was highlighted. In fact, the statutory twenty-five hours of support appears insufficient for some. Others, depending on their profiles, may require varying degrees of support, especially if the validation is based on a written claim.

c) Is the VAE process too formal?

Among the reasons given to explain the limitations of VAE, some mention the formal nature of the procedure. In fact, there is debate on which validation format to use when going before the assessment panel, particularly for the least qualified:

- The French education system works on the basis of apprenticeships and training, namely that a skill is explained first in writing, and that this explanation must then be presented to an assessment jury.
- AFPA has taken a more practical approach with the idea of using concrete work-based situations. It requires an eligibility application and a pre-claim, but without a written translation of professional practices. The panel then makes its decision with regard to the work-based assessments.

Organisations, such as *Club Méditerranée* and *Pôle Emploi*, think that validations based on practical assessments are more appropriate for those with no qualifications, and therefore prefer to use AFPA and its methods. However, the CGT and the CFDT of the domestic assistance branch highlight the fact that the written claim helps identify people who are unable to write. This identification has prompted OPCA to introduce modules to counter illiteracy. As highlighted by a CAVA manager, the question is not so much knowing whether the VAE process practised by the State education system is adapted to illiteracy, but knowing if there are still jobs in which it is possible to be illiterate. Ultimately, among the cases studied, the majority of the stakeholders work with both approaches, and it is above all the content of the profiles that determines the selection of one or the other, as highlighted a manager of Ipéria.

3.2 Areas of tension

a) Salary recognition for qualification

In the examples described, both employers and employees have a common interest in VAE. For the first, it allows them to develop career paths that cost less than training, and also to recognise the skills of and motivate their employees. For the second, and particularly for those who leave school with few or no qualifications, this recognition is important as it boosts self-image and even restores self-confidence as opposed to undertaking training.

However, interests diverge on the issue of salary recognition. For the CGT and CFDT, salary scales should recognise qualifications obtained via VAE. When the VAE was introduced, the employers' organisation, MEDEF (*Mouvement des Entreprises de France*), clearly warned that obtaining a qualification via VAE would not lead to salary increases, arguing that wage bargaining had nothing to do with VAE. In fact, the French system of

collective agreements developed during the post-war years disconnected qualifications from the classification system. In France, with the exception of a few collective agreements, the classification system does not provide that those doing the job corresponding to the qualification be paid more than those doing the job without. Trade unions, such as the CGT and CFDT, are trying to use VAE to push the idea that qualifications are worth improvement in salary recognition, but without any real success. In the cases studied, with the exception of the domestic care branch, the qualification obtained via VAE does not influence, or only marginally influences, salaries.

b) Mobility

The issue of career progression, particularly outside the company, is another stumbling point between the social partners. French employers, who have always considered qualifications as a tool for mobility, see in the VAE process a risk of losing their employees. Conversely, all of the trade unions interviewed consider VAE an opportunity for career progression, particularly outside the branch. This explains why employers are inclined to favour, in the validation process, CQPs which are only valid in the branch, and which do not officially recognise any level. While trade unions, such as the CGT, prefer the acquisition of a qualification that recognises a national level and promotes mobility. This is also the viewpoint of the French education system which, through its qualifications, seeks to avoid a 'matching' approach, and promotes the acquisition of a base of transferable skills.

From this point of view, breaking qualifications accessible under the RNCP down into modules may pose an opportunity or a risk with regard to mobility. For the French Ministry of Social Affairs, this offered the opportunity to establish links between the profiles of *Auxiliaire de puériculture* (Childcare Assistant) and *Aide-soignantes* (Healthcare Assistant): some modules are common and the employee is not obliged to take all of them again if he or she wishes to change course. Conversely, the award of partial qualifications may lead to an employee development process focused on a few specific tasks, much like the English example of NVQs, with the risk of holding employees captive within the branch.

c) VAE during or outside of working hours

A final point of tension is the time lost to VAE: should it be carried out during working hours or conversely during the employee's personal time? In the different cases covered, there does not seem to be a unanimous answer to this question: the domestic assistance branch accredits learning during working time, while the personal care branch holds that this is impossible. It all seems to depend on the power balance that the trade unions manage to establish.

On this point, the legal provision is fairly ambiguous. VAE is an individual process, but if the employee wants to make a VAE claim as part of a personal mobility plan and he or she does not therefore discuss it with the employer, then they will have to take days off. In addition, it will not be financed, unless the FONGECIF is mobilised under a still very complex procedure. To receive financial cover for VAE, the OPCAs must be involved, which also means making a request to employers.

3.3 Areas for improvement in VAE

a) Towards more effective links between validation and training

The lifelong learning apparatus in France is over-serviced: 50,000 training providers of all statuses, all sizes and all sectors live from the legal obligation to finance training which represents several billion euros of guaranteed expenditure every year. This system leaves little place for the development of a competitive approach, such as VAE, which provides an alternative and cheaper route to accrediting skills.

Beyond the structural aspects, VAE rethinks training-based qualification. Recognising experiential learning is, by its very nature, individual, while the formal training system is a group approach. Employees are trained in groups within an educational infrastructure tailored to a group process (trainers, premises, technical facilities, etc.). In addition, qualification through training is based on the transmission of knowledge to the employee, more generally outside of the company. Conversely, VAE starts with the employee and his or her knowledge in the company to then go for qualification.

However, the weaknesses seen in the VAE process calls for better links between the two processes. So, illiteracy needs prior basic skills training before starting a validation process. Likewise, to lead to qualification, partial qualifications require either additional experience or training. For the RNCP²⁶, this complementarity needs, for the training system, shaking up practices that have until now been based on knowledge content and the amount of knowledge to be acquired, taking an 'academic' approach. VAE forces the system to move towards a 'competence' approach in which the structure is based on a professional target and its associated competences. This was the approach taken by the Institut Ipéria when, in 2009, the decision was made to review qualifications²⁷ and training content in order to think in terms of competences and thereby bring them more in line with the validation process. The two approaches now mostly complement one another and share tools such as the skills portfolio which is presented before common assessment panels.

b) Increasing the number of assessment panels

Among the difficulties encountered by the VAE process, the issue of creating assessment juries or panels is widespread. Their creation requires a sufficient pool of trained, available professionals. Yet, based on the opinion of all those interviewed - institutions, trade unions and employers - this is not currently the case for two main reasons:

- The pay is insufficient and even seems to vary depending on the level of qualification sought. In addition, the loss of earnings that an employee's participation in an assessment panel represents for the employer is not compensated, hence the reluctance to grant leave outside of holiday leave.
- The members of the assessment panel must be trained in the particular VAE assessment format. It is not an examination board making decisions based on lists of grades, but a validation panel working on the basis of individual interviews. Professionals with recognised skills who can comment on the candidates' practices are required.

²⁶ G. Asseraf (2011), "A propos de l'approche par les compétences" (On the competence approach), Annual CGE seminar, October

²⁷ CQPs were transformed into professional designations recognising a level and facilitating mobility.

With the lack of sufficient employees to make up the juries, the deadlines are longer and these discourage VAE candidates. The CFDT leader for the domestic assistance branch highlights that the assessment panels are often incomplete - with no professionals - placing them at the legal limit. To bridge these gaps, awarding bodies sometimes dip into the pool of professionals made up of employees qualified via VAE, or call on union federations that have training centres and can therefore train their members or employees for the role. For its part, the CGT for the domestic assistance branch identified the participation of their members on VAE assessment panels as a challenge.

c) VAE as a collective right

During this study, it appeared that, for both the CGT and the CFDT, it was difficult to identify, within their own organisation, examples of VAE practices. The reason for this is that, under the law, it is first and foremost an individual process, and not a group process: it is the employee who decides to initiate a validation process. It is therefore difficult for trade unions to address this question. However, we did note that there are indeed group VAE approaches, managed within the company and launched at the instigation of trade union organisations (for example, the CGT-FO at Club Méditerranée) or management (for example, Orange). It should be noted that, in the Personal and home care sector, employers often motivate the employee's decision to undertake VAE.

With regard to the weak points in the VAE process, the group approach presents certain solutions. Upstream, it is possible to identify the jobs in line with the business and therefore provide better guidance for candidates. During the process, the time dedicated to support can be increased (forty hours at Orange against the twenty-four statutory hours), as can the resources (management can bolster the support provided). Downstream of the process, the employees that have only achieved partial qualifications remain in the company and can therefore receive support more easily to carry the qualification through to completion. Lastly, collective VAE processes can potentially lead to negotiations in terms of salary recognition for the qualifications obtained.

At present, there are group VAE processes put in place by companies and often well communicated given that this can boost company image. However, the difficulty we had in finding examples leads us to believe that these cases remain marginal, which was confirmed at territorial level by the CFDT training manager for the Province-Alpes Côte d'Azur region. Overall, companies seem little inclined to commit to a process that may help increase wage costs. MEDEF took the opportunity to report the absence of a legal framework for the group VAE concept. Beyond this lack of appeal for employers, the lack of training for trade unionists in companies may also explain the low number of group VAE initiatives. As the National Training Manager at the CFDT mentioned, the issue of VAE, like training, sits well behind issues of employment and wages in the bargaining agenda.

d) Beyond VAE, skills portfolios

The VAE process far from epitomises the practices of accrediting formal and informal learning. We might even think that, as regards the low number of employees concerned - a CGT leader described VAE as the 'Rolls Royce' of validation - there are other more common, but certainly less visible, practices. In several of the cases studied, some of these tools came to the fore. One example is the 'competences portfolio' used to record the competences acquired by employees throughout their professional practice, and which are used in the personal and home care sector by FEDESAP and Ipéria.

The tool exists, based on fairly similar methods, in other sectors. For example, as part of the ADEMA (*Accès des Demandeurs d'Emploi aux Métiers Agricoles*; Jobseeker access to agricultural jobs) project, the FAFSEA (*Fonds d'Assurance Formation des Salariés des Exploitations Agricoles*; Agricultural workers' training fund)²⁸ supported initiatives to immerse unqualified jobseekers in agricultural businesses. In addition to learning the agricultural business, the challenge of the process is to verify basic skills ability. After five days at a training centre to learn about the jobs and three weeks with a company, a certain number of social outcomes are accredited on the basis of a system of observation and assessment entrusted to the trainee supervisors. The whole is recorded in a portfolio, which is handed over to the jobseekers.

²⁸ The OPCA for the agricultural sector.

Annex: Meetings

Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)

Djamal Teskouk, Chairman of the Career Path Security Fund

Sylviane Spique, Former manager of the federation “Organismes sociaux”

Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT)

Jean-Luc Gueudet, Confederal Training Manager

Claudine Villain, Federal Secretary “Santé et organismes sociaux”

Mario Barsamian, Regional Training Manager, Région Provence Alpes Côte d’Azur

Confédération Générale du Travail – Force ouvrière (CGT-FO)

Etienne Dakiche, VAE Project Manager at Club Med

AGEFOS-PME

Caroline Troadec, Branch Adviser Responsible for Personal Care Services

Association pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes (AFPA)

Paul Santelmann, Planning Manager

Centre Académique de Validation des Acquis (CAVA), Créteil,

Jacques Cheritel, Manager

Commission nationale des Certifications Professionnelles (CNCP)

George Asseraf, President (telephone interview)

Fédération Française de Services à la Personne et de Proximité (FEDESAP)

Julien Jourdan, Professional Development Project Manager

Fonds d'Assurance Formation des Salariés des Exploitations Agricoles (FAFSEA)

Christine Clopeau, Director of Research and Development

Institut Iperia, Fédération des particuliers employeurs (FEPEM)

Marie-Christine Maréchal, Qualifications Manager

Orange

Patricia Bantas, Training Engineer

Pôle Emploi

Didier Defer , Technical Adviser

Validation of NFIL in Italy: local experiences and trade-unions
Synthesis of the study visit in Italy (16th - 20th January 2012)

Nicolas Fleury

May 2012

Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission



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Validation of NFIL in Italy: local experiences and trade-unions

Introduction: fragmented experiences linked to the validation of NFIL

Since many years, a rather large consensus on the principle of validation of NFIL exists in the Italian society and especially for trade unions of employees. While there is no *implemented* national framework of validation, many ‘local’ experiences of validation or ‘certification’ have taken place in the last years, at the regional level or in some universities. Furthermore, some very recent developments (April to June 2012) prepare the ground for the development of a system of validation-certification of competences at the national level. This document firstly focuses on the interests and involvement of trade unions in the field of training and ‘validation’ (section 1). Then, some particular ‘local’ experiences, from two regions and one university are exposed (section 2). Finally, the conditions for the birth of a national system in Italy and the factors that had limited so far the possibility of a national framework of validation are discussed, and the recent developments that plan a national system of validation in Italy are presented (section 3).

1. Trade union and validation of NFIL: fragmented experiences and interests

1.1. *The employees side*

General situation.

In Italy, there are no shared national professional standards, but many works on these subjects have been made, and a recent agreement between regions and the government has been found for the creation of a national system of certification of competences on apprenticeship, and the Law of June 2012 on the labour market reform include principals about validation and certification of competences (see section 3). Training in Italy is not necessary for the worker’s career, which depends mostly of his loyalty to the firm and to his seniority. In some sectors as the Health sector, it is possible for a worker to benefit from training, to enhance his professional standing. But normally it is not possible in the private sector, with some notable exceptions for sectors like building and textile, (where newly hired workers benefit from a mandatory training).

Since several years, 28 social partners (4 trade Unions and 24 employers), with Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, ministry of education and research and regions are involved, to create joint national professional standards (that may lead to the validation of competences), but the work in progress is rather slow.

About the building sector.

The Building sector¹ is one of the first driving forces of the Italian economy. This sector experiences an important change of culture since a few years. For instance, in 2011, there was

¹ The sector benefits from the existence of *Formedil (Ente Nazionale per la Formazione e l'Addestramento Professionale Professionale nell'Edilizia)*, a national organization for vocational training in the building sector,

a national initiative aiming at the training of the sector's human resources (*"to change our way of thinking"*).

Some specific requirements in terms of skills in the building sector include some hours of mandatory training (safety, and link between work and health and safety) as a beforehand condition to hiring². Also, in many works, firms have to show that their workers have the necessary competences³: for instance, some specific skills are mandatory to gain access to public works (technical knowledge, driving licence, *etc.*). Finally, some certifications are required for some works in the field of architecture, restoration.

Some important tools linked to skills and training are used in the building sector. The first one is the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* (*cf. infra*), which corresponds to a skills/training portfolio, here coordinated by Formedil. The second (and very important) tool used in the sector is the *borsa lavora*. The *borsa lavora* is a database in charge of the matching of supply and demand (it recapitulates personal details, CV, *etc.*). It stands at the 'experimentation' level ('pilote' phase). The *borsa lavora* is based on individual declarations (mainly unemployed people) that may be checked by the director of the training centre. The matching between demand and supply is observed: for instance, the individual may have to follow a one week course to get all the required skills (these skills are defined at the national level). Another important aspect is that *Borsa Lavoro* has strengthened the work done in the building sector. Finally, there also exists a *database for training in the building sector*. This database offers a wide job supply in building sector, useful also to support mobility of companies, needs and supplies of skills in some specific areas. It may also help to erase the 'black market' problem. On the 2009-2011 period, 40 000 people belonging to 30 000 companies were trained and included in the database. There are currently more than 150 000 individuals in that national database.

About the textile sector.

The textile sector has a large importance in Italy, with 700 000 workers⁴. Textile is the only business sector in Italy that has dedicated training centres and taken in charge by social partners. During the last decade, the sector has experienced some strong restructuring⁵ and the crisis. As a consequence, new strategies have been developed for the sector to be more competitive, based on innovation and high-value-added products (*i.e.* competition not based on the cost). One central fact is the *quality* of the training that is needed: specific competences and professions had to be re-thought.

There exists a strategy for sector defined at the joint European and Italian level by social partners. Many things in the last years had to be renewed in the sector. Some political and industrial agreements, common activities with trade unions and the Italian government have been made to get a rethinking of industrial policy in the sector, and training was considered as central.

it has its own resources coming from the sector. More than 600 people are currently in the training centres in Italy and 3000 people are working as consultants in that field.

² This was the result of collective bargaining and recognized by *Formedil* and has been 'crowned' by a dedicated law, common to all Italy, of the 21st of December between state and regions: recognition of initiatives of 16 mandatory hours, and considers training modules for employers and safety officers.

³ Specific skills may be acquired through training programs with 'Building school' (1 school per province).

⁴ Note that one third of the European employees of the sector works in Italy.

⁵ These very strong structural changes at the national level are particularly due to the end of the multi-fibre agreement (AMF) and to the entry of new partners in the world trade organisation (WTO).

The textile sector has specific training difficulties because it is organised on small scaled companies that do not necessary understand the importance of the recognition of skills in training. It is also difficult to organize training courses. Finally, as the sector changes at a quick pace, it renders uneasy to include specific skills in the possible recognition/validation. In the sector, some committees in charge of monitor training policies, articulate education and continuous training, lifelong learning and apprenticeship have been created. They run some projects that try to ensure bilateralism at different levels (political, project and implementation level).

Last December 2011, in the framework of the European social dialogue, European textile social partners (EUROTEC, *etc.*) have created a project funded by the European commission: a European network of professional competences for the sector⁶.

One problem for the recognition of skills is the attitude of some firms is that they may well find young people in colleges with technical competences but do not recognize their skills (*e.g.* stages, apprenticeship). The recognition of skills has to be subsequent to initial experience, according to some actors of the sector. Finally, it is reported that in a sector rapidly changing as textile, certification and identification of new skills are both difficult and relevant.

On the establishment of a national system of validation.

The Italian trade unions, CGIL, CISL and UIL⁷ have a common willingness of a national system of validation for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. That's why a negotiation forum with regions and social partners was started. The differences between all the involved actors render complicated to find an agreement. Professional and training standards (including for apprenticeship) at national level were discussed, but no agreement is yet fund on how to describe the job profiles, the training contents, and how to certify competences and skills. It was a very slow process, notably difficult because of different point of view from the ministries. One of the problems is the lack of a strong political authority on this subject. Social partners have also asked different sectors how to design the definition of job profiles and skills, but the work was stopped due to a lack of leadership/political involvement.

Another problem is that the creation of a national system may be self-centered. Firms are very much linked to their own sectors, as well as regions: this could an important problem to solve. Shared principles at the whole national level (and compatible with the local need) must be fund, so the 'least common denominator' has to be fund. This is especially a challenge with so many actors, where each actor wants to preserve his own role.

There is also a problem of coordination coming partly from the respective fields of competences (education for central government, and training by regions). To go ahead, mandatory guidelines of constraints, to have knock-on effects could be useful, at a national level, but also possibly at the European level (*e.g.* European directives and guidelines about the European qualification Framework were important to start the building of a national system of qualification).

⁶ The project focuses on textile and leather (not including shoe). Some difficulties in the project come from the fact that Italian bodies from the sector that bargain are not recognized at that level. Another difficulty comes from the counterparts, as employers do not want to do something that involves costs.

⁷ *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori and Unione Italiana del Lavoro.*

There is also a problem of culture in the delay of Italy to build a national system of validation as a large share of Italian workers can't understand the relevance of the valorisation of learning. Indeed, most of the time, workers do not see further than the mandatory skills. The concept of validation of NFIL may seem theoretical from the life's individual. Furthermore, workers who have acquired some skills at workplace are not aware of this validation possibility, are not willing, or do not even want these skills. It is a very relevant subject visible in the trade unions work, unions considering the individuals at the core of the process. Especially, trade unions put a special focus on training to favour the worker's career in a lifelong learning perspective ('European approach').

1.2. *The employers side*

From a general perspective, trade unions of employer report a *quite important lack of link between school and labour market*⁸. Yet, the recent reforms of Education and apprenticeship introduce:

- More labour market-oriented activities at schools (and more English courses).
- The creation of scientific committees for technical/vocational education, destined to define a strategy and to follow the appliance of the reform. Some firm representatives participate to these committees.
- Multi-territorial projects, as the "club of the 15"⁹, and another project that aims at improving the presence of firms inside the schools (the "pilote" region is *Lombardia*).
- The *implementation* of the recognition of the on-the-job training in the company as a part of the general training, as an important part of the reform of apprenticeship, usually considered as "not attractive".

Some employers' representatives stress the facts that it is difficult in Italy to build a national system of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The governance is complex for different involved actors (ministries, regions and social partners) and competence in this field. In any case, employers' organizations underline the importance of collective bargaining in this area.

There currently exists a big controversy about the industry-based Training Funds¹⁰, a kind of training resources considered as public: these funds that could rather be organized as a private organisation, and not as a public organisation, as it is currently the case. It is reported to be difficult to use public resources for training.

One important limit to the recognition of skills is that companies usually want to recognize their own specific qualifications: each firm wants to recognize its own skills, its own labour

⁸ Note the existence of *Confindustria Education*, an important project from *Confindustria* (*Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana*), now on the 8th edition. One of its main goals is the link between school and the labour market. The importance of technologies is particularly stressed in the subjects.

⁹ This club is an association of 15 firms, and 15 technical schools focusing on the manufacturing sector. It aims to offer more possibilities for students to find a job, and for companies to find the best curricula.

¹⁰ The Sectorial Funds activity starts in 2004 and these are the new actors in the Italian CVT system; they are set up through agreements between Social Partners and the authorization of the Ministry of labour, they are not-profit organization on voluntary basis and Social Partners have a joint responsibility in organizing and managing the Funds, because the management boards are composed by an equal number of representatives from employers and employees; they can finance training plans at corporate, sectorial, local and individual level - by call for proposal - for workers employed by private company. The activities' plan must be concerted by Social Partners - through a signed agreement - and answer to specific training needs - the plan and the implement project must reasonably motivate the whole aim of training activities.

force. Each collective bargaining agreement has its own ‘area’ (e.g. *Confindustria* members depending of 70 different collective agreements).

There are some cases where firms would be particularly interested in recognition: in the context of restructuring or if there is a need to change, to get some innovations to adapt. These features happened to come in the last years with important changes in the Italian economy.

Furthermore, the recognition of the on-the-job training is especially difficult because of the social and historical background of the Italian companies. For instance, during many years, vocational education schools, considered as not attractive, were abandoned by students. Organisations of employers put a lot of pressures to favour this type of education, very important for the manufacturing sector and an industrial country such as Italy.

Another limit for the development of a national system of validation also comes from the fact that Italy is often described as “*Italy is a land of provinces*”.

One important feature of the Italian economy is the very large majority of *small and medium-sized enterprises* (smes, 95-98% of the Italian firms). For example, some *Confapi* (*Confederazione italiana della piccola e media industria private*) representatives stress the fact that in smes, most of the learning is informal. One central question is the following: “*how can you recognize all the learning that you can have?*” One of the rigidity about the smes comes from the fact that “they can’t achieve to recognize learning and training because they are not able to use the resources of the training fund”¹¹. It is a central challenge for them to stay competitive: in that perspective, the recognition of learning is central. It is also reported that it is even more difficult for micro-companies¹² to approach the issues of recognition. The mismatch between supply and demand of skills is even a bigger problem for these firms.

Firms sometimes use the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* instrument, which is not widespread in Italy (see *infra* for a description, e.g. in the experience from the *Marche* region), which is used for the registration of different kinds of training (e.g. health and safety, and other specific obligations of training for a job). Some companies use it as it is the only way to “register” some of the training, skills. It stays experimental at the regional level, without any legal value at the national level.

The activities by trade unions of employers related to training and validation include notably:

- The *Confindustria* work with regions in some experiments to foster innovation and changes in the smes where it is often difficult to introduce new practices. For instance, in *Toscana*, non-formal learning (cultural activities, etc.) is financially supported by regional authorities as adult learning, sometimes developed with social partners.
- The realization of a common document on professional standards by association of employers and employees in Italy and ministry of labour, with a special focus on apprenticeship in Italy (“*an efficient way to enter the labour market in Italy for young people*”). For the firms, it may be an open door to the reform of professionals and training standards.
- Signed in 2010, an interconfederal agreement with trade unions has been made on the position regarding the valorisation of experience of people working in companies during apprenticeship, that could be included in the libretto.

¹¹ In Italy, only 0.3% of salaries of firms goes to the interprofessional fund for training. If the firm has the capability to imagine itself in a way to develop, training plan would be done, but would not normally think about the validation of NFIL. Also, managers have in general very little time to develop this kind of activities.

¹² This kind of firm are composed of an average of 3.5 individuals (including the owner).

- Some specific categories of workers are targeted by some projects. One of the projects is financed by the European commission for people who are older than 40 years old (*Mayaouta* project). For migrants, other projects are run by local branches of *Confapi* in *Piemonte*, *Lombardia*, for 'loans' of workers between companies, and giving importance to NFIL.

2. Local and regional experiences of validation of NFIL

2.1. *The Emilia Romagna region experience*

Emilia Romagna is one of the few Italian regions that have developed a system of validation on the theoretical and practical sides¹³. The first tools have been created in 2003-2005 and the system was firstly operational in 2005. This is an implemented system, but also a 'process', which can evolve, according to the national and European contexts.

The *Emilia Romagna* Region has now a very large repertoire of professional standards¹⁴. The validation system is strictly related to the vocational system, *i.e.* focuses on adults (employed/unemployed) or on the 16-year-old people and more. In that process¹⁵, one to four competences may be certified. In the process of validation, an important step is the 'check for evidence' which corresponds to some 'proofs' to produce. These proofs may be very diverse (projects made at workplace, official documents, coordination activities...). The individual in the process may go to the exam if necessary: it is decided by an expert¹⁶ which analyses the provided documents. If the provided evidence is assessed as "enough", the individual is certified. Different kinds of certification may be awarded:

- A certification of qualification ('complete') which gather together 4 competences.
- A certification of competences (1, 2 or 3).
- A card of knowledge or capacity, which is just created upon declarations, with the involvement of teachers.

The main idea behind validation is very important: each person can be certified *whatever the way the skills are acquired*. However, it shall be noted that around 95% of people obtain certificates which are the results of training courses, the rest obtaining their certificate though validation of 'experience'.

The role of social partners is pretty weak in the process of validation itself. But on a more general perspective, social partners play a very important role in the development of the regional training system. Indeed, the system is more related to the vocational educational system than to the labour market. Trade unions discuss with the *Emilia Romagna* region on the questions related to labour market. But, one important problem is: "*does the labour market recognize the qualification system?*". Another important question is, to what extent companies are interested by the possibilities of validation? The match between formal certifications and the needs of the labour market is, in particular, difficult to be fund.

¹³ Please note that the *Emilia Romagna* region has also tested the *Libretto Formativo Del Cittadino*.

¹⁴ It is not directly with European frameworks, but a work in that field at the national level is started. Each qualification has the same template. Each qualification is composed of four competence-units, each of them being composed of four different skills.

¹⁵ Document 2 in Appendix presents the process of validation.

¹⁶ Different kinds of experts are involved in the process: 1 – an expert of the assessment process which certifies that the process is correct (often someone from an education centre), 2 – an external expert, which is an expert from the sector, of the professional qualification.

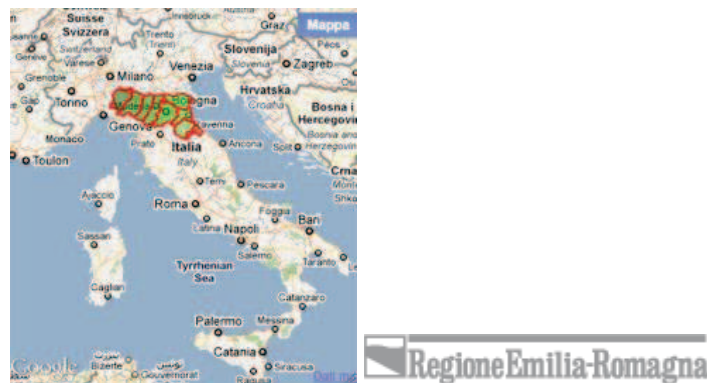
The process of validation in *Emilia Romagna* has a cost of around 300€ per individual, even if it may be lower for a group, and higher for a sole individual.

Theoretically, many ‘target groups’ could benefit from validation: employed, unemployed, adults, *etc.*, but it is very difficult to assess the impacts of validation in practice, as it is particularly difficult to relate qualification and salary or professional position. However, some professions are strictly related to national qualifications, with a mandatory formal certification (*available in all regions*), like nurses, caretakers, or hairdressers.

One practical limit for the application of the system in *Emilia Romagna* is related to the information and publicity of the system (VET centres know the system, employees not too much).

Some projects lead by the Region and which also could be recognized as best practices include the Leonardo coordinated project *Real window*¹⁷, with some countries like Austria, Czech, Italy (*Toscana, Emilia Romagna*). This project has been recognised as ‘best practice’ by ISFOL¹⁸. There also exists a work consisting in a reflection on the qualifications of migrants and about their content¹⁹.

Finally, according to some experts of validation and training from *Emilia Romagna*, an important step in the development of validation would be to involve the social partners, as the current system could work better with a stronger matching with the labour market.



2.2. *The Marche region example: the ‘Libretto de Formativo’ and other experiences*

The *Marche* Region has two main experiences related to certification and validation, even it does not correspond to ‘strict’ validation of NFIL. The first experience concerns the validation of competences of social operators (“care”, housewives, *etc.*). Many women, mostly of them with a low level of education, used to work in this sector, and benefit from a lot of experience but without any formal certification. An institutional table has been built

¹⁷ Two main objectives are pursued by this project: (i) creating tools and instruments directed to the comparison of the national/regional qualification system in the engineering area of the countries involved and (ii) creating and testing a device (procedures, tools and instruments) for the transparency and validation of the competences (inherent in the engineering area) acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. See <http://www.projectrearwindow.com/>

¹⁸ *Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori* (Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers, depending to the Italian Ministry of Labour).

¹⁹ Many migrants work in the region, so represent a potential interesting target for validation.

with social partners and social cooperatives²⁰. The main question was: “*how to recognize the precedent experiences?*”. It was a complicated process that involves firms, the women from the sector, the social services sector and some vocational training units. Their role was to establish a standard training path, on the basis of training credits to get a diploma. The people benefiting from the process participate to some of the training courses (more ‘theoretical’), to realize “*how we can do this thing well*”. This has been recognized as a ‘good practice’ by the public administration.

The second experience corresponds to the certification of job profiles in the vocational training sector, that concerns managers, administrators, teachers, coordinators, *etc.* The system of accreditation and the system of certification are organised with the principle of quality warranty. To benefit from European funds, a project must be accredited at the regional level, and involve people who must be accredited. Acts related to training and to administration specify that vocational traditional units should establish a list of new professionals. People that want to be accredited should provide evidence, documents for their experience in the field. The *Marche* region does not have a process to search for proof for this kind of ‘accreditation’: there are some commissions that verify documents, declarations, contracts, but this isn’t a work of examination (it does not correspond to ‘real’ validation). This ‘system’ only stands for the vocational training sector.

Even it does not neither represent a ‘strict’ experience of validation, the *Libretto Formativo Del Cittadino* has also been tested in the region²¹. The same standard of *Libretto* applies in all Italia. In the *Libretto*, you choose what you want to communicate. The owner of the *Libretto* is the individual. This is different from a *curriculum vitae* based on declaration, as you have to demonstrate, in the *Libretto*, that you have the competences. The *Libretto* is built with the help of qualified operators. That tool was particularly demanded by social partners in the context of economic crisis, as well as the *bilan de compétences*. At the end of 2011-beginning of 2012, the *Libretto* is a new instrument for the *Marche* Region. In the context of the crisis, the *Libretto* will be targeted on adult workers that are registered in job centres. The first step is the making of a short version of the *bilan de compétences*, whose information will be integrated in the *Libretto*. In the first section of the *Libretto* is presented all that is certified, training experiences (*e.g.* continuous training, safety, *etc.*). The second section concerns “non-formal” learning. The main difficulty is to incorporate non-formal and informal learning into the *Libretto*. *Marche* Region wants to introduce more information related to un-continuous training and training for safety²². The *Libretto* will also be transformed in a database at the regional level in a near future.

In June 2011, a cooperation document with the *Toscana* region has been created to acquire some data of job profiles, to adopt the same system than *Toscana*’s.

Other examples and projects include guidelines accreditations of training agencies and a project for the certification of competences for volunteers. Another regional project focuses on adult continuous training for the analysis of the needs in training and qualification. One of

²⁰ These cooperatives may be from two types: those providing social services or those employing disadvantaged people.

²¹ The *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* that has been tested on the 2006-2009 period in 13 Italian regions. Please refer to the document 3 in appendix for a fac-similé of the *Libretto*.

²² In *Marche* Region, the question of safety at work is a particularly relevant question. Moreover, a recent national law on safety edicts that every related training course has to be written in the *Libretto*.

the results of this work is the necessity to provide specific profiles (an agency is in charge to build these profiles). Another project has been run after to build training process for the creation of professional figures and to experiment on people with experience. The specific content was aimed to raise skills and competences and to test the new profiles. At the end, the creation of new profiles was gotten.



2.3. *The Roma Tre University experience as an illustration of university initiatives*

In Italy, the relations between University and validation of NFIL are weak, and the institutional framework is quite unfavourable in that perspective. The recognition of NFIL though University credits is not very relevant especially because:

- There are not national policies concerning this issue.
- The European document 'Universities for Lifelong Learning guidelines' is not yet adopted as a strategic perspective for Universities.
- A recent Law from December 2010 has seriously limited the possibility to recognize prior learnings whatever the settings, in terms of University credits²³.
- It is very difficult to involve external partners in these activities (social, economical, institutional actors) because of a lack of attention about this question.

But, some Italian universities, notably *Roma Tre University* (Roma III University), have nevertheless good experiences in that field:

- To develop and guarantee the possibility for adults to (re-) enter University.
- To create new methods to reduce the gap between formal learning and NFIL.
- To increase the quality of human resources in terms of knowledge and competencies, and also the quality of the economic and social development.

In the field of recognition of prior learning, *Roma Tre University*²⁴ has done some research action, didactic, organizational and institutional activity. Some benchmarking analysis have been made, in particularly with the French *VAE* system and the British *APEL* model. An Italian model for procedures and methodologies for validation has been built and put in practice through activities which have gathered together 145 adults on the 2008-2010 period and attending a degree course in Education and Development of Human Resources. In that perspective, the criteria needed by student to apply for validation had be defined, based on the development of competences-based strategies as a key element to support life transitions. It was also necessary to change the regulations of the Degree Courses, to introduce new rules

²³ This law for Universities has reduced from 60 to 12 the numbers of credits that may be recognized in that regard.

²⁴ The document 4 in Appendix provides an overview of the initiatives of validation at *Roma Tre University*.

(acknowledgment to apply for validation, definition of learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, ability and competences, procedures to produce evidence, CVs, new activities and guidance, tutoring service, tools as Jury/committees to involve teachers [internal and external professionals]).

Some new locations of discussion and promotion of recognition of NFIL at university have been created. The Research and Service Centre for Bilan de Competences and Competences Certification has been decided at *Roma Tre* University. Also, an Italian Network of Lifelong Learning has been created, on the model of the European Universities Charter. In terms of external competences of different professional sectors used in the project, experts or teachers have provided resources in terms of finance, work organisation and human resources management.



3. Towards a national system of validation of NFIL

3.1. *Political and institutional context: what has been done so far?*

Four main steps may be identified in the 2000's in the process leading towards a national framework of validation of NFIL:

1. From 2000 to 2006, Ministries of Labour and Education, social partners and regions have created a national table to build a national qualification framework, strictly related to the European qualification Framework. The involvement was very high in that phase. But there was uncertainty on what the Italian government would do after that.
2. From 2006 to 2011, the work in progress was stopped due to the ministry of Labour (to do a new plan), even if regions and social partners were in the line to continue the work.
3. From 2011 to now, the initiative has to be taken away from the agenda. Uncertainty prevails now, with a new Italian government and the economic crisis. Indeed, at this time, the question of validation is not viewed at the central level as a priority, a relevant political issue.
4. The agreement of the 19th of April 2012 between Italian regions and the government, which plans the institution of a system of validation - certification of competences at the national level for Apprenticeship, then the agreement of the 20th of April and the Law of the 27th of June 2012.

At the present time, there is not yet an implemented qualification framework in Italy, but the majority of the work for such a framework has been done by the government, regions and social partners²⁵ and an agreement was finally found between on the development of a national system of validation. Regions think or have developed practices of validation standards since 2004. In one project, regions have built new positions' certifications. All

²⁵ The role of social partners is important not only at national level but at the regional model of governance as well. In the regional committees, participation to procedures, discussion for the actions of the regions, resources and funds have to be approved by these committees in a cooperative and social dialogue approach. For example, for discussions on the need of skills, regional committees gather together region representative, local representative, trade unions of employees and employers, etc.

regional systems of ‘certification’ have been analysed, assessed and the existent was summed up, to put in light a design of the processes. The goal was to achieve some minimum standard level for each region (to ensure inter-regional mobility). There is a lack of professional standards at a national level but regions have built a document which links national standards to professional regional standards to describe the profiles.

Italian regions and provinces have competences about training²⁶. To build a system to validate competences the role of regions and provinces is very important, in that perspective. The quality of the system of vocational training is granted by the regions, by the agreements from 2008, in which regions have renewed the accreditation system. All regions are involved in the *IeFP (istruzione & formazione professionale)* system of quality.

The experiences of Italian regions in terms of NFIL validation are very diverse and fragmented (see *supra* for a presentation of the *Emilia Romagna* and *Marche* experiences)²⁷ and include in particular the *Libretto Formativo del Cittadino* that has been tested on the 2006-2009 period in 13 Italian regions. For instance, in *Toscana*, the *Libretto* was generalized for unemployed economically supported workers in 2011, as well as in the *Sicilia* and *Lazio* regions.

Some Italian institutions are particularly involved in studying validation, as ISFOL and *Tecnostuttura*. ISFOL (*Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori*), an Italian agency dedicated to training, has mandated a workgroup on the topic of validation, recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Surveys²⁸ presenting an overview of what is being done and what has been done, monitoring all experiences (regional, national, stake holders) have been completed, which provides a good overview on validation in Italy, with a systematic survey on validation and other benchmarking studies²⁹. *Tecnostuttura* is a technical association that works for the regions to carry about training, education (*etc.*) policies and other ESF (European Social Fund)-based projects. Since around

²⁶ Vocational education and training is a competence shared by the national and regional levels.

²⁷ In January, *Toscana* Region has completed 18000 *Libretto* for unemployed people, to build the worker’s experience until he gets back onto the labour market. A compilation of *Libretto* has been made at the province level in the employment agencies. It helps individuals on the labour market to rebuild their experience, helps to find the competences that may be certified, to prepare the exam. Once an individual has passed the exam, the region certifies his competences and put them inside the *Libretto*.

In the *Lombardia* region, competences should be related to formal qualifications, to the regional system of qualifications. Moreover, the catalogue of qualifications is less complete in *Lombardia* than in *Toscana* (there are 240 regional figures in the regional catalogue). All kinds of experiences may be certified, but inside formal activities.

The *Valle d’Aosta* Region has a system of training credits to warrant the transfer or the valorisation of learning. There exist two procedures and rules, the first one evaluates the learnings acquired in all kinds of context, and credits are given through a commission. The second one consists in a system of certification built on the 2006-2009 period. In this system, professional standards and a set of rules to maintain regional professional standards have been defined.

²⁸ See e.g. Elisabetta Perulli and Gabrielle di Francesco, *European Inventory on Validation of Non- formal and informal learning 2010. Country Report: Italy*, CEDEFOP and GHK, 2010:

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/F/93PUGKCL8G6JN8CYHVDVGQ1VDU163RIIBY4AKI7K1YUT7JG1V1J-27712?func=full-set-set&set_number=000144&set_entry=000035&format=999

²⁹ In one work made by ISFOL, 47 initiatives and good practices have been checked off, and a little database has been built, with relevant information on practices. Another work reports a 3 cases study (Germany, Denmark, Spain) regarding the validation of NFIL, different approaches of building a system of validation at a national level. An overview has been done on all 21 Italian regions were moving initiatives dealing with validation, 6 of these regions have a ‘good starting’ and 11 other regions are in an experimentation phase, working on some targeted groups.

ten years, *Tecnostruttura* worries about building a “national” system of validation by providing assistance in the whole process (documents, *etc.*). One working commission of *Tecnostruttura* is dedicated to job and education policies.

Regions have tried to have bottom-up process to enhance the planning of a national system of validation, but they were waiting for national guidelines. When the central government leads or follows the process, regions can go ahead, but in absence of central governance, regions had to work together through some inter-regional projects on a national possible system. The main problem comes from the fact that at the central level, the interest in validation of NFIL corresponded to a non-continuous initiative.

For the future, it would necessary to complete the work done by the drawing of an entire system, in particular for the recognition of CFU credits (training credits at the university). The building of a system of validation requires defining a real national framework for NFIL validation. ‘Minimum’ standards on validation have to be found to find an agreement on that. But, one again, this couldn’t be decided or enhanced without the involvement of the ‘central’ government.

3.2. *The previous limits to establish a national system of validation*

A first difficulty that restrained the possibilities for Italy to get a national framework of validation of NFIL lied in the question of timing, because of the economic and political current contexts. Indeed, while a recent law from September 2011 on apprenticeship notably specifies that learning outcomes must be registered in the *Libretto*, the recent Reform of University (December 2010) has reduced the number of credits that universities may recognize for learnings acquired in non-formal contexts (see *supra*).

Moreover, a reform of the labour market is currently starting in Italy, with many questions to be dealt, and validation is not regarded as a major issue or a priority.

Italy benefits from many local experiences, which may render difficult to create a common system, even if there some similarities or common points may exist between the different local experiences. Another part of the difficulties to build a national framework in Italy could be explained by a certain divergence in terms of interest regarding validation: while most of the social partners and regions as well are interested, historically in Italy, the ministry of Education was not very sensitive to that question.

In addition, ‘hard’ evidence on the impacts of validation (in terms of rising qualifications, on employment, on salaries, *etc.*) is rather hard to find at the regional level, which do not provide (possible) additional reasons to build a national system. But, it shall be noted that in the qualitative surveys about the ‘local’ projects or certification/validation, operators, stake holders and final beneficiaries give encouraging views on these experiences.

The other following points may partly explain the delay for the building of a national framework of validation in Italy, so far:

- The relationships between actors (regions and ministries...) render the agreements difficult to find, even if social partners are very sensitive to the issue.
- Some regions are so advanced that it may be difficult for them to go one step behind.
- Some other regions have not the willingness to start the process.
- The institutional competences are not well shared.

- There is no national institution dedicated to validation (unlike to many countries). More largely, in the governance approach, there are no national committees to discuss on this topic.
- There is a general problem of funds dedicated for training. Furthermore, there is no central institution of training than can collect fund for validation.
- The information for potential beneficiaries of local initiatives of 'validation' is not widespread in the public. There does not exist a strong communication towards workers on their rights about training. In particular, regions that do experiences do not spread information to everyone, mostly because it is not possible in the current situation to offer the process to 'users' (this is costly).
- The interests of different sectors, at the regional and national levels, may be very diverse.
- From a general point of view, the rigidities of the Italian society or economy.
- In practice, it may be difficult at first sight to implement a national system of validation in a region where a 'local' system already exists.

3.3. The recent planning of national system of validation

3.3.1. The need of a system of validation?

Some well-targeted people could theoretically gain much benefit from validation of some of their non-formal or informal skills, especially those who experience some problems of unemployment, and particularly temporary unemployed people who are financially supported by the government and migrants. Regarding these stakes, validation may be seen as an interesting way to recognize some previous skills of workers, especially in a context of a lack of resources devoted to vocational training, and also in the context the current crisis.

In addition, somewhat strange situations may occur in Italy as it is possible to benefit from recognition of competences in some regions, and not in other regions. In the same time, learning that have been recognized in a given region will be available in any Italian region, which creates 'asymmetries' inside the national Italian area for workers. In that perspective, the building of a national framework for validation could favour equality between regions.

3.3.2. The feasibility of a national system?

To implement a national system of validation, it is necessary to have some guidelines (technical guidelines, on the people in charge of validation...) and ideas on critical points, competence of operators, *etc.*, to find some agreements about standards of competences, and to have a definition on what is non-formal and informal learning, credits, lifelong learning, *etc.*

Does the current period represented a good timing to build a national framework of validation of NFIL? On the one hand, it could be assumed that recent political and economic features (the new government, reform of the labour market make there are many subjects to be treated) limit the feasibility of such a framework. On the other hand, it could also be stressed that possibly, the economic crisis may also render a validation framework more desirable than ever.

According to many actors, practically, it would not be so difficult to build a national system of validation in Italy at this period of time. It was often advanced that one of the main factor to go ahead was the political willingness. Indeed, in the last ten years, many steps have been achieved with the works and discussions between regions, government, social partners (they

work together, then split, *etc.*). According to certain actors, to build a system of validation with clear goal, political wish could take around two years, by capitalising on the all the experience and work that has been done at the local' level. There is some quite strong willingness coming from social partners, and some institutions as *Tecnostruttura* may work to support regions in such a project. But the only way to get a national system was to get a consensus between the central government and the regions.

3.3.3. The planned institution of a national system of validation

A political consensus between government and regions was finally found in the first months of 2012. As a result, very recently, two agreements and one draft Law prepare the setting up of a system of validation-certification of competences at the national level:

- On the 19th of April 2012, an agreement was found between the Italian regions and the government, that plans the setting up of a national system of validation and certification of competences for apprenticeship, and including 'minimum' norms of certification. Also, on the 20th of April 2012, Italian regions sign an agreement where they decide to strengthen the agreement with the government, by planning follow-up actions at the regional level.
- Then, Regions and both Ministry of Education and of Labour decided that, waiting for the implementation of a national certification system, the agreement of April concerns all the formal, non formal and informal learning
- On the 27th June 2012 was enacted the national law on labour market reform, that includes principles about validation and certification of competences from formal, non formal and informal learning.

Conclusion: some sufficient conditions for the establishment of a unified framework of validation?

The multiplicity and the diversity of the existing Italian local experiences of 'validation' and also the involvement of social partners on the question of training and validation have created some good conditions and a favourable ground for the building of a national framework of NFIL validation. Even if some disagreements existed at some levels, many conditions to a national system seemed to be acquired. Finally, the political willingness allowed a consensus between government and regions on the setting up of a national system of validation, and has permitted to go ahead. In the context of the reform of the labour market which currently takes place in Italy, the possibility of validation of NFIL could be a chance for the Italian Economy. The best practices of the 'local' Italian experiences are very important, in that perspective, to strengthen the setting up of the planned framework of validation at the national level.

Appendix: meetings

Trade Unions of Employees (CGIL, CISL, UIL) and FORMEDIL, CGIL Headquarters
(16th January 2012)

Roberto Pettenello, CGIL, Training and Research
Francesco Lauria, CISL, Labour and Training
Milena Micheletti, UIL, Labour and Training Policies
Clemente Tartaglione, FILTEA CGIL (construction workers)
Marcello Guardinelli, FEMCA CISL (textile workers)
Giuseppe Moscuza, FILCA CISL (construction workers)
Emilio Correale, FENEAL UIL (construction workers)
Giovanni Carapella, FORMEDIL

Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori (ISFOL), (16th January 2012)

Gabriella Di Francesco, Systems and methodologies for learning
Elisabetta Perulli, Systems and methodologies for learning

Trade Unions of Employers, (17th January 2012)

Fernando Ippoliti, CONFAPI, International and European Affairs and Training
Silvia Ciuffini, CONFARTIGIANATO, Labour market and Vocational Training
Carmella Mazza, CONFINDUSTRIA, Education and Labour Policies
Daniela Tebaldi, CONFINDUSTRIA, Industrial Relations, Safety and Social Affairs
Bruno Scazzocchio, FONDIRIGENTI, CONFINDUSTRIA, Institutional Relations,
 Communication and Training Plans
Anna Felli, FONDIRIGENTI, CONFINDUSTRIA, Consultant

Ministry of Education, University and Research, Directorate General for Education and Higher Technical Education and his Relationships with the Educational Systems of the Regions (18th January 2012)

Luca Tucci, Head of Office
Patrizia Capitali, Professor
Sebastian Amelio, School Manager
Enrica Tais, School Manager
Nicoletta Puccinelli, Professor

TECHNOSTRUTTURA, (18th January 2012)

Constanza Bettoni, Director
Alessia D'Andrea, Consellor
Flavio Manieri, Training

University of Roma Tre (18th January 2012)

Aurelia Alberici, Training and Development of Human Resources

Emilia Romagna, IAL Innovazione Apprendimento Lavoro Emilia Romagna Srl
Impresa Sociale (19th January 2012)

Daniele Calzori, Manager

Giovanni Primavera, Vocational Training

Marche Regione (19th January 2012)

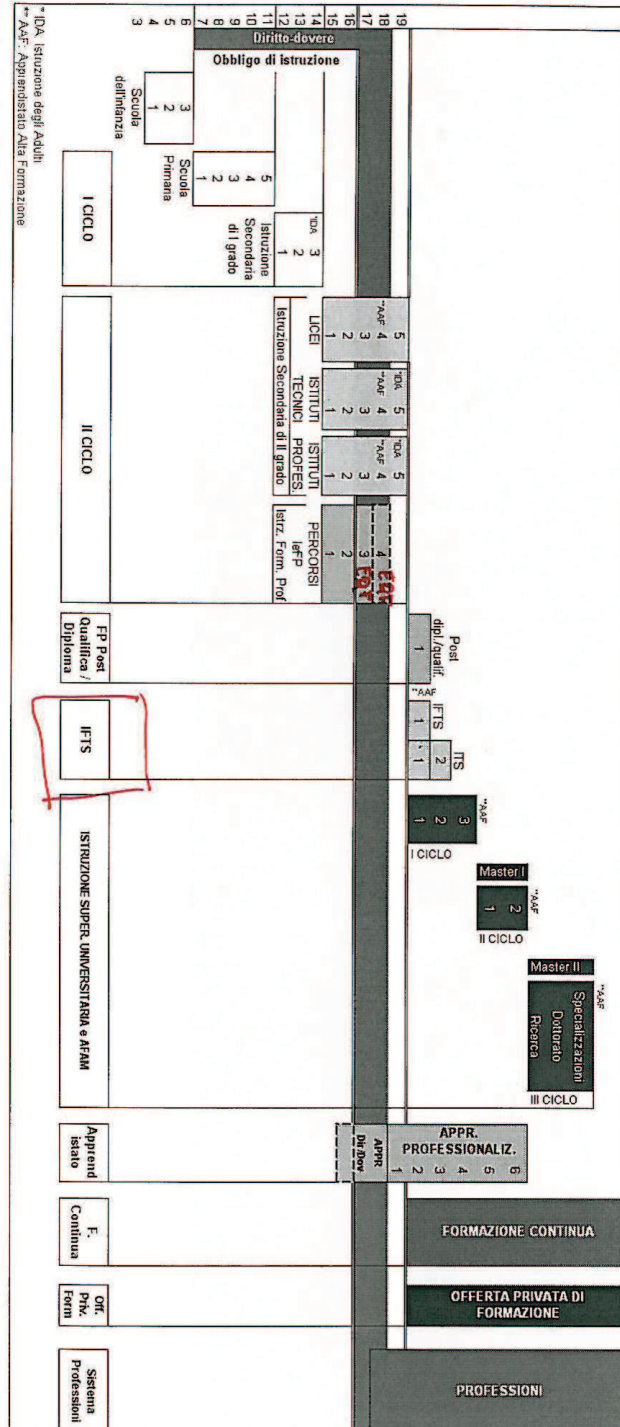
Raffaella Triponsi, Project Coordinator

Paola Paolinelli, Servizio Istruzione Formazione Lavoro

Appendix: documents

Document 1: the Italian system of education

RAPPRESENTAZIONE GRAFICA DELLA SEZIONE I



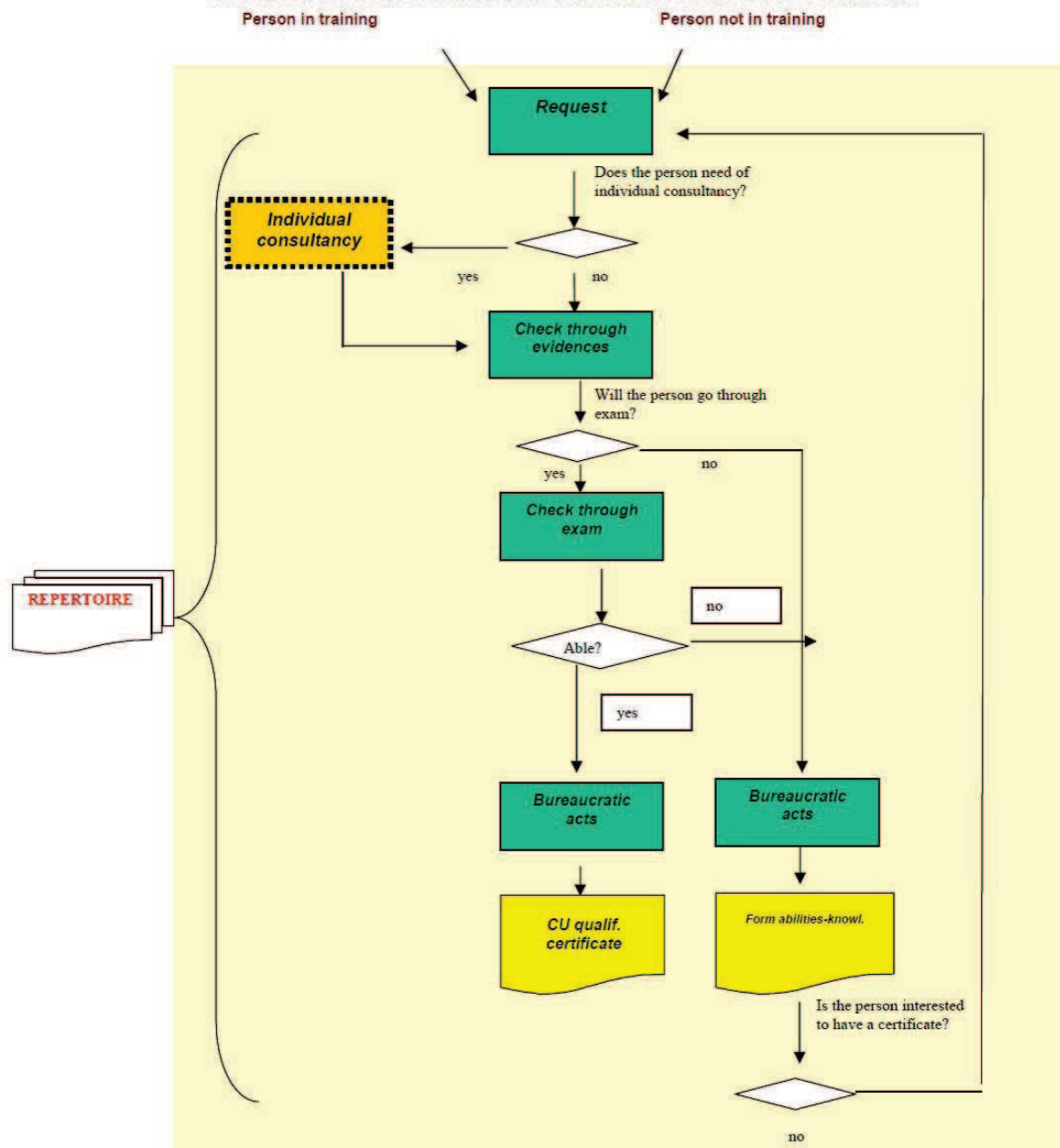
Nota 1: ai corsi serali IDA possono accedere adulti, anche stranieri non in possesso del titolo di studio del I ciclo o che non abbiano assolto l'obbligo di istruzione (anche Ieerm) o non in possesso del titolo di scuola secondaria di II grado

Nota 2: All'apprendistato per l'Alta Formazione (AeF) ovvero per il conseguimento di un titolo di studio secondario possono accedere soggetti dai 18 ai 29 anni

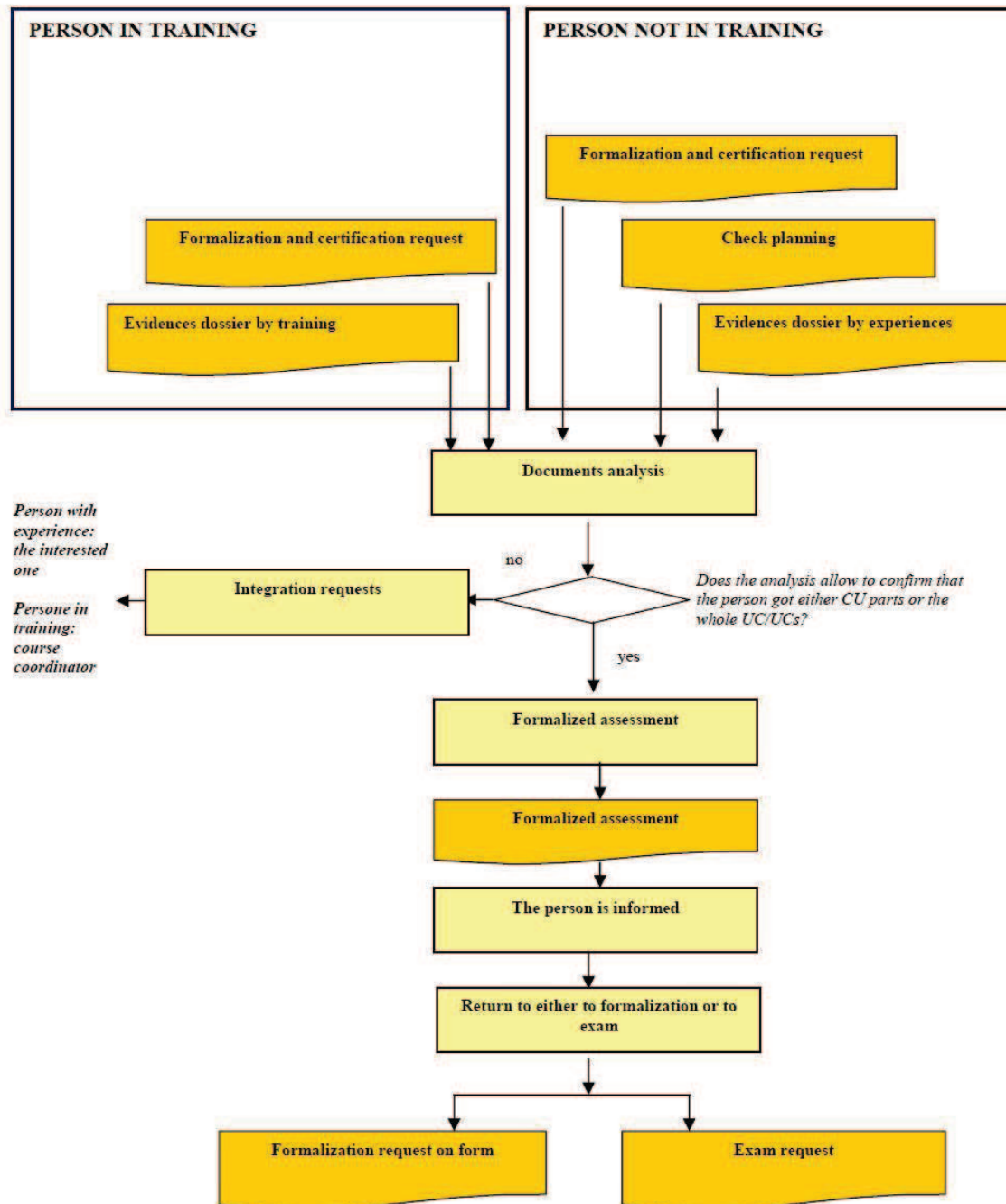
Document 2: The competences certification process in Emilia Romagna region



FORMALIZATION OF COMPETENCES CERTIFICATION PROCESS



CHECK THROUGH EVIDENCES



LIBRETTO FORMATIVO
DEL CITTADINO

RELASCIATO da ... (soggetto abilitato/autorizzato)
NELLA REGIONE/PROVINCIA.....

DATA DI PRIMO RILASCIO
DATA DI ULTIMO AGGIORNAMENTO



SEZIONE 1

1. INFORMAZIONI PERSONALI

Nome e Cognome
Codice Fiscale
Sesso
Data di nascita ____/____/____
Comune (o Stato estero) di nascita
Provincia

Nationalità
Comune di residenza
Indirizzo di residenza
Comune di domicilio
Indirizzo di domicilio
Numero di telefono cellulare
Numero di Telefono
Numero di Fax
Indirizzo di posta elettronica

CAP
Provincia

CAP
Provincia

2. ESPERIENZE LAVORATIVE / PROFESSIONALI (*)

Tipologia contrattuale

Data di inizio del rapporto di lavoro ____/____/____
Data di cessazione del rapporto di lavoro ____/____/____

Mansione svolta (qualifica SIL) _____
Settore economico (codice STAT) _____
Principali attività svolte _____

Nome del datore di lavoro _____
Indirizzo del datore di lavoro _____

(*) da ripetere per ogni esperienza data

2

1

SEZIONE 2 –

Competenze acquisite in percorsi di apprendimento

Tipologia (*)	Descrizione	Contesto di acquisizione (in quale circostanza/situazione sono state sviluppate le competenze indicate)	Periodo di acquisizione (anni/mesi in cui sono state sviluppate le competenze indicate)	Tipo di evidenze documentali a supporto dell'avvenuta acquisizione delle competenze descritte

(*) In caso di competenze acquisite nell'ambito di percorsi di apprendimento formale, specificare l'articolazione in relazione alle tipologie di competenze individuate dall'accordo in Conferenza Unificata del 28.10.2004: competenze di base, competenze tecnico-professionali e trasversali. Per le Competenze di base derivanti da percorsi di istruzione e formazione si farà riferimento alle aree individuate dall'Accordo in Conferenza Unificata del 15.01.04: Area dei linguaggi, Area tecnologica, Area scientifica, Area storico-socio-economica.

3. TITOLI DI ISTRUZIONE E FORMAZIONE (*)

TITOLO DI STUDIO _____

(se in apprendistato, indicare se:
apprendistato per il diritto dovere ☐
apprendistato per l'alta formazione ☐
Anno di conseguimento _____

Nome dell'istituto Scolastico/Ente/Università _____

Sede dell'istituto Scolastico/Ente/Università _____

Volontario conseguito (numerazione/lettera) _____ / _____ cum laude _____

ultimo anno frequentato (se abbandonato) _____

anno di frequenza (se in corso) _____

nei esami sostenuti (se abbandonato o in corso) _____

titolo conseguito ☐ Durata _____

emissione/autorizzazione _____

4. ESPERIENZE FORMATIVE (*)

TITOLO ATTIVITÀ FORMATIVE _____

- se ottenuto in apprendistato indicare:
apprendistato per il diritto dovere ☐
apprendistato professionalizzante ☐
apprendistato per l'alta formazione ☐
- indicare se ottenuto in contratto di inserimento ☐
Soggetto che ha erogato l'attività formativa _____

Sede soggetto erogatore (comune e stato estero) _____

condotto nel _____

durata (specificare se in ore/giorni/mesi) _____

certificazione/qualificazione rilasciata o indicata dall'ente pubblico _____

altre attestazioni _____

titolo conseguito ☐ Durata _____


emissione/autorizzazione _____

(*) da riportare per ogni esperienza presa in considerazione

(*) da riportare per ogni esperienza presa in considerazione



ALPHA

CENTRE ETUDES & PROSPECTIVE



SÉMAPHORES

Document 4: an overview of the initiatives of validation at Roma Tre University.

RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF PRIOR AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

FOR ADULT LEARNERS AT UNIVERSITY "ROMA TRE": QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO GUIDANCE


BACKGROUND

Starting from the change approach proposed by the *Bologna Process* and by the *European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning*, the modernisation and innovation in the Italian University system depends on the response that can be given to social, economical and cultural challenges.

This assumption generates the need to identify a third innovative *mission* for Universities, besides the two traditional missions of research and higher education: a new mission related to the necessity to provide adequate feedback to potential beneficiaries who are already integrated in a work context and to fulfil newly acquired educational needs.

The valorisation of competences become crucial in a lifelong learning-oriented system also including the educational institutions of higher education, such as universities. The development of qualitative strategies competence-based turn out to be a key element to support transitions of individuals towards the job market and educational system. The qualitative methodologies, applied to adult, reinforce their capacity of reflection on their educational and work paths/experiences, and of developing a critical and proactive thinking on their life experience.

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES'
CHARTER
ON LIFELONG LEARNING



The PRIN (Nationally Relevant Research) project - Universities of Roma Tre, Firenze, Salento - Duration: 2008-2010 - People involved: n.100


"Recognition and validation of professional and experiential competencies of adults (re) entering university, in a lifelong learning perspective"

The research project aimed to define procedures and build specific tools in the field of guidance to the recognition of prior learning.


The main focus was on the following areas:

- validation of learning taking place in relation to formal education and training settings;
- validation of learning taking place in relation to the labour market (enterprises, public organisations and economic sectors);
- validation of learning taking place in relation to voluntary and civil society activities as well as in community learning.

The methodology, that combined a qualitative and quantitative approach, has developed a national survey by questionnaire involving all Italian universities and qualitative methods of guidance such as *bilan de competences* and *biographical laboratory*.



BILAN DE COMPETENCES



The *bilan de compétences* was experimented as an individualized proactive tool for the guidance to analyze the prior experiential learning. The *bilan de compétences* had an auto-training value, with the aim of strengthening adult students capacity of self-analysis and self-evaluation and of empowering adult students and helping them planning their university studies and post-university outplacement.

BIOGRAPHICAL LABORATORY

The biographical laboratory allowed adults to think over themselves through the narration, to interact in groups, to recognize themselves and their story of life, which has a great importance for adults who face the challenge of re-entering educational paths. The biographical laboratory promoted reinforcement of adult students' capacity to reflect on their educational and work paths/experiences and to develop a critical and proactive thinking on their life experiences.

RESULTS

- ⇒ The results call for the adoption, in the Italian academic context, of APEL procedures, individualised educational offer, different curricula at different "speed" for this particular audience.
- ⇒ They put in evidence that is necessary a shift to biographical and learner centred approach in teaching, as well as to enhance guidance and re-guidance tools to accompany adults replanning their educational projects.
- ⇒ The results of this research confirmed the conceptual framework telling us that fostering active citizenship means first of all giving fair opportunities to this peculiar audience (adults often workers) to access the university and to recognize and assess their prior informal learning.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

Definition of tools for the establishment of a service aimed to:

- Students placement and empowerment
- Certification and validation of prior learning
- External service dedicated to adult workers or institutions for the benefit of active work policies
- Research of partnerships and fund raising activities to support university's programmes

Aureliana Alberici
aalberici@uniroma3.it


Paolo Di Rienzo
pdirienzo@uniroma3.it


"ROMA TRE" UNIVERSITY

<http://host.uniroma3.it/centri/cres>


Research and Service Centre for
Bilan de Competences

<http://www.uniroma3.it/>





SÉMAPHORES



Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in Poland
Synthesis of the study visit to Poland (12th December – 15th December 2011)

Nicolas Rode, consultingeuropa

May 2012

Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission



Outline

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Introduction: NFIL is a new tool in Europe to increase employability, but the Polish education system reforms itself slowly but steadily. It will include also the recognition and validation of NFIL in the near future.

Education in Poland is generally characterized by a high degree of formalization. The formal education system is considered by most Polish citizens as being the place where the necessary professional tools for the labour market are acquired. Poland has not yet established a system to certify qualifications obtained in non-formal and informal (NFIL) settings. At European level, the debate on the European Qualification Framework and on its transposition on national level has however triggered considerable efforts by the Ministry of Education, social partners and relevant stakeholders in order to adapt formal education, especially higher education and vocational education and training, to the new requirements of an integrated European labour market and international competition because the Polish labour market is moving away from low-skilled and manual work towards higher skilled service, sales and managerial occupations. NFIL is a new tool in Europe to increase employability, but the Polish education system reforms itself slowly but steadily. It will include also the recognition and validation of NFIL in the near future.

This report deals primarily with the perspectives of mayor actors on the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in Poland.

1. Step-by-step: the adaptation of the higher education system to European standards as the benchmark for further reforms in the area of education and training

According to a recent study, 95% of Polish respondents do not think that lifelong learning is part of their life. Poland does not have a culture of lifelong learning. People have to adapt to requirements of the labour market. Even if they leave the labour market, even senior citizens need skills. There is a culture of caring and family cohesion, but not of life-long learning (LLL). Continuous learning is not engrained in Polish society. Research by the Polish Agency for Business Development (www.parp.gov.pl) shows that the Polish population in general lacks social competences and social skills which are vital for a highly diversified economy. After school, people do not expect to continue to learn. In 2005 only 36% of the male and 20% of the female population between 55 and 64 years of age were employed. Poland thus had the lowest rate of employed elderly in the European Union.¹

One indicator shows that 5% of adults are participating in continuous learning in 2011 and the increase is slow. This is particularly important to mention because nearly a 1% increase per year would be necessary to reach European targets of 10% for 2020. Even teachers lack social competences and are now facing challenges in new forms of teaching and learning. They must implement a new system of education, but the quality of the outcome of the reform process is highly uncertain.

¹ <http://www.laender-analysen.de/polen/pdf/PolenAnalysen11.pdf>

Poland has a very good formal education system with nominally some of the best indicators in Europe, but the quality of education is not sufficiently adapted to the needs of the labour market. Up to 2011, there were between 400.000 to 2 million new students in higher education every year. This meant considerable pressure on the education system and the labour market. More and more students are now overqualified and hide their qualifications in order to get a job in the service sector. The Polish universities are blamed that they are not preparing people adequately for the labour market. Universities are financed by the government so there is little pressure or competition between institutions to improve employability of students. There is no permanent cooperation between Higher Education and employers. There is no real dependence between them. Universities mostly lack alumni associations in order to connect students and employed alumni.

In order to address some of these issues, the draft proposal for the qualification framework for higher education was finalized in 2007. In 2011 Poland implemented its Higher Education Reform. The new regulations are forcing universities to create boards of trustees at universities. These boards of trustees should decide about necessary investments in research and development as well as which faculties and study programs should be developed. According to some local experts, the speed of the university reform process is too fast. There is no true understanding of its implications and it could be that institutions react mechanically to reforms imposed by a European agenda and directives.

1.1. The role of national institutions in setting up the framework for recognizing NFIL outcomes

In Poland, the first document on the development of Life-Long Learning (LLL) was adopted in 2007. The government is currently working on a new document on Life-Long Learning which will also set the agenda for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The European Qualification Framework (EQF) has lead to new regulations in Poland. In 2009, the Ministry of Education developed a new education policy. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education is also implementing the Polish Qualification Framework in cooperation with social partners and stakeholders. Considerable adjustments must be made to introduce a credit system. So far, there are no clear procedures to validate NFIL even if there is a large training market. There are also no procedures for measuring and improving the quality of training institutes.

In 2008 work started on the Polish Qualification Framework (PQF) covering the whole of the education and training systems. One year later, in 2009, a proposal was submitted by a working group examining the competences and qualifications for the labour market and developing a QF. In 2010 an NQF steering committee adopted proposals as a basis for designing and implementing the PQF.

The first consultation on the Polish Qualification Framework took place in February 2011. The whole consultation phase took one year and was completed in February 2012. The Polish Qualification Framework will include procedures for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, but the main project at the moment is to formulate over 600 pages for new laws which will include a register of all the professions.

The VET system must be changed in Poland. Understanding the standards in other countries can be a considerable problem. A lot of European material had to be translated into Polish. One sentence in English can lead to two or three sentences in Polish. Therefore the Education ministry financed a project to develop a national glossary (EN/PL) in order to steer the discussion with the right key words and definitions.

1.2. Coordination is key to a successful implementation of European standards: the role of the Ministry for Education, the coordinating IBE (National Institute for Education and Training) and the national training institute KOWEZIU in Warsaw

After the election in October 2011, the Polish government reorganized the national Ministry for Education and developed yet another new Education policy. There is a national Human Resource Plan for 2012 with priorities and activities. The main target groups are:

- people who need or use vocational education
- the unemployed
- people with lower levels of education
- people who are affected by restructuring or getting prepared for it
- public administration
- people who are eager to improve their skills
- youth

The problem is that different regions have different needs, so target groups are difficult to define on the national level.

The Ministry for Education and the coordinating IBE (National Institute for Education and Training) are very interested in feedback from social partners, particularly from trade unions. According to the manager of the IBE, increasing employability is one of the main challenges and social partners should have an interest in pushing this agenda. The IBE is preparing the stakeholder forum in 2012. There will be a database of institutions and a digital platform to exchange information similar to the Scottish, Irish and English systems. In general, the Polish relevant actors who are setting up the PQF system are very interested in the Anglo-Saxon model. The Scottish model where training services are not individual rights, but packages addressed to companies, seem particularly appropriated to the Polish system.

The national training institute KOWEZIU in Warsaw is specialized in providing training and certificates for teachers and trainers. Most of its projects are co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). The institute aims at the modernization of learning and teaching standards, it provides help to develop modules of learning. There is also a project for professional councillors for employment as well as e-learning courses for teachers.

1.3. Structural barriers to financial support for VET measures in Poland

The national Parliament Sejm has a **Social Dialogue Committee** in order to discuss also employment measures. In the tripartite committee, the Prime Minister is the chairman of the committee. Social partners are represented and can discuss labour related issues with the government. They can make proposals to the government to relocate ESF and Labour funds. The government recently decided to cut finances for the labour fund and the social partners agreed.

The Polish training and labour fund is co-financed by the European Union. It has 5 priorities; one is adaptation to change, human resource and other areas. Now regions and sectors can apply for funding.

There is a training fund for companies, especially for SME. It offers the opportunity to develop projects for social partners, regional projects and sectoral projects. Each company can create a training fund based on 0,25% of the salary cost. Very small and micro companies, the majority of Polish companies, do not collect enough funds to be able to engage in training. In some regions micro-companies and even big companies are excluded from the training fund.

The available funding from the national human resource plan is 50% of cost, but it is not sufficient according to the social partners. It is not interesting enough for funding the training in SME or trade unions according to Solidarnosc.

2. The position of social partners on non-formal and informal learning

2.1. The position of trade unions on non-formal and informal learning

2.1.1. Solidarnosc

Solidarnosc trade union confederation has a new leadership since October 2010. Its new president Piotr Duda is still prioritizing their working areas. According to Solidarnosc, the two main target groups for the recognition of NFIL outcomes are young people and workers over 50 years of age.

Solidarnosc developed a course for 18 internal trainers. They came from the different regional and federal structures. The examination at the end of the course included a module on the preparation of training programs for new trainers. For Solidarnosc it is important to certify trainers and team builders within the organization. This internal training should improve services for members.

Concerning social dialogue, it is difficult to discuss training issues with employers since there is no legal basis for trade unions to engage in a dialogue with employers on these issues. There must be an assessment of the educational needs of employees. Trade unions have to build up their capacities, but Polish trade unions lack the resources to influence the design of training services. The local labour offices rarely have relations with the Polish trade unions and there are not many sector collective agreements in order to fix shortcomings on training.

2.1.2. Sharing and learning in a European setting: involvement in European projects by the teachers' union ZNP

From May 2011 until September 2012, the ZNP, the Polish trade union for education, participates in a cross-border project on assessing and improving professional and education advisers financed largely by EU funds. This transnational project called “Guidance Dialogue”² between Germany, Austria and Poland was set up by trade unions and vocational training institutions. The aim of the project proposal (February 2011 to January 2013) is the promotion of transnational dialogue on the subject of vocational education and training advice, the development of guidelines for vocational education and training and to make contributions to the development of national strategies for education advisory structures in the participating EU-project countries (Germany, Austria, Poland). The relevant requirements for consultation are: carrier independence and neutrality as well as subject-oriented individual, cultural and gender sensitivity.

Another project with which ZNP associates is the Practice and Information Network (PIN). It deals with the assessment of the European Qualification Framework from the perspective of different stakeholders.

2.2. The position of the employers

Employers want to train employees, but they want to be sure that people sent to a training have received high quality training. High standards of investment in human capital are an important matter for employers. The system is not optimal, and partly still inefficient.

2.2.1. The dilemma of training measures from the employers perspective: uncertainty about time, resources and outcome of training

Employers emphasize the importance of high standards of investments in human capital, but a lot of VET services do not have the necessary standards. They rely on the easy access to European funds (input) but do not evaluate their work (output). The customers are not satisfied, therefore labour offices consider introducing vouchers for clients. In Poland a large training market exists, thus employers need orientation and reliable policies. Employers complain about the low level of general qualifications. Businesses interested in training can apply for funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) on different levels (territories, wojewodships/counties, national level). Many projects are done on European and regional levels with the help of European budget lines for human resource development. There are different projects according to the needs of the companies on the local level. Poland has another structural issue: small and medium companies are particularly important and even more so micro-companies (employing 1-9 employees) which are dominant in the Polish economy.

² www.guidance-dialogue.eu

This is particularly difficult for the advocacy of employee interests since according to Polish law, people working in these micro-companies have reduced labour rights and can therefore not be members of an union.

One further issue is that Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) is not very popular in Polish companies, therefore training is not seen as a service provided by the company, but a personal responsibility of the individual employee. Employers say they pay twice, once for the training and once more when the trained employee leaves the company.

2.2.2. Further on the process of recognizing and validating NFIL through intensive European cooperation: the Polish craft chamber

The national chamber of crafts ZRP is an umbrella organization similar to the German Bundes-Handwerkskammer. Both Polish and German organizations have good relations and exchange regularly information on qualifications. Local crafts chambers exist in each region. They group 480 organisations for craft professions, 27 regional organizations and at the top the national chamber as umbrella organization. The ZRP cooperates with craft chambers in other European countries, particularly with German crafts chambers in order to get qualifications certified for enterprises working abroad.

Polish regulation allows professionals to receive certification of their competences and skills from chambers; it has the same recognition as secondary school certificates. Special courses to “Train the trainer” are set up by the ZRP in order to provide certification according to specific professions.

3. Initiatives of the social partners on sectoral levels

The Ministry of Education discusses the level of technical qualifications with the chamber of crafts and other chambers, but also intensively with social partners. Sectoral frameworks will not be obligatory, but the Ministry of Education encourages the development of sectoral frameworks in order to develop descriptions of qualifications for the vocational sector. These sectoral proposals should start to appear in 2013³.

Each sector has a large number of professions with specific qualification requirements. Qualifications can be divided into transferable (between sectors, from one to another) or general qualifications as well as special or partial qualifications which can be used only within one sector. The key sectors for Poland are construction, metal and electronic, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), outsourcing services and last but not least financial services. The capital Warsaw concentrates considerable growth in services such as IT and finance. The Polish information society (ITC) and the Warsaw Institute of Banking (banking sector) show to the IBE-institute of the Ministry of Education what they have developed in their respective sectors. These are Polish good practices. They follow

³ Report of the Debate 2011:11

international standards and adapt Polish standards accordingly. This is very helpful for the Ministry of Education.

The building industry is another successful sector. In this sector weak spots have been identified. Skills and knowledge are sufficient but social competences are very low. Projects help to identify weaknesses and how to improve them, one recent initiative has been the project “Towards a Qualified Construction Workforce for Poland” (APL-Bud; Accreditation of Prior Learning for Polish Construction). It has been implemented by a Polish Trade Union (Budowlani) in cooperation with other national and international partners between 2008 and 2010. It was financed by the Lifelong Learning Program (Leonardo da Vinci, Transfer of Innovation). Widely recognized assessment instruments such as Standard PN-EN ISO/ICE 17024:2004 “Conformity assessment – General requirement for bodies operating certification of persons” were used in the project to assess their practical value;

In 2010, the pilot project on the construction sector in Poland had created some momentum and resulted in the following developments:

- Initiation of legislative changes in the legal framework with relation to the recognition of skills and competences acquired through non-formal learning and certification
- appropriate changes were proposed to the Labour Code, the law on education etc., and two more specific legal acts in the construction sector – The Law on Construction and the Act of Management of Real Estate;
- Discussions were started and concrete recommendations have been delivered to design a universal national system for RPL in the construction sector;
- the project also delivered practical insights on the need to develop partial qualifications which were taken into account in the process of developing the NQF and the modularized structure of qualifications at VET schools;
- Plans are being developed to use an overall project module for piloting other vocational qualifications in the construction sector forming part of the NQF.

The project seized the momentum to benefit as well as contribute towards the reform process of the Polish VET system but the pilot project in Poland also indicated a lack of appropriate infrastructure to undertake both theoretical and practical training and examinations. In order to improve this, there is a need for cooperation and partnerships between education providers, employers and producers of construction products.

A best practice example from the steel sector was the Arcelor Mittal steel project in 2009. It was called “Professional Qualification Today and Tomorrow”. The research assumes a decrease in the labour force and skills in the coming years. Therefore the social partners decided to increase their efforts to train employees for the future. In 2009, approximately 9 Million Zloty were spent on external training and 870.000 Zloty on internal training.

A good practice can also be found in public transport. As part of the privatization process, many workplaces had been eliminated. In order to help departing employees, formal reconversion training was provided.

4. Regional actors involved in NFIL projects

4.1. The example of the Małopolskie Voivodship

The Małopolskie Voivodship is involved with activities regarding strengthening human capital and investments in human capital. For many years Małopolskie Voivodship has been an active partner in the European network FREREF (La Fondation des Régions Européennes pour la Recherche, l'Éducation et la Formation - www.freref.eu). The network supports research and a lot of different projects. Regional authorities who are partners in the foundation put in their own contribution. It unites social partners and researchers. The Malopolska Voivodship is the only partner from Poland. There is a significant difference in attitude towards cooperation within the LLL process between the Malopolska Voivodship and the rest of the country. For the Małopolski Employment Board the first step is to explain to training providers the necessity to introduce quality management in education and training.

4.2. Regional Labour Office Krakow

Poland modernized its public employment services with the help of the World Bank in the 1990s in order to be able to access the European Union. Through the ESF, the Polish Public Employment Services (PES) developed career guidance and training measures for unemployed workers. The Leonardo da Vinci program helped to create a national guidance forum. The system was later decentralized between national, regional and local PES. Starting in 2004, some PES were privatized, however on the whole little was outsourced. Poland developed mobile information centers to reach geographically remote areas. Some agencies use e-mail, free phone and even distance career guidance using video-conferencing facilities in order to reach clients.

Lifelong learning forms part of the activities of the county's Marshall office for regional development. Partnerships for lifelong learning exist with approximately 100 local partners. The regional labour office deals with higher education, vocational education and validation of qualification as well as with standards of lifelong learning. It also coordinates outplacement projects, guidance, coaching for entrepreneurship. The team on VET training also wrote reform recommendations for the system of validation of non-formal education.

The local labour offices should work as local incubator for businesses and organize partnerships between stakeholders and investors in early stages. The aim is to raise the quality of training. Projects mainly connected with the labour market are coordinated by the Voivodship Labour Office in Crakow. In this kind of program research projects are in a minority. The accent is set on the cooperation between employers and training institutions. All these activities are 'circulating' around supporting and developing an idea of lifelong learning. The Voivodship Labour Office in Cracow plays a coordinating role in such cooperation. This cooperation can be seen as an example of 'good practice' and model of partnership between social partners, local authorities and the pool of training providers. It emphasizes the importance of cooperation between stakeholders.



Map1. The Małopolskie Voivodship in Poland (source: <http://wikitravel.org/en/Ma%C5%82opolskie>)

4.3. Regional project on NFIL – the centre for recognizing qualifications and prior learning outcomes at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow

The center for recognizing qualifications started in 2011 and will take two years to be fully implemented. The goal is to build a centre for the recognition of qualifications gained by non formal education, achieved at the workplace through work experience.

The project will be in the form of transferring innovations within the Leonardo da Vinci Program – www.ec.europa.eu. This innovation will be transferred from Scotland. The IBE www.ibe.edu.pl is involved and is preparing solutions at the national level. This project will be a pilot project, because of the lack of legal regulations. The project partners would like to test different solutions and as a result have a clear picture of what kind of procedures must be used in a process of recognizing qualifications. There will be a handbook which would show tools and explain how they should be created. A group of “Advisors” - adjusters /experts should train organizations involved in evaluating VET. The project management plans to provide an open access to the results of researches (universities etc.) for the institutions at the national level. The results may help in a process of building NQF and a Register of Qualification.

Conclusion

The system for defining and validating NFIL is not yet fully established in Poland. Many efforts are financed by European funds and the Polish institutions are confident that it is the right way to follow. Some sectors are moving faster than others.

Poland is still far from introducing the validation for NFIL outcomes. The relevant actors are working on the implementation of the EQF on national level. The introduction of the European credit system for VET (ECVET) is also not yet discussed in Poland.

Most of the work that has to be done is in the recognition of NFIL outcomes. According to the social partners the European Commission should campaign for more human resource projects. The legal basis must be guaranteed, but at the end the idea of continuous education must enter the heads of institutions, employees and employers. According to several interview partners, Polish employers, mostly owners of micro-enterprises, are not appreciating skills and competences acquired outside the formal system. Poland has also too many highly educated jobseekers. They risk to work in jobs which are below their professional value.

In many sectors no regulations and no plans to validate professional experiences exist. Poland is in a learning process concerning the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, therefore there is no piloting, monitoring, or evaluation in place. For the actors at regional level the support from the national level remains vague since most of the frameworks (PQF and sectoral frameworks) are still in discussion and not yet implemented. All in all, it can be stated that the implementation of European standards of measuring the outcomes of the Polish VET system is still in the making in a step-by-step approach in order to see how elements interact.

Persons interviewed

Chamber of Crafts, ZRP,

Jolanta Kosakowska, Warsaw, 13th December 2012.

NSZZ „Solidarność”

Jerzy Wielgus, Warsaw, 13th December 2012

National Institute for Education and Training (IBE) ,

Beata Balińska, IBE (Warsaw), 14th December 2012

Polish Teachers' Trade Union ZNP,

Dorota Obidniak, (Warsaw), 14th December 2012

National Center for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (KOWEZIU)

Monika Wojciechowska, (Warsaw), 14th December 2012

Jagiellonian University -Faculty of Management and Social Media, Krakow

Grażyna Pawelska (Krakow), 15th December 2012

WUP Krakow (Labour Office in Krakow),

Małgorzata Sieton (Krakow), 15th December 2012

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Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in Portugal
Synthesis of the study visit in Portugal (23th January – 27th January 2012)

Jacky Fayolle

May 2012

Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission



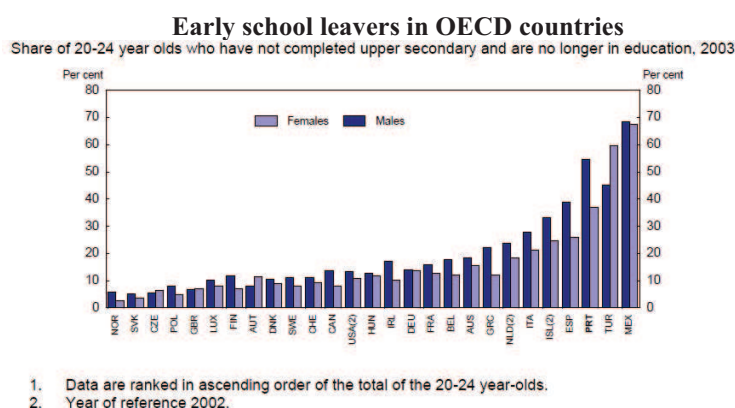
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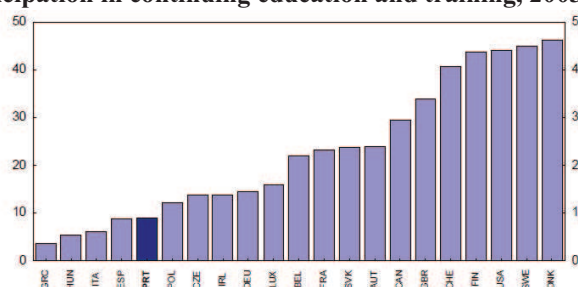
Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in Portugal

Introduction: The public program *Novas Oportunidades* and its assessment

A study by OECD, published in 2006, expressed a clear-cut view on the performances of the Portuguese education and training system : “The lack of human capital in Portugal has become a key obstacle to higher growth. ...Improvements are needed to narrow the significant human capital gap with other OECD countries. Despite progress in the past decades, Portuguese children spend comparatively few years in formal education, and they do not perform as well as children from other OECD countries. Adults, especially the least educated, do not participate enough in lifelong learning and training programmes. This situation does not stem from a lack of resources devoted to education and training but from inefficiencies and misallocation of spending, and weaknesses in the quality of the services that compound the low starting point of Portugal regarding education. Modernizing the Portuguese economy therefore requires a broad reform which increases human capital at all levels. The ongoing efforts of the authorities in the three areas - basic and upper secondary education, tertiary education and adult training - go in the right direction but implementation remains a challenge”¹. However, the OECD views are debatable but similar views were sufficiently shared by the Portuguese political and social actors themselves to urge them to take strong initiatives in order to overcome this situation and to foster a rapid catching up with European averages. Two graphs extracted from this study summarize the situation.



Participation in continuing education and training, 2003¹



1. Participation of the labour force (25-64 year-olds) in non-formal job related training within a 12-month period.

¹ Stéphanie Guichard and Bénédicte Larre, “Enhancing Portugal’s Human Capital”, *Economics Department Working Papers*, N° 505, OECD, July 2006.

The *New Opportunities* initiative (NOI), launched at the end of 2005, was such an initiative. It was not an initiative from scratch: it rested on a long term tradition of attention to vocational training and on first experiences of NFIL validation in the first 2000's. But the NOI was a new step and a break moment: a **big scale** initiative, supported explicitly by the social actors and intensively promoted by media. Six years later, the complete results of an independent, collective and ongoing assessment of the initiative are available and allow a qualified measurement of its impact². Roberto Carneiro, director of the research team, defines NOI as “an innovative approach to motivate low-skilled adults to embark in a system of informal and no-formal skills recognition, accreditation and certification, with complements of formal learning, to obtain 4th, 6th, 9th and 12th grades education diplomas or/and a vocational certification”. This “offer of a radically new design of adult certification and skills upgrading” follows a two-fold strategic plan: the qualification of adults, by offering them a new and fair opportunity to redress the lack of appropriate qualifications (the “stock”), but also the qualification of young people, by reducing strongly the high rates of drop-out from initial education (the “flow”). The intermediary results of this assessment were useful for the institutions in charge of the NOI in order to adapt its implementation: *Agência Nacional para a Qualificação* (ANQ, now called ANQEP, *Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional*) and *Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional* (IEFP)

The starting point is the reality of 3,5 million under-skilled workers (more than half the active population), without the complete secondary education level : a huge scale problem, anchored in a low-skilled labour intensive economy. The ambitious goal was to overcome this massive “third world problem”³ by convenient policies and instruments, balancing the quantitative effort and the qualitative concern. The NOI was based on an inclusive approach, aiming to social cohesion by overcoming persistent social and cultural divisions created by initial educative inequalities. It was not only a top-down policy: social and local actors were explicitly involved; a decentralised national network of 450 *Centros Novas Oportunidades* (CNO) was implemented. Common framework and guidelines oriented the work of these CNOs but they were incited to auto-regulation and self-assessment. The human and financial investment was sizeable: teachers, trainers, technicians, psychologists, social scientists... Over 9000 professionals work in the CNOs network. Near half of them are new professionals, often young. A high-qualified, enthusiast and energetic system has been built in a short time. The learning-by-doing and network effects, inside this system, have been developing. If small employers were often initially suspicious about NOI, the receptivity of the employers has progressed along the implementation of the initiative: the employers were able to verify the positive impact for more autonomous and pro-active workers. However, the micro-firms typical of the Portuguese economy remain more reluctant to be involved in the initiative.

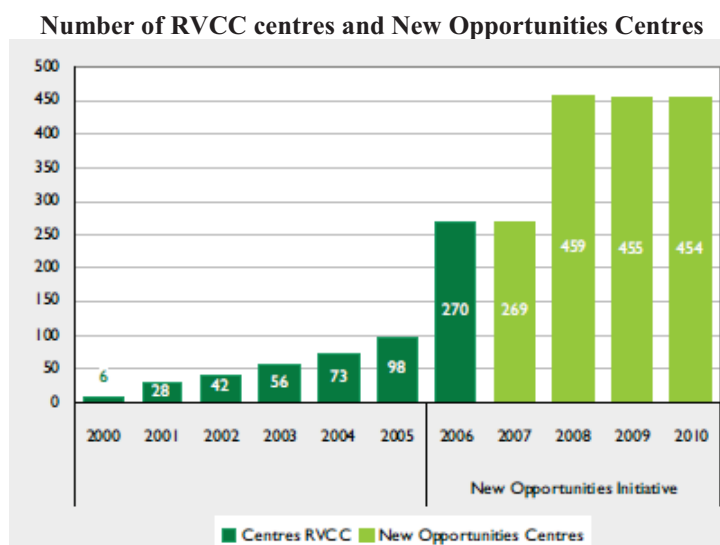
The main target was to certify 600000 adults and to cover 350000 through Adult Education and Training Courses between 2006 and 2010. One main challenge was establishing the secondary level (12 years of schooling) the minimum qualification level of the Portuguese population. 5 years after the launch of NOI, about 450 CNOs have enrolled 1,6 million persons and topped 430000 certifications (9th and 12th grades). The detailed

² Roberto Carneiro (Research Director and Editor), *Accreditation of prior learning as a lever for lifelong learning, Lessons learnt from the New Opportunities Initiative*, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Centro de Estudos dos Povos e Culturas de Expressão portuguesa, MENON Network, November 2011.

³ Expression used by Rodrigo Queiroz, one of the authors of the study managed by Roberto Carneiro.

quantitative targets are frequently exceeded (but not in the case of the upper secondary level or 12th grade, where it was impossible to attain the initial ambition).

Comparatively to the pre-existing RVCC centres (*Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences* centres), the expansion of CNOs is dramatic. These CNOs get back the RVCC methodology, organizing the recognition of competences acquired by life and work experience and by non formal or informal learning, in order to convert these learning outcomes into skills formally validated and certified. In a context where, for decades, many young people left the school with the minimum level to go rapidly in a workplace, the need of formal recognition of acquired skills became a priority.



Source: New Opportunities Initiative, ANQ, September 2010

The objectives and principles of NOI were fundamentally supported by the two confederations, CGTP and UGT, with some differences concerning particular moments. In February 2006, CGTP and UGT signed an agreement with the employers' confederations, which considers NFIL validation as a necessary process⁴. In March 2007, UGT signed a tripartite agreement about the reform of vocational training, aiming to define and to implement the framework of NOI. CGTP didn't sign this agreement, notably because of a lack of answers to specific needs of the workers in small and micro-firms.

However, the situation is now complicated by the fiscal crisis and the recent governmental change: uncertainty affects the future of NOI. In January 2012, a new tripartite agreement on the reform of the labour market was concluded. UGT signed it, but not CGTP. This agreement

⁴ *Acordo entre As Confederações com assento na Comissão permanente de concertação social, visando a formação profissional*, 8 de Fevereiro de 2006, Art23: "Consideram que se devesse efectivar o sistema de Reconhecimento de Qualificações e Competências adquiridas por via informal ou não formal nas empresas e, ainda, a necessidade de desenvolver os sistemas de certificação das qualificações, particularmente as obtidas no posto de trabalho, e o reconhecimento das competências, assegurando as devidas passagens entre a vida Profissional e a vida escolar".

reasserts the need of reinforcement of the NFIL validation system but announces also the remodelling of the CNOs network (and also the network of employment centres)⁵.

1. The strong points of the New Opportunities Initiative (NOI)

1.1. A cooperative institutional framework: ANQEP, IEFP, Sector Councils.

NOI is a governmental initiative with a consultative board where the social partners are represented to discuss all measures to be taken under the umbrella of the initiative. This board had 15 meetings since the launch of the initiative, the last in June 2011, before the coming into office of the new government. The strength of the initiative supposes a robust and reliable institutional framework. There is a close relationship of work division and cooperation between ANQEP and IEFP, what sustains this framework. The purpose is to develop a single integrated system of vocational training and skills validation, based on a balanced cooperation between the ministries of Labour and Education (but apart from the Higher Education). Since the creation of ANQ/ANQEP, the conception of tools is the responsibility of ANQEP and the role of IEFP is more operational.

The ANQ/ANQEP, created in 2007, is now the body responsible for the coordination of the national system of qualification and validation. ANQEP is in charge of the development of the *National Qualifications System (Sistema Nacional de Qualificações, SNQ)*, aiming to integrate the existing qualifications into the *European Qualification Framework (EQF)*. The SNQ covers the *National Qualifications Framework (NQF)* and the *National Qualifications Catalog (NQC)*. The definition and the actualisation of the standards integrated in the catalogue (occupational profiles, training referentials, RVCC standards) benefit from the work of 16 national *Sector Councils for Qualifications (Conselhos Sectoriais para a Qualificação)*, which involve representatives of IEFP, social partners, training providers and educative institutions. The activity of the Councils and of their stakeholders is unequal. It is sometimes difficult to identify expert stakeholders, who could bring value for the specific discussion of

⁵ Conselho Economico et Social, Commissao permanente de concertação social, *Compromisso para O Crescimento, Competitividade e Emprego*, Janeiro de 2012. We **extract** some points of the agreement concerning training and learning issues (in Portuguese language):

III. Políticas Ativas de Emprego e Formação Profissional.

A. Centros de emprego:

- reestruturação da rede de Centros de Emprego e reforço do seu papel no acompanhamento dos desempregados, com vista a sua rápida colocação, ou, sendo caso disso, ao aumento das suas competencias profissionais;
- Aumento da ligação entre os desempregados inscritos nos Centros de Emprego e a oferta formativa dos Centros de Formação;

D. Formação de Desempregados:

- Os desempregados inscritos no IEFP devem ser prontamente encaminhados para os Centros de Formação do IEFP e, quando necessario pela especificidade da formação, para os Centros de Formação Protocolares.

E. Formação continua:

- Assegurar o pleno respeito pelos principios subjacentes a formação modular e ao Catalogo Nacional de Qualificações. A formação modular deve permitir construir um percurso de aprendizagem conducente a uma profissão devidamente reconhecida e certificada.

I. Reforço do ensino profissional e da ligação das escolas as empresas

- Referenciação ao catalogo Nacional de Qualificações de todas as modalidades de dupla certificação de jovens. Melhoria do sistema de Certificação Profissional
- Reforçar o sistema de reconhecimento, validação e certificação profissional.
- Analisar e definir a remodelação da rede de Centros de Novas Oportunidades (CNO)

qualifications in one sub-sector. It is also difficult to take into account the needs of the micro-firms, where the qualification of the employers is frequently low. A challenge for the social partners is to play a pedagogical role towards their affiliated members. The Sector Councils are the tool to do the link with the labour market. The staff of ANQEP hopes a new impetus to make these councils more efficient in producing information and to make the representatives in the councils more participative and anticipating. There is an open model of consultation, which permits to anyone to make proposals for creating or updating qualifications.

ANQEP plays a specific role for the young people: the main aim is to diversify the professional training options available for them, namely in secondary public schools. It creates more responsibility of ANQEP for regulating the training offer. ANQEP and IEFP develop efforts for informing training providers on the global and local needs of the labour markets. But there is yet a lack of a systematic anticipation of skills needs. In relation with the ministry of education and IEFP, ANQEP can authorize or not the opening of courses. ANQEP authorises and controls the vocational training centres referring to NQC (outside the reference to the catalogue, there are training centres directly financed by companies for their own needs.)

IEFP, created in 1979 after the Carnation Revolution to renew the vocational training offer, is a public service administrated by a tripartite Council and financed by the EU funds and the Portuguese budget. It is in charge of the implementation of vocational training *and* employment policies (particularly the jobseekers' placement). Presently a discussion prevails about new ways of financing, with a possible limited co-financing by the trainees. IEFP has its own network of 86 employment centres and 32 vocational training centres, covering all the country. 27 other vocational training centres are jointly managed by IEFP and social partners (unions or employers) in specific sectors (metallurgy, wood, shoe making,...). In these centres, the trainers are autonomous workers paid by hour on a contractual basis. IEFP coordinates also the vocational training centres located in different institutions (schools, professional schools, private entities,...) and RVCC centres (now CNO) through the country.

Everybody who is unemployed should inscribe himself in an IEFP employment centre: the inscription is mandatory in case of unemployment benefits. Several options of orientation are proposed to the unemployed person according to its profile: RVCC and training path are ones. Since last year, it is mandatory for everybody unemployed without the 12th school level and having benefits is mandatory to entry in the first step (diagnosis) of the RVCC process.

1.2. Regulated and harmonized processes of NFIL validation

The CNOs apply the RVCC methodological process experimented during the first part of the 2000's. In 2001 the *National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences* (*Sistema Nacional de Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências*, RVCC) was created by the *Ministry of Education* (*Ministério da Educação*) and the *Ministry of Labour and Social Security* (*Ministério do Trabalho e da Segurança Social*), under the coordination of the *National Agency for the Education and Training of Adults* (*Agência Nacional para a Educação e Formação de Adultos*, ANEFA). The first network of RVCC centres was launched simultaneously. From 2004, responsibility for the system was held solely by the Ministry of Education, but it became a joint initiative of both Ministries again in 2007, under the responsibility of ANQEP.

The standardisation of this methodology of recognition and accreditation of prior learning permits a uniform and fair implementation of the RVCC process through the whole national network of the 450 CNOs, located in different places, schools, companies... The number and diversity of CNOs have historical factors and are in relation with the regional diversity of occupations and pathways. Some CNOs were closed, when they were not able to respect this methodology and the quality criteria.

The RVCC covers two processes (the “double certification”):

- The **School Process**, aiming to recognize and improve the qualification levels of adults who do not have basic or secondary education certificates. The certification process uses the school standards for certifying the key competences (*Referencial de Competências-chave*): For the basic level (9th grade), there are 4 areas of key competences: mathematics for life; language and literacy; information and communication technologies ; citizenship. For the secondary level (12th grade), the key areas are similar but more thorough: society, technology and science; culture, language and communication; citizenship, human rights and duties; and the basic knowledge of a foreign language. The recognition of scholar skills can be completed by ad hoc training to achieve 9th or 12th high school grade.

- The **Vocational Process**, for adults who do not have formal qualification in their occupational areas, aiming to recognize and improve their vocational qualifications. The recognition process is based on the vocational standards of professional activity. This process remains more experimental and its extension is yet limited. Now about 30 professions participate to the process and the outlook is to extend it soon to the 80 professions having a recognition referential ready (the NQC contains about 250 professions).

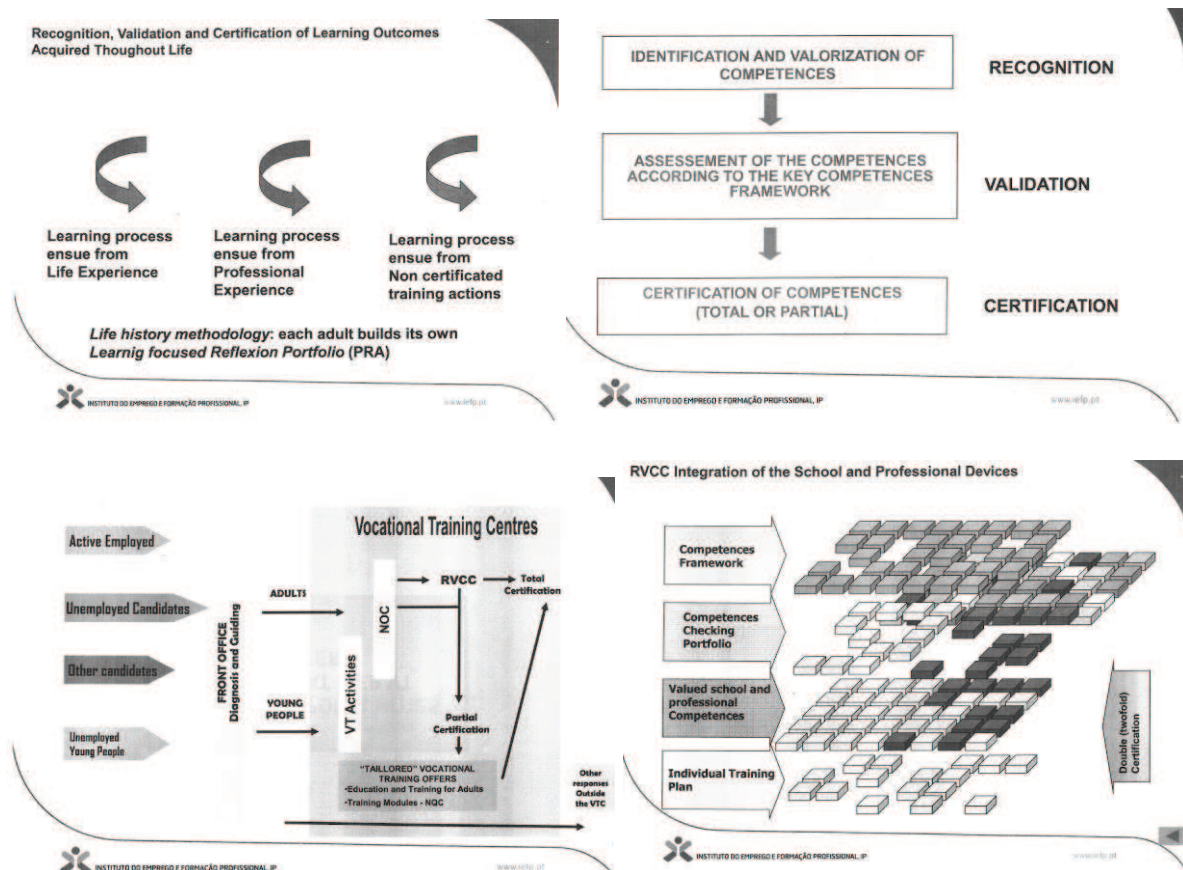
The recognition process follows a modular organisation allowing personalized paths: scholar and vocational competences are described in competence units, based on the NQC references. So it is possible to obtain a partial recognition, to be completed by an appropriate training plan in order to achieve a complete qualification. The jury is constituted by expert evaluators (trainers, teachers,...). The final examination by the jury is a well prepared moment of formalization to finish the process, normally without surprise for the candidate: the candidate knows what the jury expects and the external evaluators have analysed the portfolio before the jury session. But there are frequently persons who don't arrive until the jury. They can take up again the process, in order to conclude it.

The modular approach offers flexibility but reinforces the need of individual and collective serious planning to achieve a complete process. It is compatible with a personalized and comprehensive guiding of every candidate, since the initial interview and diagnosis until the definition of a personal development plan, after the final examination and certification. Particularly, every candidate is incited to analyse his/her life and work story and to summarize it in an individual competences booklet (portfolio), which can be used as an official document available for potential employers. The process is demanding for the individuals.

A person can candidate to the two processes (school and vocational). But the main investment of the last years was made on the recognition of school competences, not so much on the one of professional competences. It corresponded also to the main expectations of the people coming in the RVCC process. These people had the will to make recognized their school level and key competences more than their professional competences, without immediate outlook of consequences for their professional situation. The main individual

objectives were rather the personal fulfilment, the self-esteem, the ability to help the children at home, the will to continue until a further superior level (school, eventually university).

The schemes below, extracted from a document of IEFP, present the general features of the RVCC process managed by CNOs (or NOC, in English) located in IEFP training centres. The case of CNO managed by IEFP is particular, taking into account the function of this institution: these CNOs accept to drive the recognition of scholar competences only for the candidates who are starting the recognition of professional competences with IEFP. IEFP is not cut out to drive the exclusive recognition of school competences.



1.3. A political, institutional and operational involvement of Unions

There is a strong involvement of the two confederations CGTP-IN and UGT at the different levels of the NOI and of its institutional framework:

- A clear commitment in the support to the fundamental objectives of the initiative. The consciousness of the necessary catching-up of education and skills with the European and world standards is shared by the Unions.
- An active presence in the boards and councils which contribute, at global, sector and local levels, to the orientation and to the implementation of NOI. The unions bring specific influential information for the leadership of the training centres and CNOs.
- An operational involvement, as CGTP-IN and UGT run directly two CNOs: INOVINTER (CGTP-IN) and CEFOSAP (UGT). These CNOs play an important role

in the scattered landscape of CNOs. This practical involvement legitimates the Unions to express expert points of view about the results and the limits of NOI.

If the vocational component of the NOI develops, as expected, in the near future, the involvement of the Unions should intensify. The investment in the recognition of professional competences should enlarge the role of social partners. Their more direct participation would permit to bring more concerned people in the training and recognition system (particularly at apparent low levels of qualification). It is conceivable to include representatives of the social partners in the juries of the RVCC processes.

The Unions supported the double certification process (school and vocational). The school process satisfies the expectations of workers and citizens who wish a better recognition of their key competences: in the Portuguese situation, it was a normal strategic priority. But it is easier to define and to implement, at big scale, such a “universal” process than the recognition of more specific professional competences, what needs a more personalized methodology, adapted to each kind of occupation. In a phase of intensive economic restructuration, where professional mobility and unemployment are rising, the development of the vocational RVCC becomes crucial. The RVCC process must more contribute to the “securization” of the professional transitions and paths, in a perspective of Lifelong Learning.

From this point of view, some contrary effects could weaken the impact of NOI and, if it is the case, it is necessary to correct them:

- The modular approach could have such contrary effects, if it is not clearly integrated in a consistent professional personal path. For the Unions, the government should develop incentives towards such integration.
- Emphasizing excessively the quantitative targets (the number of candidates received and certified) could distort the incentives on the CNOs, particularly if the inscription in CNO is a condition to have unemployment benefits. The adaptation to the needs of unemployed and/or low-skilled persons should not reduce the reliability of the RVCC process. The assessment by the Carneiro team recognizes the presence of “sleepers” in CNOs, even if the spotting of such “sleepers” is a proof of quality effort.

2. Vocational Training and New Opportunities Centres: examples of a successful mix

An interesting and stimulating aspect of the NOI is the mix between pre-existing vocational training centres and CNOs incorporated in these centres, since the launch of the NOI. Thanks to this mix, NFIL validation is *embedded* in vocational training: the CNOs can progressively assert their role as “entrance gates” to Lifelong Learning. The joint management of vocational training centres and embedded CNOs could seem not obvious a priori but, after some time of learning, the synergies and the scale economies appear. For the managers and actors of these centres, this mix is more an enrichment of their activity than a complication. It is clearly a common statement from the part of the persons met in the visited centres.

2.1. Centro de Formação Sindical e Aperfeiçoamento Profissional (CEFOSAP) and Centro de Formação e de Inovação Tecnológica (INOVINTER)

CEFOSAP is managed under the direct responsibility of UGT. It is not a “commercial” training centre. It works for and with Unions, on the basis of protocols, at the national scale. Its initial vocation, as training centre, was the enhancement of employees’ capabilities. It faces a new challenge with the rise of unemployment: how to foster the come back of unemployed workers to job and to secure their place in the society ? In 2011, 21% of the candidates enrolled in RVCC managed by CEFOSAP were unemployed. The regular training is organised on the basis of demand by trade-unionist partners and of direct deal with the workers concerned. The training is mainly “after labour time”, as it is not always easy to mobilize the 35 legal hours of training by worker and by year. The trainees come from different industrial and services sectors, with some time variability.

CEFOSAP manages RVCC since 2003 for people not having school levels and incorporates a CNO since 2007. The RVCC process is applied, on the basis of the ANQEP guidelines, in the different places of the country where CEFOSAP is implanted. CEFOSAP requests ANQEP for an agreement for developing CNO activity outside the Lisbon district (ANQ coordinates the itinerancies of the different Centres, in order to prevent duplications and competition, which may sometimes cause constraints to the trade union and training action in the field). Complementary training sessions, only for the school process and in the limit of 50 hours per candidate, are organized for people lacking units of competences before complete certification. The certification sessions are public, what is an incentive to the participation of Unions, in order to enhance their partnership with CEFOSAP. The certificates are delivered to candidates in ceremonies sponsored locally by Unions. In 2011, nearly 80% of candidates involved in a RVCC process were affiliated to UGT’s unions.

The table below measures the activity of the CNO-CEFOSAP during the years 2007 to 2011, by distinguishing between the school process (Basic, until the 9th grade, and Secondary, until the 12th) and the professional process. It allows some statements:

- The strong increase of the applications of candidates during the two first years and the decreasing since 2009.
- The minority character of the professional process, but its yet limited expansion in 2010 and 2011.
- The clear inferiority of the number of certified candidates comparatively to the numbers of applications and of enrolled candidates: certification is not automatic.

Number of candidates received, enrolled and certified in the CNO-CEFOSAP

Year	2007			2008			2009			2010			2011			Global Results
Type	Basic	Sec	Prof	Basic	Sec	Prof	Basic	Sec	Prof	Basic	Sec	Prof	Basic	Sec	Prof	
Applications	692	1312	15	928	2037	-	335	395	-	214	413	42	158	161	36	6738
Candidates with diagnostic / orientation	300	846	-	794	1693	-	315	581	-	180	453	36	130	109	35	5472
Enrolled candidates	139	318	9	500	1046	-	463	1033	-	185	472	32	94	78	19	4388
Certified candidates	82	-	-	301	407	7	335	381	-	116	349	30	84	183	17	2292

Source: CEFOSAP


The CEFOSAP staff shares the opinion of UGT about the welcomed NOI. But they emphasize the present weakness of the professional way of NOI. The development of this way supposes a closer relation with the companies and their human resources services, specially, but not only, the small ones. An obstacle is the practical recognition of the NOI certifications in the company: what tangible return for the company? In the case of CEFOSAP, the professional certification way is getting more applications in the last years. Currently, the CNO located in CEFOSAP offers professional qualifications for Clerical Employees, Labour Relations Technicians, Information Technologies and, nearly, Health and Safety Technicians. CEFOSAP contributes to the reflexion on the evolution of the professional profiles: in 2009-2010, CEFOSAP was invited to conceive a professional profile and certification tools for Labour Relations Technician. The profile was conceived in partnership with CGTP-IN and the certification tools were created by CEFOSAP and UGT experts.

For the CEFOSAP staff, the necessary investment in the professional way is also an incentive to establish a more selective network of CNOs. Some CNOs work only for the number and could neglect the quality criteria. It is necessary to identify and close the CNOs which don't fulfil the requirements of the process. It will simplify the bureaucratic process in regions and facilitate the work of the efficient CNO. A particular case is the case of CNOs located in schools, for budgetary reasons but without strong conviction of the teaching staff. CEFOSAP is a high-quality centre, which organizes very demanding processes for the trainees and candidates.

INOVINTER, training centre and CNO managed by CGTP-IN, works according to principles and practices similar to the ones applied by CEFOSAP.

2.2. Centro de Formação Profissional dos Trabalhadores de Escritório, Comercio, Serviços e Novas Tecnologias (CITEFORMA)

CITEFORMA is a vocational training centre, created in September 1987, through agreement between IEPF and SITESE (Services Workers Union affiliated to UGT). SITESE displays clearly its involvement in CITEFORMA (see table below). CIEFORMA assures the initial qualification for the young who wish to reach the professional market. It assures also the professional improvement for older workers in the office, commerce, services and new technologies area. From 2000, it has developed the flexible and modular training, structured around personal paths. Since 2006, CITEFORMA has developed the double certification process, by opening a CNO. This RVCC activity concerns only the district of Lisboa and is financed by EU funds and national co-financing. The activity of CNO is free for users but the vocational training offer displayed by Citeforma can either be free (in the case of long-term training or for unemployed people) or have a co-payment by the trainees.

 O SITESE - Sindicato dos Trabalhadores e Técnicos de Serviços, é uma associação sindical fundada em 1934 com os estatutos publicados no B.T.E. n. 26 de 15/02/2006 com as alterações publicadas no B.T.E. n.46 de 15/12/2006. O SITESE é a maior estrutura sindical do sector de Escritório, Comércio, Hotelaria e Serviços, sendo também muito importante na indústria onde representa maioritariamente os técnicos e os administrativos. Nos termos dos seus estatutos, ele tem uma intervenção em todo o território nacional. A sua estrutura horizontal funciona descentralizadamente, apoiada nas suas 4 delegações de Norte a Sul do país. O SITESE é membro da UGT. A estrutura tem à sua disposição nas suas instalações na Av. Marquês de Tomar, 44 - 4º e 5º, na cidade de Lisboa, para além dos serviços de carácter administrativo e de apoio aos associados, um conjunto de departamentos-chave para apoio da actividade junto dos seus membros, do tecido económico e

para o estudo dos fenómenos sociais, económicos e jurídicos. Os departamentos de Contencioso, de Informação, o departamento de Conflitos e o departamento de negociação Colectiva, são alguns dos mais importantes. O SITESE, como maior e mais organizada estrutura sindical do sector, e, em regra, maioritário em termos de representação dos trabalhadores tem que intervir na negociação de um grande número de convenções colectivas de trabalho, mais de uma centena por ano. O volume de contratação e a especialização cada vez mais requerida, conduziram-no à constituição de uma estrutura especialmente vocacionada para o efeito, a FETESE - Federação dos Sindicatos da Indústria e Serviços. O SITESE é ainda o único Sindicato Português detentor de um Centro Protocolar, para a Formação Profissional - O CITEFORMA, em regime de parceria directa com o IEFP. No CITEFORMA pode completar o seu curriculum escolar e frequentar cursos de línguas, contabilidade, fiscalidade, secretariado, marketing e outras.

The mix of training and RVCC activities was a challenge ! Initially they were two specialised systems working apart. Now, they work together: it is obvious that some people need recognition of their competences before entering into a training path: the RVCC process can be a start gate.

CITEFORMA has established training partnerships with companies and employers associations. In 2008, 75% of people coming work in companies and, previously, came after the working time. But it changes: now, about 50% are employed people, many from entities that have signed a protocol (more than 40 protocols have been signed since 2006) but 50% are unemployed people. The relations progress with the employers, who become more receptive: they take the habit to directly contact CITEFORMA. It is possible to organize training sessions inside the firms, with the agreement of the Unions. This kind of training becomes an effective opportunity for workers who did not access to the vocational training previously. It reinforces the idea that “Learning pays off”, in despite of the resistance of the small employers to the training during working time. It is possible, but not always easy, to use the 35 legal yearly hours of training for RVCC.

From 2006 to 2011, about 8000 persons (aged from 18 to 82, 53% women and 47% men) came in the CNO-CITEFORMA and more than 2000 were certified. Many persons give up or are identified as needing specific training before the certification. In order to be credible, the process is demanding. It supposes a strong personal motivation. The quality effort is monitored by ANQEP and by external auditors. The “Common Assessment Framework” is used for auto-evaluation.

A collective event celebrates the certification: it is a symbolic recognition of its importance for people and a mean to keep a close relationship with them. The definition of a personal development plan concludes the process. The staff of CITEFORMA develops efforts to follow up the persons, specially the young, after the training or the certification, in order to assess their integration in the labour market.

The establishment of partnerships with academic institutions facilitates the development of specialised training units usable as credits in a university program. For the staff of CITEFORMA, “it is a big recognition of our work”. But the conditions of access to the University for candidates who do not meet the standard admission requirements remains a controversial issue in the Portuguese Society, in despite of the law adopted in 2006. This law states that these candidates can claim for credits, based on the recognition of prior learning.

For the staff of CITEFORMA, the CNO system is well established. But it needs some adjustment, as a decrease of the flow of people to be certified is expected. Some inefficient CNOs could be merged with more efficient centres. The active monitoring by the social partners is a guarantee of performance. For Unions, the involvement in training and RVCC processes is a factor favourable to the trade-unionisation of workers, but it is not sure that this attractiveness is persistent: after training and certification, a person is following his own way... Concerning the future, the clear priority, for the staff of CITEFORMA, is the development of the professional certification process in the services sectors.

2.3. *Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins (CECOA)*

CECOA, created in 1986, is a training centre and CNO managed under the responsibility of the *Portuguese Confederation of the Employers of Commerce and Services* (CCP), in charge of the collective bargaining with the Unions in these sectors. The sector field of CECOA, its vocation and practices are similar to the ones of CITEFORMA... The two centres maintain a relation which balances the competition and the cooperation (for orienting persons towards the more convenient specialised training, for example).

In 2011, about 400 persons entered into the CNO, including the professional way (trade technician and employee, administrative assistant and technician). In the future, the development of this professional way should be a priority, in close relation with the needs of professional profiles expressed by the employers of the trade and services sectors. Until now, for the CECOA staff, the NOI remains very focussed on the individuals, not sufficiently on the needs expressed by the employers. It is necessary to reorient the NOI in this direction, in order to really “reach the companies” and to develop the “hard skills” needed by the economic competition. CECOA works in this direction, by offering services usable inside the companies. Good examples, with big firms, exist.

The staff of CECOA recognizes the difficulty to respect effectively the legal 35 hours of training by worker and by year in the small and micro firms (which have frequently a family nature). Organisational obstacles are important in these firms and appropriate methodologies are necessary.

The coming rationalisation of the CNOs network is welcome, without jeopardizing the system itself. The cost of such an extended network is high... It is necessary to increase the efficiency and the flexibility of the network, its ability of answer to the needs of the companies. This desirable rationalisation concerns also the vocational training offer: for the staff of CECOA, this offer is too scattered, between too many institutions (as the regular schools), which don’t have always the means of this mission.

2.4. *Centro de Formação Profissional para o Sector Alimentar (CFPSA)*

CFPSA, located in a suburb of Lisbon, Pontinha, mixes also a training centre targeting the food occupations (cooking, baking, butchers, barmans,...) and a CNO. CFPSA has a protocol with an IEPF employment centre for receiving people unemployed or living in the area of Pontinha. The Union SITESE participates to the leadership of CFPSA. For the training activities, CFPSA has a well equipped technical platform and a team of experienced trainers.

The staff of CFPSA does an important work of orientation of the very different persons arriving in the centre, aged from 18 to 65 years. 2000 persons were received in 2011. An equal and fair information is supplied to all candidates in group (30 persons) and individual (for diagnosis) sessions. Many migrants come in CFPSA, frequently without scholar certificates (normally, the candidates must have the 6th grade). Such candidates have to start by the validation of their scholar skills and life experience (RVCC), at basic and secondary levels. They can then take the training path they would like. If it is not in the food sector, they are sent to more appropriate sectors. For the CFPSA staff, it is not always easy and it is time consuming : it would be desirable to have a common platform, for all CNOs, in order to share this orientation work and the corresponding information. With each certified person, the staff of CFPSA builds, at the end of the process, a “personal development plan”, which explores the most adapted ways for this person: adult education (after certification of the 9th grade), specialisation courses (after 12th grade), eventually access to University... CFPSA does not supply a direct help to entry or come back in the labour market: it is the role of the IEF employment centres.

However, the hiring of the trainees is fostered by the excellent professional reputation of CFPSA. The training activities of CFPSA are very well assessed by the companies, which recognize CFPSA as an efficient training provider in the food sector. Protocols exist between CFPSA and companies to organise training collective sessions inside companies or in technical platform of CFPSA (particularly for hygiene and security skills, whose certification is mandatory).

Like in other centres, the mix between vocational training and RVCC is considered as a successful and positive experience, after the initial period of learning and adaptation. There are not major problems of joint management. This mix allows CFPSA to play a role of social inclusion in the area of Pontinha. The practical difficulty is the effective ability to advice and orient everyone, even if CFPSA has very good RVCC technicians.

In the present economic and political situation, uncertainty on the future of NOI is a problem. On the one hand, more people are expected by CFPSA, as some other CNOs are being closed; on the other, CFPSA is authorized to work until August 2012: after this date, it depends on the current evaluation of NOI by the new government. There is some anxiety about the professional future of the RVCC technicians working in the CNOs. “We have to wait and see”, the staff of CFPSA said.

3. Results and limits of NOI: Novas Oportunidades in front of the crisis

Among the social partners, there is a strong consensus to recognize that the high qualitative and quantitative ambition of the NOI was a necessary answer to a massive problem of the Portuguese society: the lack of effective or/and recognized educational and vocational skills in a too large part of the population. From this point of view, this big scale public program for the years 2006-2011 can be considered as a necessity and a success. This general assessment does not prevent the social partners to perceive distortions and imbalances in the implementation of the program. Such disequilibria should be corrected in a “new cycle” (expression of the Carneiro team) of the initiative, without putting in danger the high-qualified training and RVCC system built during the five last years. It is the challenge of the present political phase.

The social partners and the experts consider that the improvement and the validation of the key scholar competences produce strong positive results for the personal and family development of people and, so, for their social inclusion. Certification is often celebrated as an important symbolic event. The actors of NOI have much to say and testify about this very concrete impact of NOI. The economic impact of this inclusive dimension of NOI is indirect (more dynamic workers in the firms, more employable people in the labour market) and long term (better educated children in the families): it is necessary to underline these *potential* benefits for the competitiveness of the Portuguese economy. But, taking into account the demographic trend and the effort of vocational training towards the young generations, the number of candidates to a scholar certification is going probably to decrease in the next years, even if this way remains necessary for some very low skilled people, not yet included in NOI.

In the same time, the social partners recognize that the vocational process of NOI had a too limited development. This statement is shared by the Trade Unions and the Employers organisations, even if the former underline the vocational needs of the workers and the latter the jobs needs of the companies. The reinforcement and the development of the professional path is the main challenge to promote a “new cycle” of NOI. It needs a convenient adaptation of the processes (for example, the possible presence of the social partners in the juries). It needs also a reinforcement of the connection between NOI and the collective bargaining in firms and sectors: the active common definition of the occupational profiles ; the common anticipation of the future needs of occupations ; the expected consequences for training ; the (difficult) coherence with the current issues of bargaining (as wages). This orientation conditions a more direct and effective impact of a NOI “new cycle” on the labour market and on the productivity in the firms: a better matching between more skilled workers and companies more committed in the up-skilling of the workers (including the small and micro firms). The objective would be not only a better short term matching on the labour market, but the integration of the vocational RVCC process in an effective Lifelong Learning strategy, allowing a durable employability of the worker⁶.

Some axes of improvement are indicated by the institutional and social interlocutors to progress in this direction : a more systematic global and local anticipation of the skills needs, today too empirical and partial ; a better personalized follow up of the individuals after the end of the training or certification process (today, these persons are generally invited to express their personal assessment of the process by appropriate questionnaires destined to the centre and the only synthetic tool of follow up is, at national level, a survey by ANQEP); an offer of training and certification services more directly oriented towards the internal and specific needs of the firms, including the small ones (good examples of partnerships between CNOs and big firms or sectors, as security services and tourism, show the possibility to progress more in that direction).

The rationalization of the CNOs network (a smaller number of CNOs, by selection and merger with the most efficient) should obey not only to fiscal reasons (to foster the scale

⁶ A *Going LLL Project* was presented in a Seminar organised by ANQEP on February 2012. This project, again managed by the “Carneiro team”, aims at reshaping the present New Opportunities Centres into Lifelong Learning Centres. See, for detailed information:

<http://www.ucp.pt/site/custom/template/ucptplminisite.asp?SSPAGEID=2191&lang=1&artigoID=9098>

economies and to reduce the expenditures) but also to this targeting on the reinforcement and the development of the professional way. Some social and institutional actors are afraid of the risk of a massive reduction of the RVCC system by the new government. The high-qualified system of trainers and RVCC technicians should be safeguarded in order to support the credibility and the reliability of this orientation towards vocational training and certification. Perhaps it is also a way to increase the openness of the Higher Education to persons coming from the professional way: the permeability of the University to such persons is yet limited, in despite of the law approved in 2006 to increase the flexibility of access to Higher Education. The relation between technical and academic education remains controversial.

The current trend of deregulation of the labour market could thwart the fundamental objectives of NOI, by “disqualifying” the persons and occupations, in order to pay them less: for such an approach, the national catalogue of certifications, promoted by the European orientation, could look alike a “rigidity” ! Clearly, as said by Trade Unionists, it is a “very controversial moment”. Up-skilling of people is a condition to overcome the crisis but the blind management of the fiscal constraints thwarts this necessity. The challenge is to consolidate the sustainability of a NOI new cycle, not to annihilate this remarkable initiative.

Annex: meetings

UGT Headquarter (23th and 27th January 2012)

Paula Bernardo, Deputy General Secretary

Victor Coelho, Collective Bargaining Secretary

Vanda Fonseca, Training Department

CGTP-IN and INOVINTER (24th January)

Augusto Praça, Member of the National Council

Alvaro Cartas, Director of Inovinter

João Paulo Borrego, Inovinter, Unidade de Qualificação

Agência Nacional para a Qualificação Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional, ANQEP (24th January)

Elsa Caramujo, Director of the Referentials Department

Maria Francisca Simoes, Director of the Dept for Coordination of the NO Centres

Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional, IEFP (25th January)

Teresa Bento, Vocational Training Department

Centro de Formação Sindical e Aperfeiçoamento Profissional, CEFOSAP (25th January)

Jorge Mesquita, Director

Isabel Mendes, Coordinator of CNO

Centro de Formação Profissional para o Sector Alimentar, CFPSA (26th January)

Rute Henriques, Responsible of CNO

Ana Evaristo, CFPSA

Luis Azinheira, Sindicato dos Trabalhadores e Técnicos de Serviços, SITESE

Centro de Formação Profissional dos Trabalhadores de Escritorio, Comercio, Serviços e Novas Tecnologias, CITEFORMA (26th January)

Agostinho Castanheira, director

Amadeu Pinto, National secretary of CITESE

+ 2 members of the CITEFORMA staff

Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins, CECO A (27th January)

Helena Leal, International Affairs, Confederação do Comércio e Serviços de Portugal

Ana SilvaVieira, CECO A

Evaluation Team of the New Opportunities Initiative (27th January)

Ana Claudia Valente, Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo, Psycho-Pedagogical Dept, Faculty of Human Sciences,

Universidade Catolica Portuguesa

Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in Romania
Synthesis of the study visit in Romania (28th November – 6 December 2011)

Jacky Fayolle

May 2012

Report for ETUC with the support of the European Commission



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Actors and practices of vocational training and NFIL in Romania

Introduction: NFIL in the convergence and reform process of Romania

Life Long Learning and validation of NFIL are clearly on the agenda of the Reform Program (2011-2013) and Convergence Program (2011-2014) officially communicated by the Romanian government to the European Commission in April 2011. For the new generations, the concept of personal skills portfolio should be the norm: “The portfolio will include all diplomas, certificates and other documents obtained following the assessment of skills acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning frameworks. Out this individual educational portfolio one should be able to extract the following data: student educational pathway, his/her inclinations and skills and particular performances”¹.

But there is probably yet a long way before the full implementation of this objective:

- The institutional system of LLL and NFIL validation is neither mature, nor stabilised.
- In this situation of transition, the social actors, specially the Trade Unions, are concentrating their efforts on the urgent training needs of the workers in order to improve their position in the labour market.

As said by the last inventory of NFIL published by CEDEFOP², the validation of NFIL is gaining momentum through an increase of certified validation centres and experts, improvement of assessment methods and clearer legal and practical procedures, under the control of the *National Council of Adult Training* (CNFPA). The CNFPA has the responsibility for the accreditation of the NFIL validation centres and for the coordination of the *National Registry of Qualifications*. A recent reform (2010), in way of practical implementation, sets up a *National Authority of Qualifications* (NAQ) through the merger between the CNFPA and the *National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic Environment* (ACPART). The objective is to improve the coherence between the national framework of qualifications and the validation of NFIL, but this reform induces controversial debates among the institutional actors of the NFIL system. Presently, the consequences of this reform are not clear and this confusion does not facilitate the participation of the social actors in the NFIL system. These social actors manage and drive their own training actions.

A natural place of meeting between institutional and social actors of vocational training and NFIL is constituted by the Sector Committees. These committees have to mobilize employees’ and employers’ representatives in order to organize social dialogue about the occupational standards which provide the basis for the validation of NFIL, in relation with learning outcomes at workplace. But some progress seems necessary to assure the full role of these committees and their effective connexion with the collective bargaining in the companies and sectors.

¹ *National Reform Program (2011-2013)*, Government of Romania, Bucharest, April 2011, pp 109-110.

² We take into account the information supplied by this inventory. See: Carmen Juravle, *European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and informal learning 2010. Country Report: Romania*, CEDEFOP and GHK, 2010
http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=%28wj=europa%20and%20wj=inventory%20and%20wj=validation%29&local_base=ced01

1. A pro-active trade-unionist involvement in training and learning programs

1.1. The strategic choice of Blocul Nacional Sindical (BNS): towards an integrated offer of services for workers

The strategic choice of BNS, recently confirmed, is to develop an integrated offer of services to workers, particularly in the field of professional careers and transitions in a market economy not yet really mature: identification of personal requirements and aspirations of training; assistance to workers facing difficulties on the labour market; networking trade-unionist actors of training. This strategy combines networking of activists and experts, local implementation of projects and organised access to European funds (ESF) for such specific projects. BNS cooperates with other organisations (NGO, employers' associations, social companies...) in order to implement this strategy. BNS is developing a technical support (on-line network and national database) in order to better target services to its members, who expect not only the defence of their rights but also practical services and assistance

This offer of services contains three major pillars of services :

- Services dedicated to the labour market in order to reduce the vulnerability of people “in the most hostile labour market environment”: legal expertise; database on jobs opportunities and matching system for the unemployed ; programs of vocational training and platform of e-learning; consolidation and recognition of skills ; access to microcredit, in order to help people to develop their own project; etc.
- Assistance to consumers; distribution of available goods, before their expiration date, to people in social needs.
- Networking of experts (economists, engineers, technicians...) in order to mobilize and supply independent information and expertise in different fields and to organise an efficient lobbying for legal initiatives.

This platform of services, intellectually protected, will be an open structure of personalized information and assistance for employees, but also for unemployed, retired, independent workers, small farmers... The objective is to organise a horizontal sharing of information, expertise and assistance for individual and collective needs, by using the principle of subsidiarity. It is a factor of attraction of new members. The national BNS centre, with a young team of experts and researchers, plays a key role in the implementation of this strategic orientation.

1.2. The training of trade-unionist actors of learning.

BNS is developing, in relationship with a German partner, a project, on three years, for training trade-unionist actors of learning: “catalysts” collecting information on the learning needs of the workers in the firms and territories; “multiplayers” mobilizing this information in order to propose and implement practical programs of training. The objective of the project is to develop the network of “trade-unionist consultants” (200 catalysts and 20 multiplayers) able to anticipate the needs of skills and to define a corresponding offer of training. These consultants are a kind of “learning representatives”, working as mediators in good cooperation with the firms. In the future, these consultants should be able to have a self-sustained activity.

1.3. An example: the BNS centre of Constantza

Today, BNS has four regional training centres and the objective is to extend this network. The centre of Constantza has realized, during the years 2009-2011, a project of training and certifying "local delegates" able to develop a trade-unionist leadership on the issues of labour market, social dialogue, collective bargaining and human resources management (see below). New projects (training of computer operators, e-learning) are on the schedule of the centre. BNS develops similar initiatives in other regions of Romania (for example, in Suceava, town at the north-east of Romania).



Proiect cofinanțat din Fondul Social European prin Programul Operațional
Sectonal Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007 - 2013
FONDUL SOCIAL EUROPEAN investește în Oameni

Implicare activă în piața muncii a sindicatelor

Axa prioritară 3

„Creșterea adaptabilității lucrătorilor și a întreprinderilor”

Domeniul major de intervenție 3.3

”Dezvoltarea parteneriatelor și încurajarea inițiativelor
partenerilor sociali și societății civile”

PERIOADA DE IMPLEMENTARE:

01.10.2009 – 30.09. 2011

Contract de finanțare: POSDRU 4.1/3.3/GI ID: 21995



CONTEXT

Proiectul răspunde obiectivelor stabilite atât la nivel european cât și la nivel național.

Conform Strategiei Europene de Ocupare până în 2010 la nivelul Uniunii rata de ocupare trebuie să fie situată la 70%. În acest sens, proiectul vine ca o măsură activă de îndeplinire a acestui obiectiv.

Referitor la documentele strategice naționale, cum ar fi Programul Național de Reforme, proiectul răspunde obiectivelor asumate în cadrul acestora, contribuind la realizarea unei piețe a muncii favorabile creării de locuri de muncă precum și îmbunătățirea calității resurselor umane, respectiv stimularea ocupării forței de muncă.

Proiectul vizează întărirea capacității administrative a partenerilor sociali în vederea efectuării de programe de formare profesională, încurajării parteneriatelor și creșterii gradului de implicare a partenerilor sociali în societate.

Promovarea dialogului social utilizând o abordare regională, națională, sau transnațională reprezintă un real interes pentru partenerii sociali din România.

Crearea unor structuri sustenabile, capabile să ofere servicii membrilor de sindicat și companiilor, mărește gradul de implicare a partenerilor sociali în piața forței de muncă precum și la nivelul întregii societăți.



OBIECTIVE ORIZONTALE

- Egalitate de șanse
- Dezvoltare durabilă
- Abordare transnațională
- Abordare interregională

GRUPUL ȚINTĂ

Grupul țintă este format din personalul partenerilor sociali din regiunea SE- membri de sindicat, lideri și președinți de sindicat.

OBIECTIVUL GENERAL

Consolidarea capacității partenerilor sociali pentru a promova dezvoltarea durabilă, pentru a sprijini crearea de noi locuri de muncă și coeziunea socială la nivel local și regional.

OBIECTIVELE SPECIFICE

1. Consolidarea capacității partenerilor sociali prin crearea unui centru de formare profesională.
2. Creșterea calității procesului de reprezentare a salariaților în procesul de negociere colectivă.
3. Promovarea parteneriatelor pentru dezvoltarea de politici de coeziune economică și socială.

REZULTATE

- ✓ 1 centru de curs de formare profesională amenajat și complet echipat
- ✓ 1 centru de curs de formare profesională autorizat pentru delegat sindical de întreprindere; 1 curiculă efectuată pentru meseria delegat sindical de întreprindere
- ✓ 2 persoane angajate pentru dezvoltarea centrului
- ✓ 1 conferință de presă efectuată, 50 de participanți (personal al partenerilor sociali, reprezentanți ai consiliilor locale, reprezentanți ai companiilor, reprezentanți ai societății civile etc.)
- ✓ 1 comunicat de presă emis
- ✓ 1 web site efectuat cu un trafic de minim 700 de persoane pe lună
- ✓ 6000 de flyere și 4000 de broșuri care promovează atât centrul cât și activitățile proiectului
- ✓ 1 curs de formare profesională pentru ocupația de delegat sindical de întreprindere efectuat
- ✓ 50 de persoane certificate cu diplome de delegat sindical de întreprindere, recunoscute de autorități abilitate
- ✓ un modul de dezvoltare personală: prezentare de bune practici, importanța variabilelor culturale în negocierea colectivă, prezentarea termenilor utilizați în negocierea colectivă din limba engleză, PC
- ✓ 1 seminar de prezentare de bune practici
- ✓ 70 de persoane informate cu privire la bune practici utilizate în alte state membre pentru promovarea dialogului social

2. The trade-unionist contribution to local initiatives : training, skills upgrading, professional transitions, recognition of NFIL.

2.1. Assistance to professional transitions in an old industrial district : Resita

The territory of Resita and of its neighbourhood is an old industrial district, which meets with hard and durable problems of economic reconversion. For eight years, BNS has developed a partnership with a local NGO, “New Hope”, and with local authorities (Judet and town Councils) in order to supply an offer of vocational training and professional reconversion to workers, unemployed and youngsters facing difficulties on the labour market: a “club of personal development / vocational school”. A material support is furnished by local authorities. The access to the resources of ESF is systematically organised, with a specific training to management of European projects targeting specific groups. BNS mobilises its local network of Unions to attract workers and youngsters in need of training, orientation and reconversion. This club-school has a skilled team monitoring the process of reception, coaching, training of the persons welcomed, until the help to matching on the labour market: manager, psychologist, economist, jurist, teachers and technicians in different fields. Each person follows a personal process (skills assessment, psychological check-up, advice and orientation towards opportunities of training and reconversion). The cooperation with firms is actively developed in order to foster the matching with the jobs’ offer.

During the last eight years, 3200 persons have been welcomed. The results, accurately monitored, are significant and cover a large range of occupations, in industry and services (some examples below). The club / school is not yet a centre of validation of the skills. Clearly, this useful and courageous initiative substitutes, partially, for the failure of the public policies and of the employers’ commitment.

CLUB DEZVOLTARE PERSONALĂ. ȘCOALA DE MESERII REȘIȚA JUDEȚ CARAȘ-SEVERIN



Parteneri:



Consiliul Județean Caraș Severin

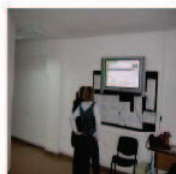
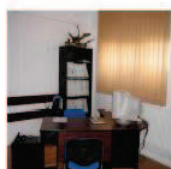
Blocul Național Sindical



Primăria Municipiului Reșița

S.C. New Hope S.R.L.

ACTIVITĂȚI: INFORMARE - CONSILIERE



REȘIȚA	
PERSOANE CONSILIIATE	720
PERSOANE ANGAJATE	170
CARANSEBEȘ	
PERSOANE CONSILIIATE	2969
PERSOANE ANGAJATE	675
BOZOVICI	
PERSOANE CONSILIIATE	380
PERSOANE ANGAJATE	50
BĂILE HERCULANE	
PERSOANE CONSILIIATE	400
PERSOANE ANGAJATE	67
OTELUL ROSU	
PERSOANE CONSILIIATE	503
PERSOANE ANGAJATE	105
MOLDOVA NOUĂ	
PERSOANE CONSILIIATE	2229
PERSOANE ANGAJATE	450
ANINA	
PERSOANE ANGAJATE	810
PERSOANE ANGAJATE	133

CURSURI DE CALIFICARE



LUCRĂTOR
COMERCIAL
352 persoane



DRUJBIST
362 persoane



EXCAVATORIST,
BULDOZERIST
859 persoane



MOTORIST LA
MOTOAGREGATE ȘI
MAȘINI ÎN SILVICULTURĂ
68 persoane

Proiect cofinanțat din Fondul Social European prin Programul
Operațional Sectorial Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007-2013, 2010

Proiect cofinanțat din Fondul Social European prin Programul
Operațional Sectorial Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007-2013, 2010

Titlul proiectului:

„Acces la fonduri structurale pentru partenerii
sociali”

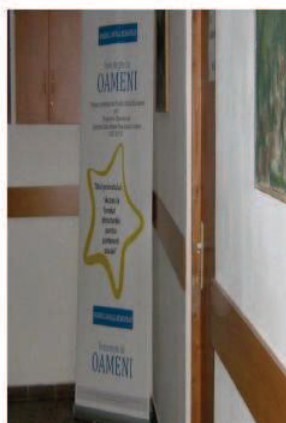
Parteneri:

Blocul Național Sindical
Confederația patronală CONPIROM
Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini
Interconsulting SRL

Grup țintă:

- 84 lucrători din cadrul organizațiilor sindicale
și companiilor afiliate partenerilor implicați în
proiect

Biroul regional de implementare a proiectului
în cadrul SC NEW HOPE SRL Reșița



Titlul proiectului:

“Consilierea și instruirea șomerilor, CIS 2012”

Parteneri:

- Blocul Național Sindical – promotorul proiectului
 - Primăria Mangalia
 - Primăria Brăila
 - S.C. New Hope SRL

Grup țintă: 250 de șomeri



2.2. *Participation to leadership of vocational schools and training programs*

BNS participates to the leadership of vocational schools and training programs, in different places and occupational fields. BNS helps these schools and programs by attracting motivated trainees: BNS has the ability to identify and approach the target people, in order to empower them in the labour market. BNS offers also its expertise for access to ESF.

2.2.1. *Constantza (great harbour city of the Black Sea's coast).*

2.2.1.1. Harbour School Foundation.

The Harbour School Foundation of Constantza is a NGO founded in 1997 through a Romanian-Danish collaboration project with the support of the European program PHARE. It is a learning institution destined to adult training: harbour workers, unemployed, Trade Union members. The members of the Foundation are the local branch of national Trade Unions federations and the employers' organization (Harbour Operator of Constantza). The National Maritime Harbour Administration Company participates to the Executive Committee.

Professional and trade-unionist training is finalized by the school in accordance with all national regulations regarding adult vocational training. A range of training programs is offered: professional training, initiation, qualification, improvement, specialisation, requalification,... The trainers are people licensed and experimented in technical fields. Some trainers are retired workers. The school issues professional and graduate certificates recognized at the national level, in accordance with the official occupational standards. These standards specify the units and the level of skills associated to the tasks of an occupation. In relation with the CNFPA, some members of the school's staff were involved as experts in the Transport Sector Committee, in charge of the actualization and validation of the qualifications in this sector. The process of alignment with EQF is a work in progress (not very simple !).

Clearly, the focus is on the harbour's occupations, what supposes a constant dialogue with the big and small companies of the harbour. The answer to the needs of these companies is not always easy: instability of the activity, difficulties of planning, lack of funds. The planning horizon of the companies is frequently too short (some months) to secure the sustainability of the programs. A part of the cost is supported by the trainee himself or, if unemployed, by the unemployment benefits.

The Trade Union members can access to educational programmes aiming to implement new methods of trade unionist activity, in accordance with national and international legislation. Specific programs emphasizing social and personal skills are available for young people. The school is not yet a NFIL validation centre. For the moment, it is not the priority of the co-founders and of the direction. It could come in the next years, but not so soon...

2.2.1.2. School of Divers and Lifeguards.

This new and modern school welcomes young unemployed, motivated by trades linked to the sea. The director appreciates the partnership with BNS, specially for its expertise in managing of projects financed by European funds.

2.2.2. Bucharest

2.2.2.1. “Grupul de Formare Profesionala Masters S.R.L” (car maintenance)

The aim of this EU funded Project is to develop a reference vocational training centre in the field of the car maintenance and repairing. But the relay of European funds by national funds is not yet secured. Three partners are associated in this project: *Radacini Group*, big player of the automotive market in Romania; *Master SA*, National Research Institute for Internal Combustion Engines; *BNS*, who supplies its ability to reach workers interested by such training. Presently, the centre concerns only the region of Bucharest and wishes to extend its geographical impact in the future. The centre is too young to have strong relations with car producers, like Dacia. Some contact is established and could be developed in the future.

The centre welcomes freely every employee needing up-skilling. Each candidate has to be an employee, graduated for a minimum of 8 years of initial education. The first target is to fully qualify 200 persons over three years. For the moment, 40 trainees have been graduated and 120 are currently in training.

The training combines very practical learning and modern pedagogy (virtual tools). The watchword is: “to touch, to see, to understand”. The teachers are experimented experts. The training benefits from the research, as Master SA is partner of the centre. The pedagogy has been tested with the support of CNFPA. The training combines the technical up-skilling with the attention to the development of soft skills (high quality work, personal responsibility, social competences): all these components contribute to define the professional capabilities. As trainees have very different ages and experiences, groups of trainees are organized in order to take into account this heterogeneity.

The certification of competences, verified by a final examination after six months of training, is recognized in Romania and European Union. Representatives of CNFPA participate to the examination. Efforts are developed to maintain the connexion with the ex-trainees, by the website and personal assistance. It seems that half of the first class of trainees is working in the automotive area.

Proiect de dezvoltare a învățământului profesional și tehnic în România
Programul Operațional Educație și Formare Profesională (POEF) 2007-2013
Fondul European de Dezvoltare Regională - Investiții în creșterea competitivității

INTRODUCTION

- GFP Master S.A. reprezintă o succesoră de parteneriat între Radacini Grup (unul dintre cei mai mari jucători din piața auto din România) și Blocul Național Sindical (Uniunea Națională).
- Este un centru de formare profesională având cea mai modernă tehnologie și metode de instruire (teorie aplicată și multă practică), care îndeplinește standardele UE.
- Tehnologia modernă și resursa umană de înaltă experiență reprezintă baza solidă pentru un program educațional eficient.
- Proiectul este administrat și implementat într-un mod care va face ca Centrul de Formare să devină sistemul de referință pentru piața auto din România.



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Fondul European de Dezvoltare Regională - Investiții în creșterea competitivității

RADACINI GRUP & Master SA

- RADACINI** – poate fi cel mai mare jucător din piața auto din România (vânzare și mentenanță cu 14 puncte de lucru)
- Master SA** – Institut Național de Cercetare pentru Motoare cu Combustibil Intern cu o experiență în industria auto
- Blocul Național Sindical (Uniunea Națională)** – infrastructură și conexiuni, precum și o experiență în calificarea lucrătorilor și suportul profesional



Proiect de dezvoltare a învățământului profesional și tehnic în România
Programul Operațional Educație și Formare Profesională (POEF) 2007-2013
Fondul European de Dezvoltare Regională - Investiții în creșterea competitivității

www.calificari-auto.ro

Proiect de dezvoltare a învățământului profesional și tehnic în România
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Fondul European de Dezvoltare Regională - Investiții în creșterea competitivității

AUTO MECHANIC

CURSURI DE PREȘAȘIE ÎN LUCRU, MECANICĂ AUTO, TENCUȘI, LACURI, ELECTRICITATE AUTO, ELECTRONICĂ AUTO

FREE classes for qualification / requalification for automotive maintenance / repair



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Fondul European de Dezvoltare Regională - Investiții în creșterea competitivității

AUTOMOTIVE – but not only!

- First authorized qualifications:**
 - Auto mechanics
 - Auto Electricians
 - Auto Body and Paint
- Next step:**
 - First desk person for the auto service shop
 - PC operator for computing diagnosis for automotive
 - Welding and metal construction
 - Lifting machinery operator
 - and many other requested on the market
- Next level:**
 - soft skills short trainings – open trainings
 - specialized workers and operators
- Target:**
 - The EU Project target is of 200 trained people – we look to exceed 400 free trained people
 - 5 years objective: to sustain and improve what our actual targets
 - 10 years objective: to become the largest Vocational Training Center in Romania, following TAFE Australia example



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2.2.2.2. Specific training programs in HORECA sector

BNS cooperates with a “social economy” partner, *Vinexpert*, to develop skills and to create small firms (“incubator of affairs”) in the HORECA sector. Such a project finished with success one year ago. A new project is developing for training 180 wine waiters (*sommeliers*). This training program is fully legally appointed, authorized and certified by the Ministry of Labour. The candidates are selected from unemployed, voluntary and motivated people, with initial evaluation emphasizing personal relationship (“how to present yourself to the people, but you could know nothing about the business”). Groups of 25 to 30 trainees are created to receive 240 intensive hours of training in three months: theoretical (“world wines culture”) and practical (“laboratory and personal tasting”) training by high-level experts. The capabilities of presentation and discussion (“maestria”) are a particular issue of attention. The serious final examination includes representatives of the Ministry of Labour and with tests all the components of learning. 80% of the last group of trainees have now a job in the HORECA sector: the results are tangible. The competition is weak, as there is not an academic cursus in this field.

Other projects are envisaged: training programs for HORECA managers and “chefs de salle”.

3. Some dualism between the trade-unionist activism and the institutional framework of NFIL

3.1. *An institutional framework in search of balance and stability*³.

A set of laws and orders adopted in the first part of the years 2000 has organized the assessment of NFIL, independently of formal vocational education and training: it can take place outside a formal programme. These legal measures have widened the duties and responsibilities of the CNFPA.

The CNFPA authorises, controls and monitors the NFIL validation centres. As of 13 July 2010, there were 52 validation centres in the national registry of centres accredited by CNFPA. Validation centres must pay an authorisation fee to CNFPA for each qualification they are able to deliver. The total fee is proportionate to the number of qualifications, as well as the number of years of accreditation for which the centre applies (between one and three years). The resulting revenues go into the state's budget. Concerning individuals, there are no rules regarding payment for validation services.

In 2009, these centres were dealing with the assessment of competences for 112 qualifications in various fields: social assistance, agriculture, construction, administration and public services, information and communication technologies, tourism, hotels and restaurants, retail trade, food industry, forestry and wood processing, welding. The Centres can be specialised departments in private companies or training centres, as well as recruitment agencies or other types of organisations that meet the authorisation criteria laid down by the CNFPA. Between 2006 and 2009, the assessment centres authorised by CNFPA have issued over 25000 certificates for 150 occupations or qualifications. In October 2010, the total number of certificates was up to 28000.

This NFIL infrastructure is now being submitted to reform, because of the merger between CNFPA and ACPART in order to form the new *National Authority of Qualifications* (NAQ). For the moment, the practical consequences for the validation centres are not clear and the opinions, among the actors of the system, are divergent: some of these actors are afraid of a possible too academic domination by the Education ministry, reducing the role of the Labour ministry and the social partners. The risk is to apply too directly the philosophy and the methodologies of the qualification system for Higher Education (HE) in the field of vocational skills. Historically, the link between the very academic Romanian HE system and the practical needs of the labour market seems weak: learning outcomes do not yet belong to the academic culture. The HE is closed to the people without High School diploma (*baccalaureat*).

Probably, the social partners will have reserves about this recent reorientation, as the employers need skilled people immediately able to do some professional tasks and the trade-unions expect professional training to be able to make people performing these tasks.

³ This section uses the CEDEFOP inventory of NFIL in Romania : see Carmen Juravle, op.cit.

3.2. *The basic role of the validation centres*

The role of the validation centres is basic for the right and fair working of the NFIL system. The quality of these centres supports the credibility of the whole system.

The accreditation of the validation centres by CNFPA is for 1, 2 or 3 years, depending on their experience proved. At the beginning, all centres were accredited for 1 year. The process incites the centre to its own responsibility for the definition of its assessment instruments (for example, a list of “critical factors” or key competences concerning the performing of the occupation and based on experience). Degrees of freedom exist: different validation centres could chose different critical factors for the same occupation. But if the centre has experienced assessors, they can identify critical factors and instruments to measure them.

The individual assessors of the centres must be authorised by CNFPA in conformity with the occupation standard of “Evaluator of professional competences”. Centres can only gain accreditation to evaluate the competences of a certain occupation when they have at least two in-house certified evaluators, specialised in that specific occupation and who have carried out at least ten assessments in that particular field.

The validation of professional competences is based on the assessment of units of competences, concluding with a result for the candidate of either ‘competent’ or ‘not yet competent’. Validation can be carried out based on separate units of competence but no partial qualifications can as such be awarded: in this case the separate units are validated and the person can be advised to take further training with the aim to acquire a complete qualification. The assessment methods are varied and adapted to the different cases.

Until now, the NFIL system is only partially controlled by an effective quality assurance mechanism. The process of accreditation of validation centres by CNFPA is mainly bureaucratic, on the basis of documents presenting the activity of the centre. The principles of the system are good, but the effective quality is not always assured. This weakness concerns also the training centres.

3.2.1. Example 1: A validation centre in the field of environmental protection

Promediu is a project, supported by ESF, aiming to build a validation centre specialized in the developing occupations of environmental protection. It benefits from cooperation with European partners. It is implied in the definition of the occupational standards in this emergent field, at national (as partner of the Sector Committee of Vocational Training in the field of Environmental Protection, CSFPM) and European scales. Today the validation centre, authorized by CNFPA, works effectively.



FONDLUL SOCIAL EUROPEAN
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Partenerii proiectului PRO MEDIU:



UNIMED - Asociația Patronală a Producătorilor și Utilizatorilor de Echipament Industrial pentru Protecția Mediului



CNFPA - Consiliul Național de Formare Profesională a Adulților



incdECO IND - Institutul Național de Cercetare - Dezvoltare pentru Ecologie Industrială



VAPRO - OVP Olanda

Contact: George Enescu 27-29, Sector 1, București
Tel/Fax 40213124554 Mobil: 40722670943
E-mail: unimed@unimed.ro www.unimed.ro



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Programul Operațional Sectorial pentru Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007-2013
Axa prioritară 1 - "Educație și formarea profesională în sprijinul creșterii economice și dezvoltării societății bazate pe cunoaștere"
Domeniul major de intervenție 1.4 - "Calitate în Formarea Profesională Continuă"
Numărul de identificare al contractului: POSDRU/20/1.4/G/9271

Dezvoltarea și Autorizarea unui Centru de Evaluare și Certificare a Competențelor Profesionale ale Adulților în Sectorul Protecția Mediului PRO MEDIU





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Obiectivul general al proiectului
Proiectul PRO MEDIU - "Dezvoltarea și autorizarea unui centru de evaluare și certificare a competențelor profesionale ale adulților în sectorul protecția mediului" s-a desfășurat în perioada Martie 2009 - Februarie 2011, având ca obiectiv general asigurarea calității sistemului de evaluare și certificare a competențelor profesionale în sectorul protecția mediului prin dezvoltarea și autorizarea unui centru de evaluare și certificare a competențelor profesionale obținute în alt context decât cel formal, pentru acoperirea cererii de pe piața muncii.

Obiectivele specifice ale proiectului pornesc de la ideea de dezvoltare a capacități instituționale a aplicanților - membri ai Comitetului Sectorial de Formare Profesională în domeniul Protecția Mediului - CSFPM - prin formarea unor experți evaluatori din cadrul comitetului și prin dezvoltarea unui centru de evaluare și certificare a competențelor necesare sectorului, în care aceștia vor activa.

Obiectiv 1. Dezvoltarea capacității instituționale a CSFPM în vederea validării învățării anterioare prin dezvoltarea de proceduri și instrumente de lucru pentru înființarea și funcționarea unui centru de evaluare a competențelor în domeniul protecției mediului.

Obiectiv 2. Asigurarea operativității centrului de evaluare și certificare a competențelor prin formarea unui număr de 15 experți evaluatori sectoriali în elaborarea de instrumente specifice de evaluare a competențelor și validare a învățării anterioare în cadrul centrului dezvoltat.





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Proiectul, prin activitățile desfășurate, și-a propus să susțină membrii CSFPM. Cincisprezece experți sectoriali au fost implicați în elaborarea instrumentelor necesare evaluării de competențe pentru ocupații din sectorul protecția mediului.

Grupul țintă a fost format din:

- 15 experți ai membrilor CSFPM
- 1 expert al CNFPA

Beneficiarii indirecti au fost reprezentați de: personalul furnizorilor de formare profesională continuă, al centrelor de formare și al companiilor din sector și de pe piață, ale căror competențe sunt evaluate în cadrul centrului dezvoltat.

În selectarea persoanelor din grupul țintă (experți sectoriali) au fost avute în vedere:

- Experiența de muncă și/sau de coordonare demonstrată în ocupațiile sau calificările pentru care este desemnat să efectueze evaluări în domeniul protecția mediului;
- Lucrul în echipă, comunicarea verbală, persuasiunea, socializarea, necesare pentru asistența candidatului în identificarea competențelor pentru care acesta poate să intre în procesul de evaluare;
- Capacitate analitică necesară în activitatea de analiză a dovezilor de competență ale candidatului în raport cu cerințele Standardelor Ocupaționale pentru stabilirea acordării certificatului de competență sau identificarea necesarului suplimentar de pregătire de care are nevoie candidatul.



3.2.2. Example 2: a validation centre in the tourism sector

Phoenix Consulting is a small validation centre specialised in the tourism sector (hotels and touristic guides). It has been created and developed by six experienced professionals of the sector: for them, the validation of the non formal and informal skills is a mean to reduce the unemployment in a country where the touristic potential is underused. It is also a way to formalize the undeclared jobs in a sector where they are frequent and to make employers responsible for the loyalty of the employees in a sector where the turnover of young people is high. The centre is authorized by CNFPA for three occupations: touristic guide; receptionist; hotel manager. The centre works in relationship with training centres. The customers of the centre (employers or employees) contribute to its financing.

The centre applies carefully a methodology based on the occupational standards, in order to assess the set of competence units permitting a full certification. The process is precisely organised:

- Welcome and auto-evaluation of the candidate.
- Elaboration of the personal portfolio of experiences and competences.
- Identification of the “critical factors” (key competences) by interview.
- Assessment by practical tests: written test; personal definition of a project; direct observation at workplace (simulation in cooperation with hotels and tourism agencies, on a contractual basis).
- File containing the results of the tests.
- Full certification, if all competences required are proved; if not, the process continues (with complementary training sessions).

The director of the centre emphasises the “quality of service” as “soul” of the competences in the tourism sector. The assessment by high-skilled professionals from the sector guarantees the credibility of the process.

**PHOENIX PROCONSULTING: extract from www.phoenixconsulting.ro
Presentation of the centre and list of competences for the three occupations assessed**

CENTRUL DE EVALUARE ȘI CERTIFICARE A COMPETENTELOR PROFESIONALE

Centrul de evaluare și certificare a competențelor profesionale obținute pe alte cai decât cele formale este autorizat de Consiliul National de Formare Profesionala a Adultilor (C.N.F.P.A. www.cnfpa.ro)

Evaluarea și certificarea competențelor profesionale este modalitatea rapidă de certificare a competențelor profesionale în industria turismului și a ospitalității pentru persoanele care nu au calificare, dar care au dobândit aceste competențe.

CertIFICATELE eliberate persoanelor competente pentru toate unitățile de competență specifice unei ocupații au aceeași valoare ca certificatele de calificare cu recunoaștere națională, eliberate în sistemul de formare profesională a adulților.

Certificatul de competențe profesionale care se eliberează persoanei declarate competente în urma procesului de evaluare a unităților de competență, îi dă dreptul acesteia de a lucra în domeniul certificat și de a urma și cursuri de specializare profesională și formare managerială în domeniul respectiv.

Centrul de evaluare a competențelor profesionale se adresează acelora dintre dumneavoastră care își doresc să își evalueze și să certifice cunostințele și aptitudinile deținute, dacă:

- aveți deja experiență în domeniul în care doriți să fiți certificat,
- ați participat la traininguri în domeniul în care doriți să fiți certificat,
- sunteți o persoană ocupată care nu are timpul necesar participării la un curs acreditat în domeniul respectiv.

Persoanele care au experiență în câmpul muncii de ani de zile și stăpânesc o meserie dar nu dețin o diplomă care să ateste competențele profesionale necesare, se pot adresa centrului de evaluare.

Procesul este echivalentul calificării la locul de muncă.

Principiile care stau la baza procesului de evaluare sunt: validitatea, credibilitatea, corectitudinea, flexibilitatea, simplitatea și eficiența costurilor, metodele de evaluare fiind adaptate corespunzător fiecărei ocupații în parte.

Sistemul de evaluare a competențelor profesionale ale adulților, în centre de evaluare, este larg răspândit în întreaga lume, fiind de curând prezent și în țara noastră.

TAXE DE EVALUARE ȘI DE CERTIFICARE DE COMPETENTE

I. Administrator pensiune turistica (15 competente)

1. Comunicarea eficienta la locul de munca
2. Munca in echipa multidisciplinara
3. Gestionarea informatiilor cu ajutorul calculatorului
4. Promovarea imaginii pensiunii
5. Organizarea activitatii in cadrul pensiunii turistice
6. Urmărirea aplicării N.P.M. și N.P.S.I.v
7. Verificarea gestionării financiare
8. Promovarea directă a produsului turistic
9. Încheierea contractelor cu clienții
10. Efectuarea operațiilor specifice de cazare și alimentație
11. Asigurarea unui climat favorabil turistilor
12. Oferirea serviciilor pensiunii către client
13. Organizarea programelor turistice optionale
14. Oferirea informațiilor de interes turistic
15. Rezolvarea reclamațiilor clienților

II. Ghid de turism (11 competente)

1. Comunicarea interpersonală
2. Munca în echipă
3. Dezvoltarea profesională
4. Asigura un climat favorabil turistilor
5. Coordonează activitatea turistică
6. Derulează activități administrative
7. Elaborează raportul final
8. Gestionează fondurile alocate activității
9. Intocmește programul suplimentar
10. Intocmește schița primară a activităților turistice
11. Oferă informații de interes turistic

III. Receptioner hotel (9 competente)

1. Comunicarea eficienta la locul de munca
2. Munca in echipa
3. Aplicarea N.P.M. și N.P.S.I.
4. Organizarea locului de munca
5. Promovarea imaginii hotelului
6. Asigurarea efectuării plăților
7. Efectuarea de operații specifice pentru sosirea și plecarea clienților
8. Oferirea de servicii hoteliere către client
9. Rezolvarea reclamațiilor clienților

3.3. *Insufficient scope and maturity of the collective bargaining ?*

There is an important place for making the social partners influent on the definition of occupational standards: the sector committees in charge of this definition by expert analysis. The implementation of the standards has strong potential consequences for the whole system of vocational training and NFIL validation and, also, for the collective bargaining in sectors and companies. Since 2009, a new regulation compels any sector committee to a registration by the tribunal. As not all sectors complied this condition, about 15 committees work now effectively (24 before the new regulation).

The process of definition of occupational standards is a long procedure, until the validation by CNFPA's board. This process is particularly important in a phase of new design of these standards, in relation with the European Qualification framework. The classification of occupations among the eight levels of EQF could influence the practical recognition of skills (including by wages) on the labour market. The objective of having, in 2012, a National Qualification Framework consistent with the EQF will be difficult to reach. To reformulate the list of Romanian qualifications in terms of the eight EQF levels is not an easy task.

The role, the expertise and the influence of the social partners in these committees should be increased and improved. Some social partners are short of expert representatives in the sector committees. BNS mobilises its federations in order to assure an efficient representation. In the present situation of crisis, many employers consider that the investment in training is not a priority : it is difficult to assure the respect, by the employers, to their legal obligations of training programs planning.

The social partners participate also to the committees which monitor, in each Judet (region), the vocational training centres and providers. The national Trade Union confederations have an agreement to share, between them, this regional representation. BNS participates in 9 Judets.

Conclusion: what complementarities between European funds and European tools ?

In Romania, national reforms and adoption of European tools (EQF, ECVET, EQUAVET,...) are processes parallel rather harmonized. The Romanian training and validation complex system has its own problems of internal consistency : the relation between training standards (for initial and continuous vocational education) and occupational standards is not very clear. The rising reference to the European tools should be used not as a sledgehammer but as a pragmatic mean to adapt and improve the consistency of the Romanian system progressively, particularly concerning the quality assurance.

A lot of vocational training and skills validation programs are supported, on the ground of convergence, by sizeable funds from ESF, with cofinancing by the Romanian institutions. Other programs in education and training benefit from EU programs (Leonardo, Comenius, etc.). The effectiveness and the impact of all these programs, specially on the labour market, lack a consistent survey process. The social actors could use such an assessment in order to better adapt and focus their own and autonomous action in the field of training and up-skilling. In this context of transition, the specific action of BNS constitutes a remarkable and interesting trade-unionist experience.

Annex: meetings

BNS Headquarter (29th November and 6th December)

Dumitru Costin, President

Georghe Ilie, Vice-President

Christine Cioboata, Adviser and searcher

Mihaela Bonatiu, Training expert

+ **2 participants** to a BNS seminar on training and learning practices

VINEXPERT (29th November)

Florin Bejan, Managing partner

HARBOUR SCHOOL FOUNDATION CONSTANTZA (30th November)

Andrei Felicia, Manager

+ **2 members** of the staff

BNS Training Center CONSTANTZA (30th November)

Vasile Otelea, Manager

+ **1 member** of the staff

DIVERS and LIFEGUARDS SCHOOL CONSTANTZA (30th November)

The Director

BNS Training Center Resita and S.C. NEW HOPE SRL (2th December)

Nicola Dragan, President

Claudia Balan, Manager

Ionela Lazaroni, Agentia Caransebes

Diana Stirbu, Trainer

+ **3 members** of the staff

S.C. GRUPUL DE FORMARE PROFESIONALA MASTER S.R.L. (5th December)

Dorin Soare, Manager Project

Sonia Cîmpan, Coordonator tehnic

PROMEDIU (5th December)

Elena Laslu, President

+ **3 members** of the staff

ROMANIAN AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION (5th December)

Serban Iosifescu, Chairman

PHOENIX CONSULTING (6th December)

Marian Ciocarlan, Director

NFIL and Validation of NFIL in UK
Synthesis of the study visit (January 2012)

Renaud Damesin



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NFIL and validation of NFIL in UK

Introduction: the crisis, a new context for NFIL practices and policy

Previous (Labour) Governments and TUC agreed about the need to develop the presence of unions at the workplace about learning :

- The Union Learning Fund created in 1998. The first 11 rounds concerned 121.millions pounds supporting 522 projects, 57 individual TU, creating 600.000 learning opportunities and training 22000 ULRs
- Union learning reps, granted statutory rights in 2003 (see below)
- Union learn established in 2006 which is the TUC's learning and skills function, mainly helping affiliate unions to deliver learning project.

Using such tools, TUC showed that training involved:

- A greater productivity: 5% increase in the number of workers trained 4% increase in value added per employee
- Better pay (there is an average of 450 pounds a week less for employees without qualification); Workers without qualification are 30% more likely to be low paid

A Trade Union evaluation also showed that within the crisis context, training and deals with unions are useful for the employers, to manage with recession. The Unionlearn survey underlines that during the crisis some of those employers decrease job-related training (11%) and spending on training (29%). But quite one third of them increased joint working with unions and organisational support for union learning activities.

Table 4: Training and the recession – employer views (percentage)

Training/organisational issues	Increased	No change	Decreased
Joint working with unions	30 (38)	68	2
Employee demand for learning	28 (36)	64	8
Organisational support for union learning activity	27 (38)	68	5
Job-related training	19 (22)	70	11
Spending on training	13 (17)	59	29

Source: Employers' survey (figures in brackets relate to where there is a learning agreement), base: 415 responses.

Source : Unionlearn adding value. An evaluation of Unionlearn and the Union Learning Fund

But the financial crisis and the coming of a conservative government implied the willingness to evaluate practices and funding priorities. The “New Challenges, New

Chances”¹ program contains one overall consultation which is done to question about efficacy and efficiency of the government actions and supports to learning actions. Two more detailed consultations focus on Further Education loans and informal adult and community learning (IACL - one of the most important ways to organize informal learning in UK, through localised community and special funds) respectively.

1. Unions building links and bridges between people and NFIL at the workplace

1.1. General scope

UK Unions are strongly involved in developing learning access. This is clearly one part of their “service offer” taking into account the expectations of the workers, and the need for better life (personal and working life). They are committed with actions with Campaign for Learning², with the National Learning at Work Day and the National Workplace Learning Network.

Skill development to be employable and competitive on the labour market is also one of the goal of such events and the “every day” commitment of the union about learning.

Table 1: ULF projects Rounds 8–11: selected outputs

Outputs	Profile total	Actual total	Achieved (%)
Number of learners achieving NVQ Level 3*	3,316	5,865	177
Number of learners achieving NVQ Level 2*	8,850	12,828	150
Existing learning centres enhanced	457	536	117
Information, advice and guidance referrals	112,613	111,637	99
Learning opportunities accessed	436,381	421,126	97
New learning centres opened	426	375	88
Written partnership agreements with providers	529	459	87
Number of learners achieving NVQ Level 1*	5,053	3,334	66
ULRs completing initial training	16,447	8,307	51
ULRs completing follow-on training	8,428	4,333	51
Formal learning agreements signed with employers	1,413	719	51

Source: ULF database – Round 8 (April 2005–March 2009); Round 9 (April 2006–March 2009); Round 10 (April 2007–March 2010); Round 11 (April 2008–March 2011).
* not Round 11

Source : Unionlearn adding value. An evaluation of Unionlearn and the Union Learning Fund

The above figures shows the large scope of intervention supported through ULF projects last years. The most achieved projects concerned the number of learners achieving NVQ level 3 and 2.

¹ New Challenges, New Chance (<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/n/11-1213-new-challenges-new-chances-implementing-further-education-reforms>) which is a programme with proposals for taking forward the strategy for further education and skills linked to Skills for Sustainable Growth and Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth in November 2010 at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills>

² Campaign for learning is working for a society where learning is at the heart of social inclusion. Research shows that lifelong learners are more likely to be happier, healthier, have better jobs, contribute more to society and live longer and more fulfilled lives. <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/index.asp>

The point of view of the employers about the impact of union learning is also positive...

Table 3: Employer views on impact of union learning (percentage)

Indicators	Increased	No change	Decreased
Equality of access to learning/training opportunities	56 (65)*	43	1
Number of employees attaining qualifications	55 (70)*	44	1
Addressing skills gaps	54 (68)*	42	3
Consultation on learning/training issues	46 (59)*	54	0
Positively addresses basic skills gaps	46 (58)*	39	16
Level of trust between management and unions	42 (53)*	54	4
Staff morale	42 (52)*	56	3
Take up of job-related training	41 (52)*	59	0

Source: Employers' survey (figures in brackets relate to where there is a learning agreement)
 * significant difference to overall percentage, base: 415 responses.

Source : Unionlearn adding value. An evaluation of Unionlearn and the Union Learning Fund

... showing the importance of the union action. In this chapter, we will emphasis on two pillars of the union action in favor of learning access: Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) and Union Learning Centers.

1.2. Union learning representatives

ULRs were created through statutory rights in 2003. TUC Education has trained more than 22000 union's members to this task. They have two main roles: to give learning opportunities for people (most often union members) and to support those people during the learning process. But they don't have the right to negotiate or consult about training with their employers.

Trade Unions we visited (Unison, CWU, Unite, POA) are clearly involved in such use of their activists.

ULRs are mainly working in public administration, education and health community sector (61%). Part of them (one third) are new activists, and those new activists are more likely more often women and younger than the other. They spend 4 hours a week on union learning activities (receiving an average of only 2 hours paid time off by the employer)³.

The two main roles mentioned above (to give learning opportunities and support people during learning process) have pragmatic implementations:

³ Learning works : report of the 2009 survey on union learning representatives and their managers, Unionlearn.

Nature and extent of ULR activity (% ULRs

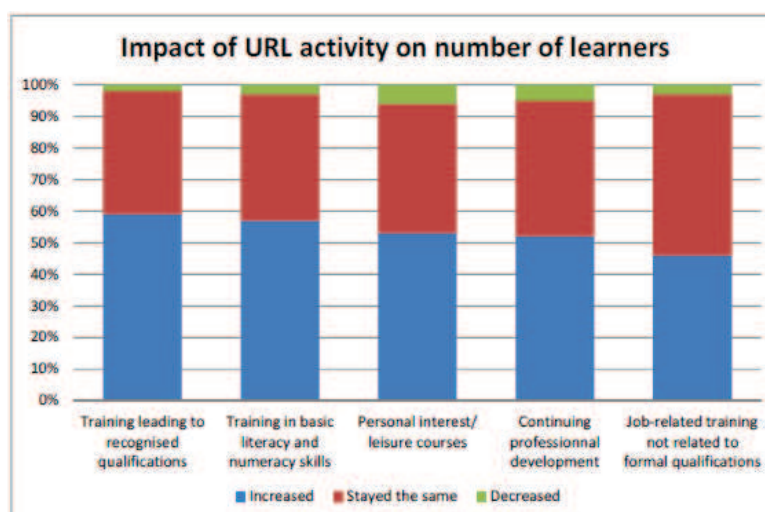
Provided information and advice to colleagues on learning opportunities	94%
Networked with ULRs from other workplaces	79%
Arranged (or helped to arrange) courses for colleagues	77%
Recruited (or helped to recruit) new members into the union	74%
Conducted a learning needs assessment	53%
Helped colleagues to get funding for learning	48,5%

Source: Union learn, 2009

Unions don't have the same service offer. One of the most significant differences is about the providing of *information, advice (IA) on learning opportunities*. IA is a key moment to develop learning taste. Some unions don't do more than this first information and advice. Others go further and practice also guidance (IAG). For example:

- Unison, POE or CWU have got ULRs who are trained for information advice, but some are trained also for guidance
- Some PCS learning centres were even awarded by Matrix Standard (quality standard for information, advice and guidance services).

All those activities do have an impact on the number of learners



Source : Unionlearn, 2009

One of the most interesting information produced by the above evaluation board is that the impact is not only on one part of the learning practices and themes but all of them: recognised qualifications or not, basic literacy and numeracy skills, leisure courses, professional development.

1.3. Union learning centres

The Union Learning Centres are created to coordinate all the union learning actions within the same place. All the unions we visited develop their own learning centres.

- Some centres are set up at the workplace in partnership with the employers, permitting a co-investment in the development of learning access.
- Sometimes they can be “open” to family, friends, or communities.
- One part of this centres are involved in a network, delivering a tool called “myguide” and in unionlearn network (u-net), permitting to access to courses (mainly IT courses),

The following chapter focuses on two learning centres experiences, aiming to develop both formal and NFIL practices.

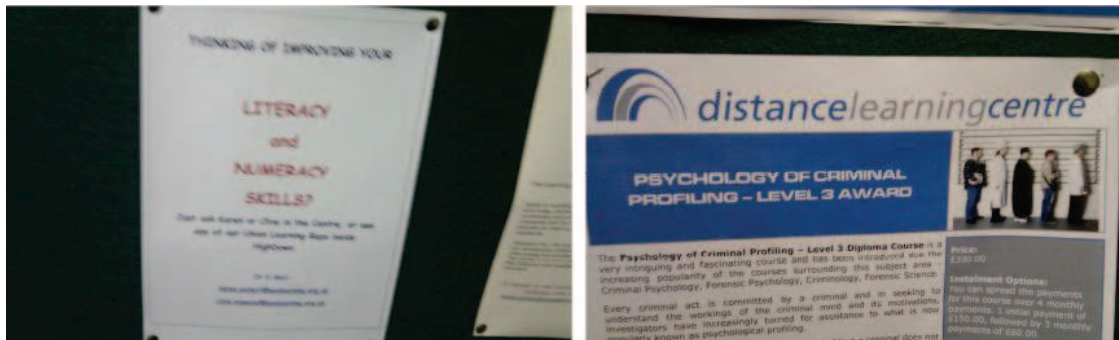
2. Focus on two learning centres

2.1. Focus 1: Learning centre and learning access for prison workers

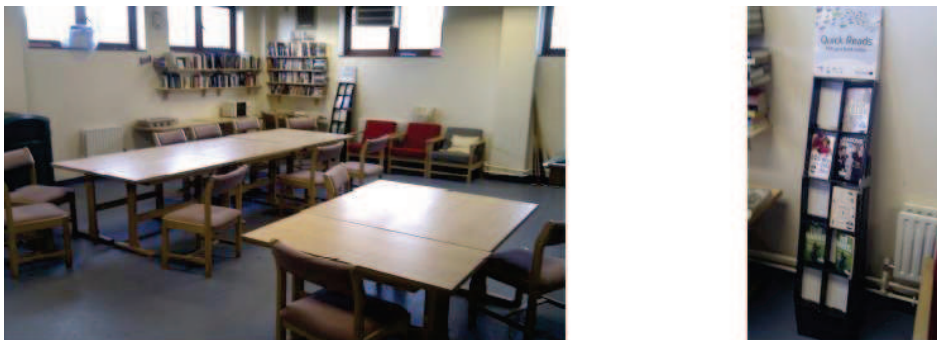
The Prison Officer Association is the largest union in the United Kingdom representing Uniformed Prison Grades and staff working within the field of Secure Forensic Psychiatric Care. There are 35000 members of this union in the public and private sectors.

Within the prison, a union learning centre give access to a large range of learning possibilities. The POE present this centre as a structured and professional service centre: *“Whether you are looking to update your skills, re-train for a new job, or to simply study for pleasure, Hatfield and Full Sutton learning Center offer a wide range of flexible courses and facilities designed to fit around work commitments and busy lifestyles. With a wide range of flexible on-line learning opportunities, you can Study for a recognized qualification, without the restrictions of traditional college, choosing when and where you study. (...) Monday 9:00 – 16:30 Tuesday 9:00 – 20.00 Wednesday 9:00 – 20.00 Thursday 9.00 – 20.00 Friday 9:00 – 16.30”*

Indeed, courses are about a large range of skills, from the literacy and numeracy, to psychology of criminal profiling...

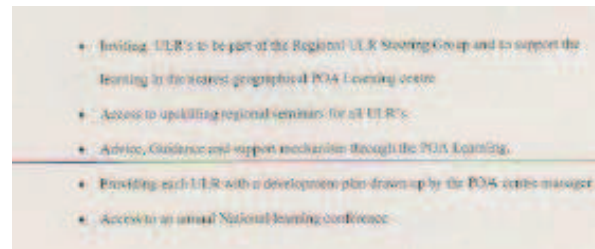
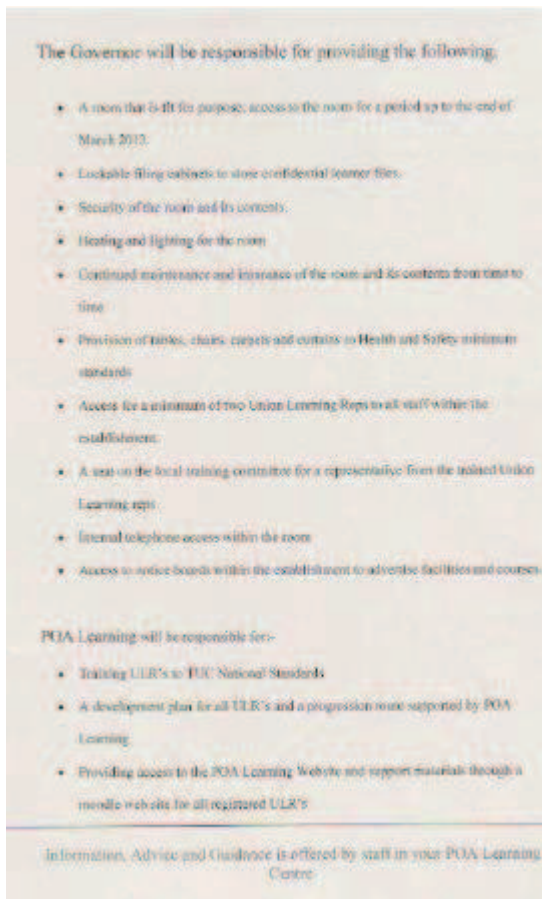


... but the centre offers also an IT platform and a living room with books access



An agreement between the employer and the union fix the resources and responsibilities. Following these agreement, Union learning representatives are for example responsible for:

- ensuring liaison between the internal training department, POA learning centre staff and staff
- offering advice and guidance regarding the use of facilities and access to learning
- recording all learning activity arranged by them within the workplace
- providing detailed feedback to the regional POA Learning centre managers and the home establishment for use by the training department
- making available results from the annual learning needs analysis undertaken



Source : extract of agreement 2012

From the Governor of the prison point of view, ULRs and the Union Learning Centre are useful and necessary. Financially, it is a good deal because he supports only 1/4 of the total costs. He recognizes the Institution doesn't have enough funds to do so much learning investments, and because of the lack of funds, these services couldn't be outsourced.

From the Governor and from the trade union point of views, the impact on the employees' behaviour is good: they seem more motivated to learn, and more confident at work after following training sessions.

One day per year, a barbecue-learning party is the occasion to discover the union learning centre offer, and to test lots of learning sessions (foreign languages, IT, etc...). This day is considered as one of the most important learning event for the Governor and for the trade union, because it gives a taste of what is possible, and can facilitate learning access for employees who wouldn't think about that.

2.2. Focus 2: A learning project for migrant workers

The Unite project consists on improving the lives of migrant workers giving them access to basic formal and non formal learning, and following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 26): “Everyone has the right to education. (...) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

In the first part of the project, the Migrant Workers Education Project worked closely with formal institution to deliver ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), ICT and numeracy courses. Because of the crisis, the education providers (university) budget cut, and the union had to rebuild its offer. It created an “Alternative Education Model” with its own pedagogical and academic resources.



The project is now called “United Migrant Workers Education Project – UMWEP”. It involved four groups:

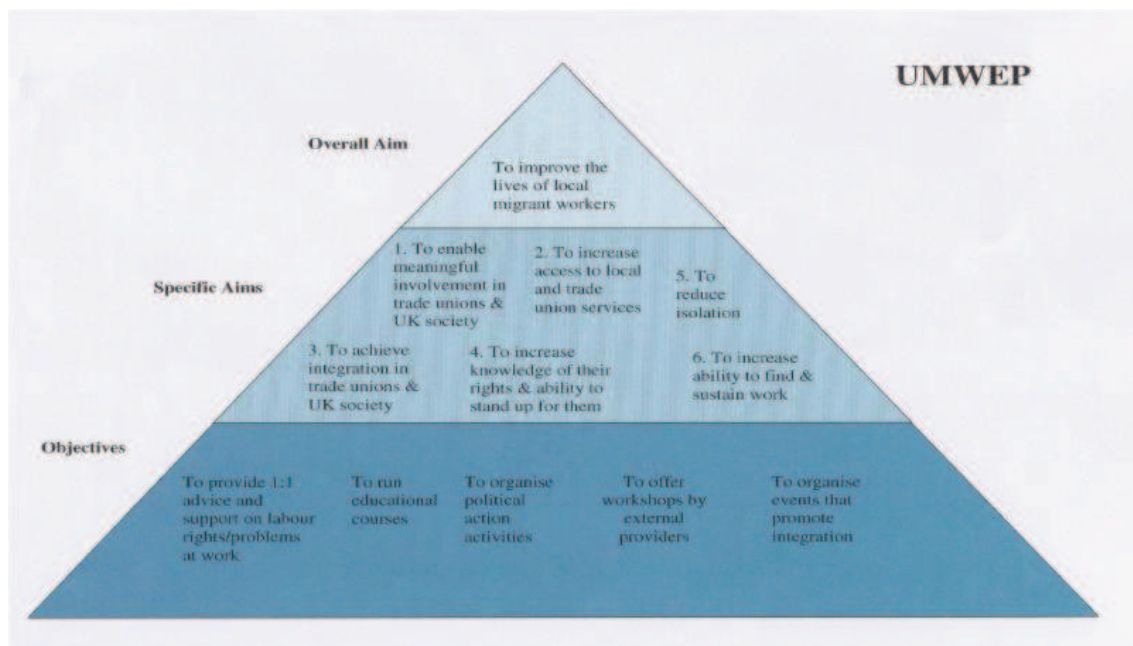
- Justice for cleaners campaign (J4CC) - workers in the cleaning industry around London
- Justice for Domestic Workers (J4DW) – a 100% migrant workers organisation
- Hotel and Catering Branch 1647 – a majority of migrant workers

- Chinese Migrant Network (CMN)

Within these centre,

- the education is free and based on voluntarism. Pedagogy is based on interaction between tutors and learners.
- the skills developed are “skills for life” and *they do not lead to an accreditation*.

Facing the cut of funding, the alternative model of education is now clearly non formal learning. The goal is not only to deliver basic education to migrant workers but also to organise them through the education.



This mean, language, self-confidence, and IT skills developed are not only delivered to integrate the UK society but also to make migrant workers members and activists if they want. Principles of equality, respect and tolerance, employment rules, trade union history are used and taught to improve working skills and worker consciousness.

3. From NFIL to NFIL recognition

In England, North Ireland and Wales, the National Vocational Qualifications (since the 80's) and now Qualification Credit Framework (since 2010) are based on abilities/competences and modular qualification systems.

Since NVQs, “Recognition of non-formal and informal learning was therefore identified as one means of generating evidence for the (accreditation) units, which comprised the qualification” underline the GHK & CEDEFOP recent study (2010, p.2)

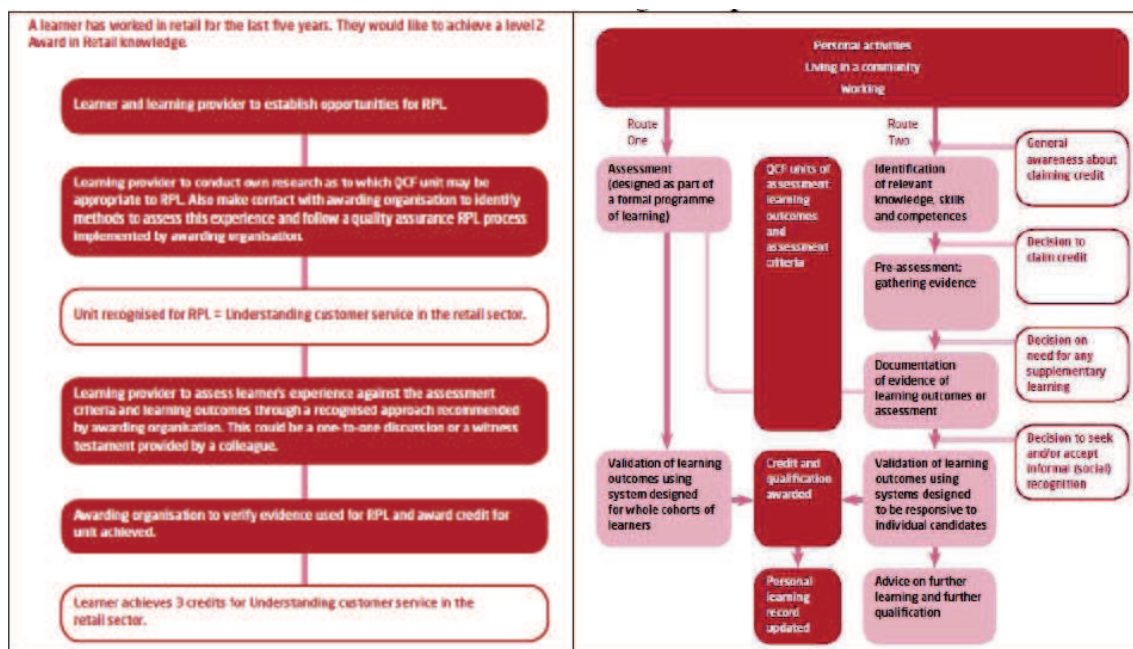
Indeed, there is no prescribed programme of learning for NVQs. “To guarantee consistency on a national basis, awarding organisations certify a learner’s achievements on a unit by unit basis. When assessing NVQ portfolios, all awarding organisations follow a set of key messages and principles and adhere to the same stringent quality assurance processes. These quality assurance and control requirements are outlined in the NVQ code of practice 2001 and the NVQ code of practice 2006 (Addendum to NVQ code of practice 2006).” And to get an NVQs, the Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA) is a means of generating evidence

Since 2010 and following the Qualification and Credit framework, “*everyone who learnt something but has never received formal recognition for this learning through a qualification or other form of certification. Within the QCF an individual is able to ‘claim’ that he or she knows or can do something already and does not need to attend a course to learn it again. If he or she can prove this claim (through assessment of relevant evidence), then credit can be awarded for that achievement in the same way as any other credits. In the QCF, RPL refers particularly to previously uncertificated learning, and achievements through RPL always lead to the award of credit.*”⁴

The practice is most commonly associated with vocational learning and it is not a systematic approach. There are some exceptions though and they mainly concern vocational learning. The only programs which are systematic and fully implemented are:

- ITQ (skills check and IT training)
- Adult literacy and numeracy (English and math)

Assessment and validation through RPL process



Source: Claiming credit: Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, 2010

⁴ Claiming credit: Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, 2010, p.10

The process described above has been adapted from the European guidelines on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁵

The Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework coming from The Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator⁶ expose that the extension of the RPL offer needs for awarding organisations and recognised centres the built of plans for the development of an RPL offer and the support of SSCs.

This favourable context for recognition of prior learning is reinforced by the fact that, in England, the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations is the qualifications regulator for all external qualifications (OFQAL)⁷ doesn't impose restrictions on how the learning should take place. Following this, any qualification awarded by a recognised awarding organisation could be attained by proving non-formal / informal learning equivalent to the required learning outcomes.

Elements of conclusion

As we showed in previous chapters, the involvement of unions about formal and non formal learning is strong in the UK. Facing the crisis, and despite the UK Government to reallocated or decrease funds, they continue to develop a specific service offer that implies funds, collective actions, and a workplace activism through Union Learning Reps. The proximity is sometimes reinforces with training centres offer.

Within the actual context of lack of resources, neither the Government nor the unions seems to give a central role to prior learning recognition. As we underlined, there is a long practice of prior learning recognition in UK (mainly coming from NVQs system and the way to go from informal and non formal learning to award). But, even if the qualification and credit framework reinforce the visibility of what is possible to get through assessment of prior learning, the process seems still complex, using a diversity of methods⁸; the dispositive seems to stay outside short term policy of evaluation and redefinition of learning priorities.

⁵ www.nvr.nu/files/Validation_guidelines_7_November_2008.pdf

⁶ http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/Regulatory_arrangements_QCF_August08.pdf

⁷ It became independent of curriculum and government in april 2010.

⁸ Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-Accredited Learning (RARPA), Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) since 1990's which is a method of assessment for further and higher education than RARPA

Appendix – visit agenda

Sunday 7th December

- Carlos Cruz, Unite, Education Department, Learning organiser, and workers learners at the learning centre

Monday 9th December

- Donald Cameron, Membership Development Officer, UNISON Learning and Organising Services
- Joanna Cain Membership Development Officer, UNISON Learning and Organising Services
- Dave McEvoy, PCS Public and Commercial Service Union, Legal, Equality, Education and Policy Support (LEEPS)

Thursday, 10th December

- Paul Dovey, CWU Communication Workers Union, Education & Training Department
- Tricia Hartley, Campaign for learning, London office directions, Chief Executives

Wednesday, 11th December

- Steve Rowlatt, Unite, Education Department, Senior Learning Organiser
- Carlos Cruz, Unite, Education Department
- And members of the learning centre

Thursday, 12th December

- Jane Ward, NIACE National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Regional Development Officer (Development and Research).
- Karen Pickett, POA Prison Officers Association, Regional Learning Centre, and the Governor of one of the Prisons on the Regional Learning Centre scope.

March 2012

- Judith Swift, Union Development Manager at TUC unionlearn