



*European Civil Society Platform
on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL)*



Recognition
RPL **LOFT**
RCC

Assessment

Accreditation
APL **VNFIL**

APCL **APEL**

Evaluation

Validation of prior learning **Certification**





The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) brings together 30 European networks working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education; networks for students, school heads, parents, HRD professionals, teachers and trainers.

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Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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EUCIS-LLL gathers 30 European networks working in the various fields of education and training in order to promote lifelong learning. We consider that the validation of non-formal and informal learning should be a top priority in the modernisation of our education and training systems. It is a concrete tool for lifelong learning. It contributes to offer more flexible learning pathways for European citizens and helps individuals, institutions and employers to identify and take into account individual progression and development in personal and professional pathways. We also see validation has a way to broaden access to education and qualifications, by offering a second chance or a relevant alternative to “non-traditional” learners.

We acknowledge that recent years have seen increased emphasis on the relevance of learning that takes place outside formal systems and on the ways and strategies to recognise and validate it. Validation has an important formative role in motivating and leading to further learning but not all countries have national legislation in place in order to promote and regulate its use. The aim of this LLL-Mag is to give an overview of policy developments at national and European level.

Indeed, the validation and recognition of prior learning has been a priority for our platform but also for many international institutions and particularly the European Union. The European Commission is about to publish a proposal for a Council Recommendation on the promotion and validation of non-formal and informal learning to encourage progress in that field. Many reference documents, guidelines, pilot projects and research are already available. However they remain little known by education and training actors in the field. In December 2011, EUCIS-LLL organised a public hearing during which we confronted this political will to national realities. We observed progress in many countries but also huge discrepancies in the path to implementing validation mechanisms. A real political commitment alongside proper resources is needed.

This magazine aims at providing key data on validation, examples of countries' profiles, interviews of experts but also of learners to give an insight about recent developments in Europe linked to the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

I hope you will enjoy the reading!

Audrey Frith,

EUCIS-LLL Director

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Before we start...

For the purposes of this "LLL-Mag", we use the term validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). It encompasses different types of known processes: the recognition of prior learning (RPL), Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL); Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL); Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL); Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APL&A); Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC); and, more recently Learning Outside Formal Teaching (LOFT). These various definitions already give an idea about the complexity of the processes under scrutiny as well as of the diversity of learning settings in Europe.

APL
LOFT
RPL
APEL
VNFIL
APCL

Accreditation
Evaluation
Certification
Assessment
Recognition

What's the current situation in Europe?

The validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) is a fashionable topic attracting interests of stakeholders from different sectors of education and training. At the EU level, several initiatives have been taken in order to push forward the process of validation and build pathways between non-formal, informal and formal learning. Common European principles and guidelines have been established, peer learning and exchange of good practice have been promoted through a regularly updated inventory of policy and practice across Europe and through the provision of financial support for projects from EU lifelong learning and youth programmes. The Europe 2020 strategy explicitly calls for 'the promotion of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning' under its Youth on the Move flagship initiative. In this sense, by the beginning of 2012 the European Commission should launch a communication on this topic.

VNFIL is recognised as an important tool in the context of the current economic crisis as well as in the pursuit of economic and social goals at European level. However, in Europe VNFIL is organised differently across member states and consequently there are enormous differences within its development and implementation among European countries. In general, we can distinguish three groups of countries:

- The ones that have put in place national systems making validation an integral part of their education and training and employment policies (i.e. France, Portugal); when this is the case it is seen as another nationally endorsed route to recognition of learning outcomes and possibly to certification.

- The ones that have introduced validation partially, putting in place legal and institutional frameworks for future development in sub-sectors of education and training or in the employment sector;
- And a third group of countries where validation remains low on the political agenda and an overall strategy is lacking and there are few concrete initiatives.

This classification has been further extended in the 2010 CEDEFOP inventory to four categories (see table below).

However, it is important to keep in mind that this categorisation provides only an overall assessment, because the situation on validation is multi-faceted, with different degrees of process and development in different sectors. Moreover, each country applies its own strategy. Sometimes we can observe a centralised approach, which leads to the implementation at national level, whereas some countries do not have any national or regional strategies and evidence 'bottom-up' approaches where local educational institutions and workplace initiatives have been developed. There are also different ministries, institutions and bodies responsible for the implementation, control and award of validation. For individuals, outcomes of validation are crucial. In some countries, an applicant can obtain a full diploma whereas in a majority of countries, an applicant can only benefit from access to education or from credit exemptions.

To understand better the process of VNFIL and differences within the European Union, we prepared a short description of validation in four European countries.

Indicative classification of countries (CEDEFOP)

High	Medium-High	Medium-Low	Low
Finland, <u>France</u> , Netherlands, Norway, <u>Portugal</u>	Denmark, Germany, Romania, Spain, Sweden, UK (England, Wales, Northern <u>Ireland</u> , Scotland)	Austria, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Czech Republic, Estonia, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Liechtenstein, <u>Lithuania</u> , Slovakia, Slovenia	Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Turkey

*Source: 2010 update of the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning - Final Report
«The focus of this classification is on relative, rather than absolute, levels of performance.»*



IRELAND

With the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) steps towards the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) have been taken. The Act provides a framework for a life-wide approach to learning where qualifications are “that which are conferred, granted or given by an awarding body which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skill or competence”. The Act itself did not legislate specifically for a detailed RPL system but rather brought into being a range of institutions which through their policies and procedures has ensured that RPL is now a key issue and one which is being addressed by all sectors of the educational system. The Act gave birth to the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) that has a responsibility to develop the use of RPL and to coordinate validation practices between awarding bodies and sectors and to ensure that the developments take place in a coherent manner across different educational sectors and awarding bodies. This agency is to become soon the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland, QQAAI. While RPL for access, and credit/exemptions, is generally practised, the concept of making full awards on the basis of RPL is a relatively new one for Ireland.

General process

In theory, if an individual wants to get his/her qualifications recognised, he/she can contact a Professional Development Advisor via the competent authorities and complete a written application form to determine his/her suitability for the scheme. If the applicant is eligible, he/she will be registered to join the scheme, and a mentor will be appointed to guide and help her/him. The applicant prepares a Portfolio of Evidence based on the syllabus, which sets out the standards that must be met. The applicant attends an interview/exam/practical skills demonstration in front of a Committee. If the standard is met, the applicant will be awarded a National Certificate. However this process is not fully implemented yet. The list of awarding bodies can be found on the NQAI website (<http://www.nqai.ie/>).



FRANCE

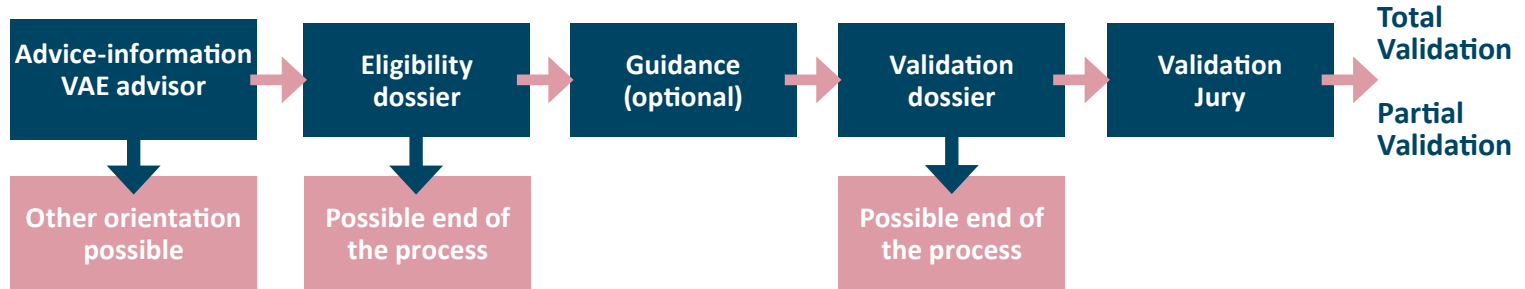
Recognition practices have been fostered in the French educational landscape as a result of a law on validation of professional experience, passed in 1992. Since 2002, the validation system has enabled the validation of prior learning and full or partial acquisition of diplomas and qualifications. French regions have developed information centres, while validation procedures have been drawn up by Ministries and validated by the National Committee for Professional Certification (CNCP). Another tool for validation is the Skills Audit (bilan de compétences), which enables learners to reflect upon their career paths, achievements and available training opportunities. In 2006, the Committee for the Development of Validation of Experience was established to investigate new developments in validation. In higher education, practices have been institutionalised due to the Law of Social Modernisation of 2002, which enables full exemption from coursework through the recognition of three years of professional experience.

General process

If an individual wants to validate his/her qualifications, he/she can directly contact the institution that awards the qualification or an information centre. Any public or private body can be considered as a legitimate awarding authority if it offers qualifications that are classified in the National Qualifications Directory (RNCP). The next step is to gather material in order to assess the eligibility of the candidate. If eligible, they will be asked to prepare an application to present their experience. If needed, a mentor will be appointed to guide the candidate. Finally, a jury will decide whether or not to award the diploma or qualification. In cases when the applicant does not receive a full validation, he or she can continue to receive individual guidance until full validation can be obtained. The total number of diplomas delivered via VAE (Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience [Accreditation of Prior Learning or APL]) by universities is approximately 4000, and has remained stable since 2007; over half of these (2200) are full diplomas. Information about validation can be found on the government website: <http://www.vae.gouv.fr/>

The French VAE system

Candidate (3 years experience)

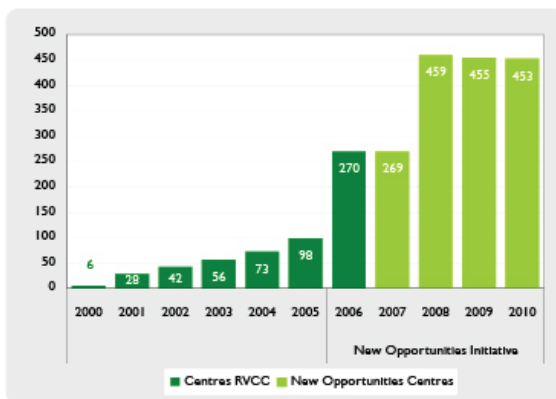




PORTUGAL

In Portugal, the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) has been taken up as a relevant political issue. The Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC) process was implemented in 2001. A main political shift occurred in 2006-2007 with the creation of a National Qualifications System (NQS) and a widened scope of the RVCC process that includes recognition of scholar competencies (basic and secondary level) and vocational education. Within this context, the New Opportunities Centres were created to provide qualifications to the population, through the RVCC processes and through qualified training. One million adults enrolled into one of the 459 bodies across the territory to formalise their qualifications in 2010. The Centers are managed by the National Agency for Qualifications (NAQ) that also coordinates the National Qualifications Catalogue for lower qualifications equivalences. The National ANQ set up in 2007, is the body responsible for the coordination of the national system of validation. Several other bodies are involved into validation practices.

453 New Opportunities Centres all over the country by the year 2010



General process

Opportunities Centres are the main interlocutors for individuals; they contribute to make the efforts made in terms of recognition visible to the population and became central in the RVCC process. There, an applicant obtains information about his/her possibilities on VNFIL. The next step for the applicant is to make a portfolio under supervision of a mentor. After that, the applicant presents it in front of a team from the centre (in case of basic and secondary education level). The next stage is the validation by a Jury composed of persons from the centre and an external evaluator. The process ends with a full certification (the individuals achieve a qualification level) or a partial certification (some competences are certified but not enough to achieve a qualification level); in this last situation, individuals are enrolled in a training course in order to conclude the qualification pathway. But even when a full certification is awarded in the end of the

RVCC process, the individuals are encouraged to continue their studies. Thousands of low-skilled adults therefore had their qualifications acknowledged thanks to the New Opportunities Centres but it seems that progress needs to be made in the field of higher education where practice remains very difficult, expensive and slow. Learn more on <http://www.anqep.gov.pt/>



LITHUANIA

No national strategy in Lithuania is dedicated to validation of non-formal and informal learning – the practical implementation has been rather slow and so far based on ad-hoc initiatives. However several laws have been adopted such as the National Education Strategy 2003-2012 (2003) that proposes flexible structures for a holistic approach to education and a focus on learning outcomes via a recognition system for untraditional pathways. A new edition of the Law on Education passed in 2003 set out key elements to formally certify competences acquired through non-formal or informal learning. Several regional, national and European initiatives have also been implemented. Validation practices are managed in a partnership approach. The Ministry of Education is involved in confirming final qualification examinations and determining the equivalence of education levels attained abroad. Public bodies participate in the process and other actors play a decisive role such as vocational schools and training institutions (that give support to applicants), colleges or social partners. Furthermore, several universities have been developing their own validation systems and have used EU funding to experiment these systems during the last few years.

General process

Individuals with at least one year's work experience and who are over 18 can apply for the recognition of competences by registering in a licensed vocational school that examines the documents provided by the individual. The student and school agree on a timetable of courses, credit tests and consultations and when the results are positive, the student can take the final qualification exam together with those from formal education, meaning that informal outcomes can only be validated through formal procedures. Individuals who successfully pass the exam are awarded with the same qualification certificate or qualified worker diploma. Assessment and recognition services are paid by the student or by his/her employer (in some cases by the Labour Exchange for unemployed people). Although the Education Strategy aimed at reaching 15% of the adult population involved in education and training by 2012, the target may not be reached. Weak individual financial capacities and a lack of information have been identified as the main problems.

EXAMPLES OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS

How to get EU funding for your projects?

The majority of projects are funded by the Leonardo da Vinci Programme within the Lifelong Learning Programme. Specific calls of proposals can be published to support pilot projects. The European Social Fund can also fund projects at the national or transnational level. To find relevant information, visit the European Commission website and/or contact your national agencies.

Examples of European projects

IDEAL - Identifier, Evaluer et Valider



IDEAL is an ongoing project, which intends to meet two objectives. Firstly, it is aimed at transferring and sharing the French methodology for the Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience or VAE (Accreditation of Prior Learning or APL), in particular to reduce the noticeable shortage of teachers seen in some European countries, by reducing the training period of adults wishing to take up teaching. Secondly, the project aims at testing and applying this methodology to the field of the continuing education of teachers. Highlighting the

subject-specific knowledge and skills needed to fulfil the role of a teacher will ensure the development of a continuing education programme for in-service teachers. In line with these commitments, partners are expecting to achieve the following results: firstly they planned to issue a "State of the Art" report (2011), which will be followed by the development of guides and tools for the accreditation of prior learning (2012-2013) and, lastly, the developed methodology will be tested by the partners (2012-2013). This project benefited from European Commission funding. Learn more: www.ideal-project.eu

OBSERVAL - European Observatory of validation of non-formal and informal learning



OBSERVAL was a three-year project (2007-2010) that aimed to create an online platform and database - the European Observatory. This resource website has been regularly updated, providing easy access to all materials and resources produced on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in European countries. Moreover, OBSERVAL has developed a strong network of experts dealing with the practice of recognising non-

formal and informal learning. The consortium, coordinated by EUCEN, bestowed great care on involving partners outside higher education from all sectors. The consortium consisted of 27 partner institutions, with representatives coming from 21 European Member States and 3 EFTA countries, covering all educational sectors (HE, VET, AE, 3rd sector) with close links to approximately 250 validation experts through the National Working Groups. Learn more: www.observal.org

Flexi-Path - Flexible professionalisation pathways for adult educator



Flexi-Path is a completed project intended to facilitate the transparency and recognition of adult educator qualifications across Europe making them comparable by having a common reference (EQF) and a common master adult educator profile which promotes the idea of mobility through standardised educational programmes and qualification levels. In addition, Flexi-Path enhanced the recognition and valorisation of adult educator learning that has occurred within non-formal

and informal settings by means of a validation instrument. Flexi-Path was aimed at adult educators who had acquired specific competences outside a formal setting, which simply did not exist sometimes or the job they were doing did not require a formal qualification in adult education as a prerequisite. With the help of this validation instrument, their awareness on the knowledge and skills they have in present can be raised and they will be able to plan their further professional development.

Learn more <http://www.flexi-path.eu/>

Koen Nomden, DG Education Culture, European Commission



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researcher at the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Antwerp.

Is there a shared definition on validation in Europe? How does the European Commission understand it?

There exists a complicated definition of validation of non-formal and informal learning. Its key components are that validation is a process of confirmation by an authorised body of acquired learning outcomes, against a relevant standard, irrespective of the setting where the learning took place. The steps of validation are: identification, documentation, assessment and certification.

Why is validation a priority of the Commission?

It is a priority because it can bring important benefits for individuals (educational, personal, and economic), for the economy and employers and for the society at large. For example it allows citizens to achieve a higher qualification, it motivates individuals to learn and it can give a second chance to those who left the formal education and training system. On the labour market it can lead to a better skills matching, based on more complete information on what individuals know, understand and are able to do. Without validation, relevant knowledge, skills and competences remain invisible, undervalued and underused. The idea behind validation is to make non-formally and informally acquired skills visible, so that they can be (better) used. However it remains the choice of the individual to validate his/her skills.

For the Commission, validation is a priority under the EU 2020 Strategy on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It is seen as a lever to improve Europe’s competitiveness in

times of fast changing knowledge, skills and competence requirements for a knowledge economy. It is all the more important since it contributes to the EU Headline targets under the EU 2020 Strategy on early school leaving (< 10 %), tertiary education attainment (>40 %), employment rate (> 75 %), poverty reduction (< 20 %).

What are the main recommendations of the Commission to Member States to make progress?

Under the Recommendation under preparation, Member States will be recommended to take practical measures that will mainstream validation of non-formal and informal learning. The proposed measures are complementary to the European Qualification Framework which promotes validation, but which does not provide indications on how to validate. An important aspect of the recommendation is that Member States should allow that qualifications cannot only be obtained on the basis of formal learning, but also on the basis of validation of non-formal and informal learning. It is important however that for both ways to obtain qualifications, the same standards in terms of learning outcomes are applied. In relation to this Member States should ensure that guidance is available and that procedures and standards are quality assured. Member States will further be recommended to create entitlements for individuals, e.g. if there is a prospect of unemployment. There is also a focus on disadvantaged groups for which usually specific measures in terms of awareness raising and guidance will be necessary. A very important part of the draft recommendation will be the involvement of social partners and all other relevant stakeholders. Finally it is foreseen that Member States promote the use of credit systems (ECTS, ECVET) of Europass and of Youthpass.

Regarding the Commission itself it is foreseen to regularly update the European Guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning as well as the European Inventory on validation. Furthermore the European Social Fund as well as the future Erasmus for All programme should provide funds for validation projects.

Is the need to move this agenda forward shared by all the member states? Do you think all EU citizen will benefit from validation by 2020?

The European Inventory on validation (2010 update)

shows that in all Member States validation is now progressing. Furthermore in the Bruges Communiqué the Member States agreed to develop and promote, no later than 2015, the use of procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning supported by EQF/NQFs. If the Recommendation is adopted by the Council and is followed up by Member States in practice, there is a good chance that EU citizens who wish to do so will benefit from validation of their non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes. However, validation of non-formal and informal learning should not be seen as a substitute for formal education and training paths.

Can the development of national qualifications frameworks support validation processes?

The European Qualifications Framework (2008) has created a new dynamic in the European Lifelong Learning area. Under the EQF a European reference framework for all types and levels of qualifications, described in learning outcomes, was set up. The Member States are currently referencing their national qualification levels to the eight European qualification levels. All have chosen to do this by first setting up a National Qualifications Framework. Under the EQF process validation of non-formal and informal learning should be promoted. To this effect in their National Qualifications frameworks Member States are supposed to indicate in which way qualifications can be obtained on the basis of non-formal and informal learning experiences as well. The EQF process, including national qualifications frameworks, is very important for the validation process. A key element is its focus on learning outcomes instead of learning inputs such as the duration of studies, because this makes it possible to treat qualifications obtained on the basis of formal learning and on the basis of non-formal and informal learning in the same way.

What are the available tools of the Commission to support educational actors working in this field?

Funding for validation is currently available through the ESF and through the Lifelong Learning programme. This should also be the case under the future ESF and the future Erasmus for All programme. Furthermore the existing credit systems for higher education (ECTS) and for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), provide support for validation. Finally one has to mention Europass, which is a tool for the documentation of learning experiences, including those resulting from non-formal and informal learning. Under the current Youth in Action programme Youthpass contributes as well by providing documentation of learning experiences acquired under the programme.



European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning

The European inventory is a tool that provides an updated overview over good practices in the area of validation and is addressing the needs of both policy makers and practitioners working in the field. The European Inventory is closely connected to the European Guidelines on validation and exemplifies in a concrete way the principles outlined in these.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/>

European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning

The Guidelines provide expert advice to be used voluntarily by stakeholders at national and local levels. The aim is to contribute to developing diverse and high quality, cost efficient validation approaches in Europe, thus supporting lifelong and life-wide learning.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/>

European Qualifications' Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)

The EQF acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting workers' and learners' mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning. Because the approach is based on learning outcomes, it provides the scope to develop an integrated approach to the promotion and validation of non-formal and informal learning. In particular with the implementation of the EQF Recommendation, most Member states are developing comprehensive national qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes, a development that lays the ground for the implementation of validation systems at national level.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/>

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

ECTS is the credit system for higher education used in the European Higher Education Area, involving the 46 countries engaged in the Bologna Process. It aims at the establishment of a system of credits as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. ECTS credits are a key element of the Bologna Framework for Qualifications, compatible with the EQF. ECTS credits are based on the workload students need in order to achieve expected learning outcomes that describe what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning. They relate to level descriptors in national and European qualifications frameworks. Each learning outcome is expressed in

IS VALIDATION PROGRESSING IN EUROPE?

Jo Hawley, GHK Consulting



Ms. Hawley is a Senior Consultant at GHK Consulting. She has been involved in updating the 2008 and 2010 versions of the CEDEFOP Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning. She previously worked as project manager at ECOTEC Research & Consulting Ltd.

You have been monitoring developments in validation the last three years in Europe; do you see an evolution?

Our work on the latest update of the European Inventory on Validation showed that in many countries, a lot of progress has been made since the previous version of 2006/07. However, the rate of progress varies across the different sectors of education and training, as well as across the countries of Europe, with some making much more progress than others.

Two developments that have helped to support the further evolution of validation processes are the introduction and adoption of a learning outcomes approach to describing qualifications and the introduction in some countries of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). By describing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes, learners can be assessed on the basis of what they can do (their skills and competences), rather than what they have done (for example, whether they have participated in a certain number of hours of learning). This makes the process of validation much easier.

However, while progress has been particularly strong in terms of the adoption of the necessary policy frameworks for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, the application of validation measures on the ground still faces important institutional, attitudinal and resource-related barriers, except in a minority of countries.

EUROPEAN INVENTORY
ON VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL & INFORMAL LEARNING

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory.aspx>

What is the added value of validation for individuals, companies and society?

Validation has a wide range of potential benefits to individuals, companies and society as a whole. The costs and benefits of validation are explored in detail in a thematic report produced for the 2010 Update of the European Inventory. It's not possible to go into great detail here but I would say that for the individual, the key benefits are of course the chance to either acquire a qualification, or take forward a professional or learning pathway, perhaps within a shorter timeframe or at a lower cost than through a traditional learning route. Validation also increases awareness of one's skills and competences and enables individuals to present those to other parties. For companies, there are many potential benefits in terms of staff development, staff recruitment, and change management. For society as a whole, validation presents an opportunity to recognise 'untapped' knowledge, skills and competences among the population and to ensure that people are given cost-effective opportunities to gain recognition for their skills, which can for example help to tackle issues such as unemployment and skills mismatches.

Validation is a priority of the European Commission but its implementation is unequal in Europe. What are the main challenges / barriers in the countries?

There are a number of challenges, which of course will depend on the individual context within the country in question. One issue is the lack of dedicated funding allocated to the development or implementation of validation in some countries. The 2010 Inventory showed that only a few countries have an earmarked, or ring-fenced budget for validation. Another issue is the need for a 'cultural shift' to increase the trust among different stakeholders in the value of non-formal and informal learning, as well as the process and outcomes of validation itself. The need to move from pilot and short-term projects to mainstream measures is another issue and there seems to be in some countries a certain variation in the way and extent to which a national policy / strategy is applied at local or provider level. It is also necessary to introduce better systems of collecting data and evaluating existing validation initiatives and practices, to create an evidence base for future developments in this area.

Are stakeholders' involved in the definition of validation processes in the countries?

The answer to this question varies from country to country and also within a country from sector to sector. It is of course important to involve a range of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors in the development of a system of validation in order to ensure that it is valid and reliable, and buy-in from all parties – including potential users of the system – is important to ensure trust in the system, its processes and outcomes.

Do you think validation is a tool that supports lifelong learning in Europe? How?

Absolutely. Validation puts the different forms of lifelong learning on a par with formal learning and makes all forms of learning visible. It presents an opportunity for people to return to learning, or to acquire a taste for learning, by giving them a way of understanding and in some cases gaining recognition for their existing skillset. It helps individuals to resume formal learning at their actual level of competence and not simply according to the qualifications they have, which avoids wasteful repetition. Formative validation can therefore help people to plan a learning pathway for the future, while summative validation gives them a chance to acquire a (partial) certificate, which may act as an incentive to take up more learning opportunities in the future. By recognising the skills and competences people have acquired, regardless of the context in which those competences have been obtained, validation can therefore be seen as a tool to support lifelong learning.

With the current economic crisis, what are the good arguments advocating for validation?

In response to increasing unemployment resulting from the crisis, validation of non-formal and informal learning can offer a basis for jobseekers, or workers at risk of losing their jobs, to make future educational/professional choices and to undertake personal development, by providing to each jobseeker a clearer picture of their strengths and weaknesses. Because validation focuses on the competences acquired, rather than the context in which they have been acquired, it facilitates transitions between economic sectors, which is particularly important in times of economic crisis and restructuring. Validation can thus help people to improve their employability and in some cases present an opportunity to acquire a qualification. Validation can also help employers to make more efficient recruitment decisions. Furthermore, in some instances it is possible that validation is more cost-effective than the provision of a (full) training course and in the context of tight public sector budgets, this may be a considerable advantage.



terms of credits, with a full-time student workload ranging from 1500 to 1800 hours for one academic year, and one credit generally corresponds to 25-30 hours of work.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/ects_fr.htm

European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

ECVET is a system for the accumulation and transfer of units of learning outcomes in vocational education and training in Europe. It provides a common methodological framework that can be used to describe qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated points. It is not intended to replace national qualification systems, but to achieve better comparability and compatibility among them. ECVET applies to all outcomes obtained by an individual from various education and training pathways that are then transferred, recognised and accumulated in view of achieving a qualification. This initiative makes it easier for European citizens to gain recognition of their training, skills and knowledge in another Member State. It aims to promote transnational mobility and access to lifelong learning.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/ecvet_en.htm

EUROPASS portfolio and future Skills Passport

Europass is an online Curriculum Vitae service, helping individuals to make their professional experience and skills clearly and easily understood. Europass draws attention to people's skills and abilities, including those acquired outside formal education and training. The structure of the Europass serves to encourage identification and recognition of learning, and therefore competence and qualifications levels, which consists in an important step towards full recognition, validation and certification. However, so far these tools have only been able to capture non-formal or informal learning taking place in the home country to a limited degree. The Commission considers that to cover these unmet needs it is necessary to develop an integrated Europass Skills Passport capable of recording the full range of formal, non-formal and informal learning whether acquired abroad or domestically.

<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home>

YOUTHPASS

Youthpass is a tool for participants of projects funded by the Youth in Action Programme to describe what they have done and learnt. It is part of the European Commission's strategy to foster the recognition of non-